The Library in the Life of the User

OCLC Conference Recap

Sponsored by the Professional Development Committee
“The major long-term influence on libraries is how those needs (of users, of universities, of learning & research practices) change.”

“Over the years we’ve seen a shift in seeing the library as a collection to a library in terms of how to support learning and research in new ways.”
“Workflow is the new content – in a digital world, the library needs to organize itself around the workflows of research and learning.”

Historically, libraries are interested in outcomes, they memorialize research. Today, the process of research (methods, evidence, and discussion) as well as the aftermath (discussion, revision, and re-use) is increasingly relevant to libraries.
• What is the role of the institution, particularly in terms of changing research and learning workflows, the network, and the personal?

• Need to shift from consumption to creation.
Lorcan Dempsey

Traditional Research Workflow

Modern Research Workflow

https://innoscholcomm.silk.co/page/Traditional
https://innoscholcomm.silk.co/page/Modern
Lorcan Dempsey

https://innoscholcomm.silk.co/
• Need to shift resources from infrastructure to engagement. Where Engagement = customer relations, supporting new research and new needs.

• Emphasize institutional innovation. Specifically with a view towards answering how can we do redesign, collaborations, and services better to meet new needs.

• Focus on right scaling infrastructure, e.g., moving to shared systems and general “groupiness”
1. This drop largely coincided with when Wikipedia began requiring a login to edit.

2. The Wikipedia Gender Gap
   a. Only 23% of Wikipedia editors are women (which is an issue for access to quality information relevant to women);

   b. Men with lower or equal computer skills as women are also more likely to become editors.
In fact!

Men rating themselves at skill level 2 felt comfortable becoming editors, women at same level overwhelmingly did not.

Of equally skilled men & women, 50% of the men respondents would become editors while only 25% of the women respondents would.
So what does this mean for us?
What are libraries?

- They are about relationships, social institutions, social relationships
- They are technologies
- They are symbols and symbolic systems
- They represent beliefs about the world and how information and knowledge should be organized
- They are about practices

*Libraries are the stuff of ethnographic and anthropological study.*
Experience Design or Human-Centered Design – in addition to the visual, it also includes:

- Information
- Interaction (how will people find and interact with it?)
- Structure
- Concept (how will you deliver value to your user?)
- Proposition (what is this thing going to do?)
Paul-Jervis Heath

4 Phases of Design:

- **Phase 1**: Immersion
- **Phase 2**: Inspire
- **Phase 3**: Imagine
- **Phase 4**: Invent

[Diagram of the 4 phases]
Tools of the Trade

Library-supplied quantitative data

- Gate count
- Circulation data
- Database use data
- Demographic data
Tools of the Trade

Student-supplied quantitative & qualitative data

• Heat maps
• Activity interviews
• Map sketching
• Activity flow charts
• Photo surveys
• Diaries
• Observation
• Interviews
• Focus groups (structured and semi-structured)
• Surveys
• Pre- and post- workshop assessment “quizzes”
• Visitor & Resident Framework (perhaps in combination with another self-reflective tool such as diaries)
Let’s give it a try:

Visitor & Resident Framework

Visitor

Resident

Personal

Institutional
Do we have time for one more?

Activity Flow Chart

You’re a sophomore and your professor just gave you the title and author of a book you should use for your research project. What steps would you have to follow to walk back out of the library with the book in hand?
3 Core Concerns with Current Practices:

• Are we asking the right questions?

• Are we looking to the future in addition to the present?

• Are we aligning our services, spaces, and technologies with the university’s teaching, learning, and research aspirations?
A Wish List for Library-based User Needs Assessment

• Improved ability to complete project from question to data to meaning

• Need to collect and correlate data across library realms of collections, mediation services (aka user services), and facilities

• Need to develop means documenting, celebrating, and further developing successes
Discuss