



Opening Address: Barriers to UX Design

Andy Priestner

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Our 5th year. Not a fad.

UX research and design is here to stay.

How much longer will we have the conference?

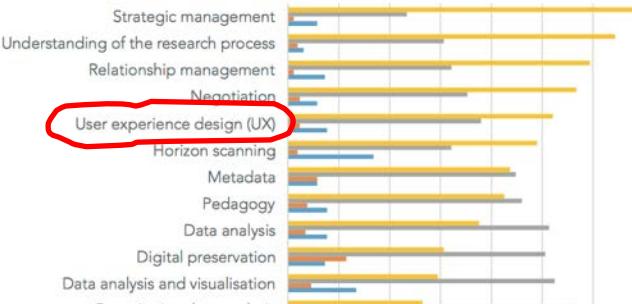
Not yet embedded or second nature so we need to keep on advocating for it.



According to UK academic librarians: the most important technical skill (after soft skills)!

Note: 'UX design' NOT research.

Library skills: In your library how important will the following skills be...



Andy Priestner @andypriestner · 11 Dec 2017

Delighted to see **UX** is listed as THE most important emerging technical skill for librarians (after soft skills) in this new @InfoSchoolSheff @SCONUL report. If only someone offered established and successful #UX training for librarians... 😊

Stephen Pinfield @StephenPinfield

Our report, 'Mapping the future of academic libraries' for @SCONUL is now published. #mappingacademiclibraries. Thanks to all who took part in the conference last week to kick-off discussion about it. @iSchoolAndrew @sophiearutter @InfoSchoolSheff sconul.ac.uk/news/mapping-t...



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When we talk about UX today we mean User Experience Research & Design: a toolkit of techniques for exploring and responding to the experience of our users



Question:

How many libraries are currently conducting User Experience research?

Answer:

Many!



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Question:

How many libraries are currently employing and/or embedding a User Experience design process?

Answer:

A small handful



It's wonderful that so much UX research is going on,
however, there's a serious problem with next steps...



*That's really
interesting, let's
form a committee*

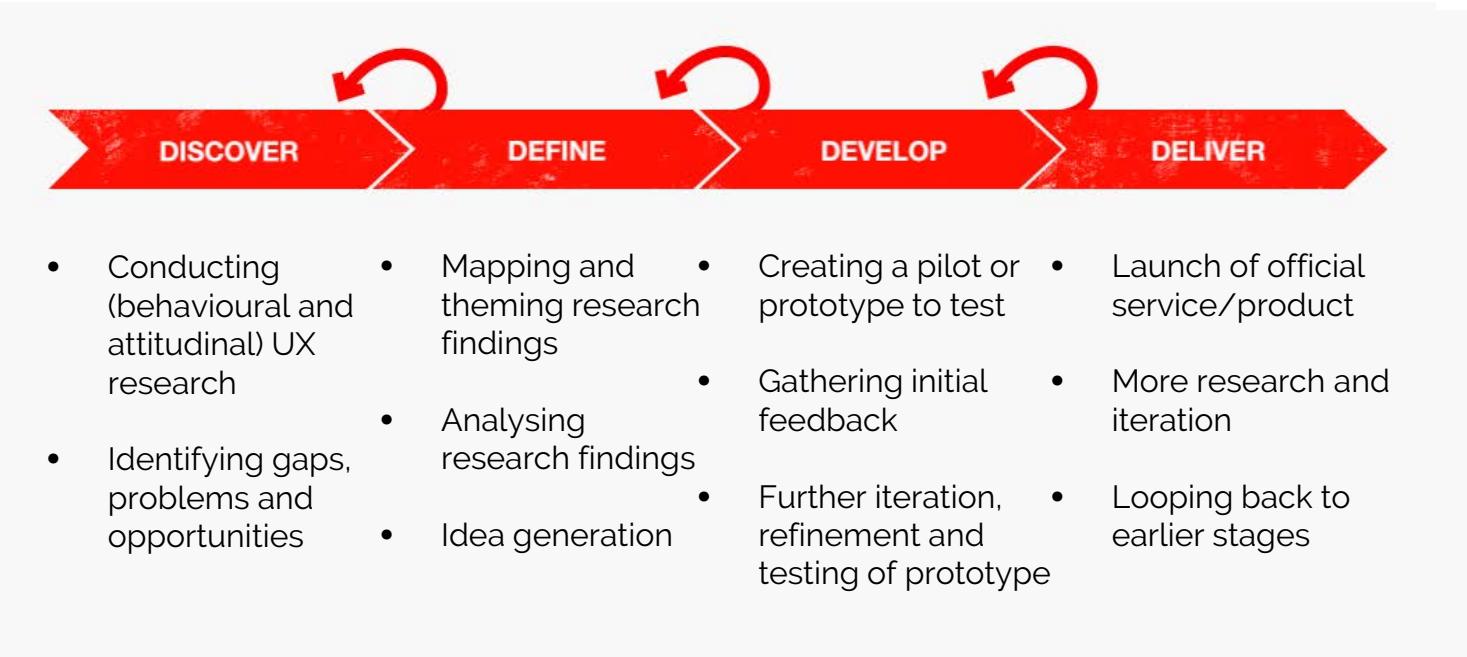
*We can work on this
for the next 6 months*

What is UX design?

Responding to themes and concentrations of data derived from UX research with ideas for new prototype services or policies that can be tested and developed with users



THE UX RESEARCH & DESIGN PROCESS



Andy Priestner (adapted from 'The UX design process',
<http://www.designingcollaboration.com>)



UX design is often neither begun nor dealt with as a systematic process. The user research data you gather needs to be:

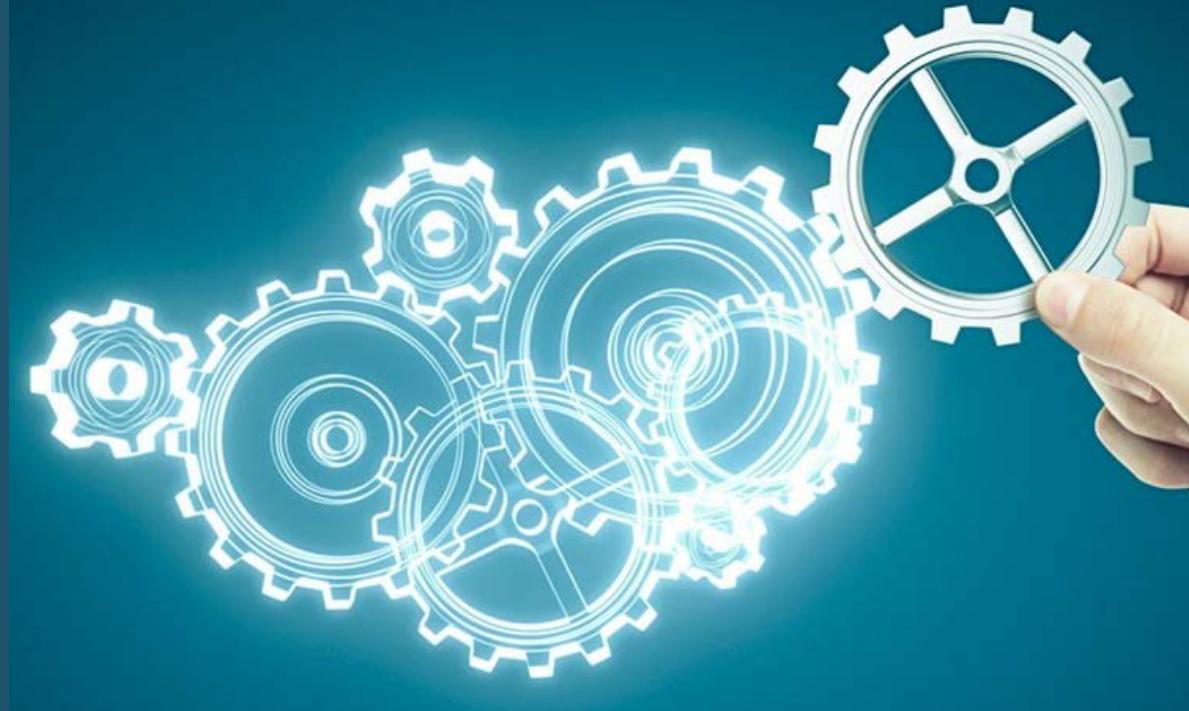
- mapped and sorted by theme
- used to fuel focused idea generation sessions in which you devise new services or products in response for testing
- engaged with physically and collaboratively
- accessible in a designated design space, not hidden away in Excel and emails



8 institutional barriers to
user experience design...

1. seeing research data as the finish line

- a lack of awareness of the whole other set of activities that can and should follow UX research
- writing reports rather than generating ideas for services and testing them
- gathering too much UX research data: not realising it's about uncovering actionable insights to test rather than statistical significance



2. we are terrible at idea generation

not knowing how to make idea generation effective and/or just not spending enough time engaged in it in response to UX data...

- focusing too much on feasibility and costs rather than creativity
- dismissing wild ideas too quickly – not brave enough to live with and evolve 'out there' ideas
- not spending enough time in a divergent thinking space and instead settling on the first convergent 'safe' idea
- thinking we should be group brainstorming when we should actually be generating ideas silently and alone before sharing as a group



3. we pursue perfection

unrealistically aiming for perfection
for new services first time

- too focused on the 'ta-da!' moment than on seeking user input over time and evolving services *with* them
- what is perfection for library staff is never going to square up with user perfection so it's a waste of time
- perfection takes too long and is usually far more detailed and complex than what is actually required



4. we are too cautious

the UX process is progressed too cautiously, usually because it is hierarchically controlled and constrained when it has no reason to be; staff are not empowered to just freely try out new prototypes...

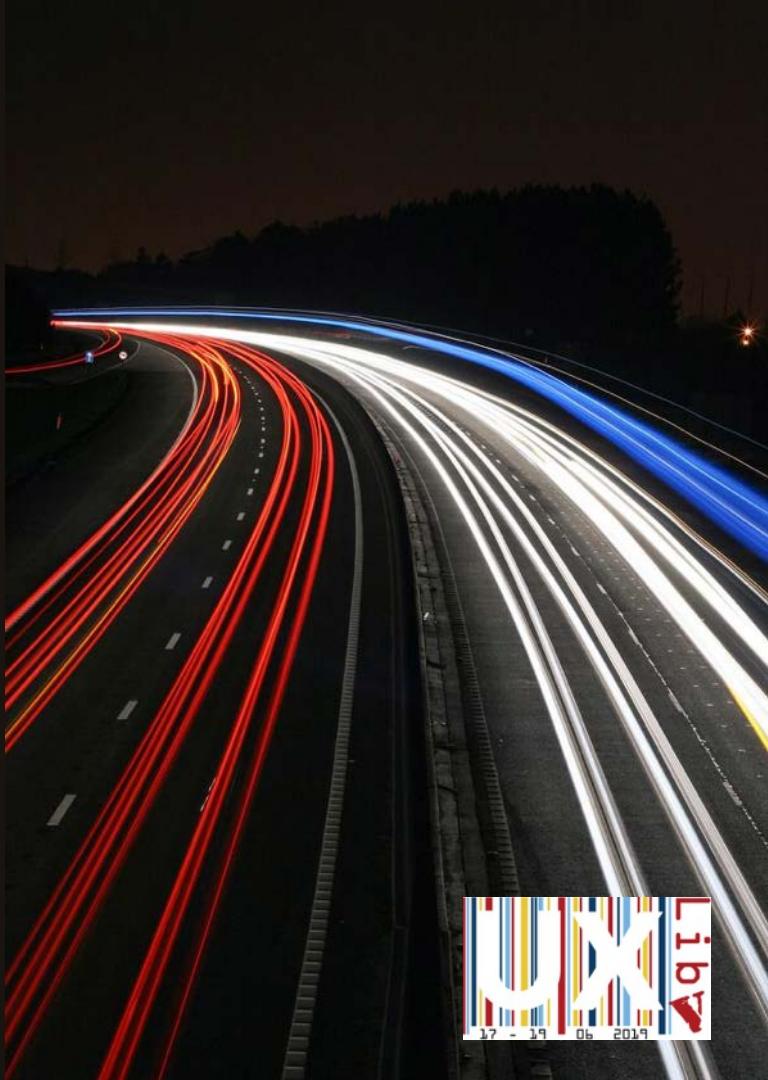
- seeing prototypes and pilots as threats rather than as freeing and inspiring opportunities to experiment and learn
- the world is not going to end if you try a new idea or service: 'it's only a pilot'
- however, control is nearly always imagined and exaggerated, so ask for forgiveness not permission



5. we are not agile enough

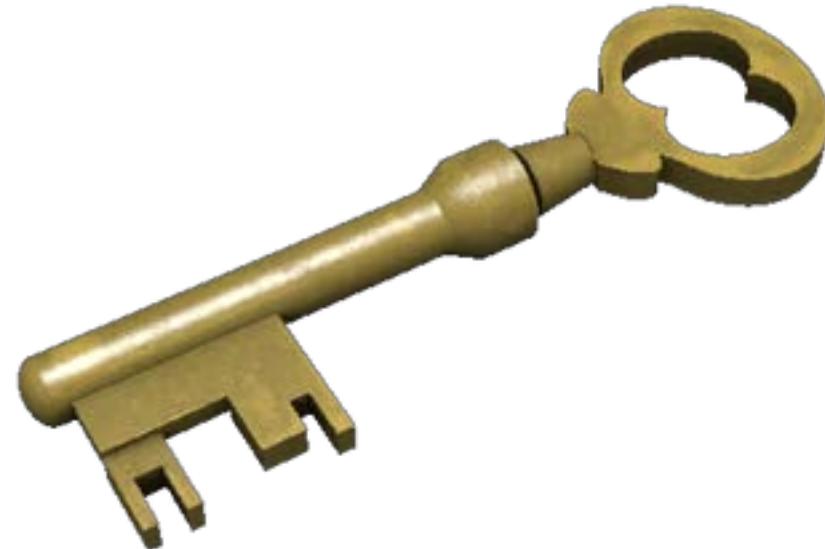
agile design: testing and progressing new services quickly - is almost entirely at odds with the bureaucratic structure and approach of most public and private institutions, which prefer:

- long, sometimes endless, projects
- despite funding constraints, routinely spending lots of money when making changes, rather than experimenting quickly and cheaply with users first to find out what's really needed
- referring everything to staff committees and hierarchies for their thoughts, slowing it all down unnecessarily (and despite the fact that UX design is not about what staff think)



6. we face issues around ownership and politics

- not being sure who owns UX, or where it sits in the organisation, or even whether it is regarded as a strategic priority
- seniority, or lack of seniority, of those involved will affect take-up
- the personalities involved and the history of its arrival in the organisation are determining factors to whether it is actually embedded
- strategic agendas that can mean UX results are sometimes not timely or welcome
- scope misunderstood and therefore not viewed as relevant beyond digital



7. ignoring the basics

- institutions are not actually interested enough in what our users are doing or saying, especially when its about problems with basic services
- there is often willful neglect of those service elements that are not why people went into libraries (e.g. clean toilets, poor food and drink arrangements, stapling) in favour of sexier aspects like user education and OA
- UX design is often used as a byword for innovation, so there is a perception that its outputs have to be revolutionary and sexy, but they can just be practical



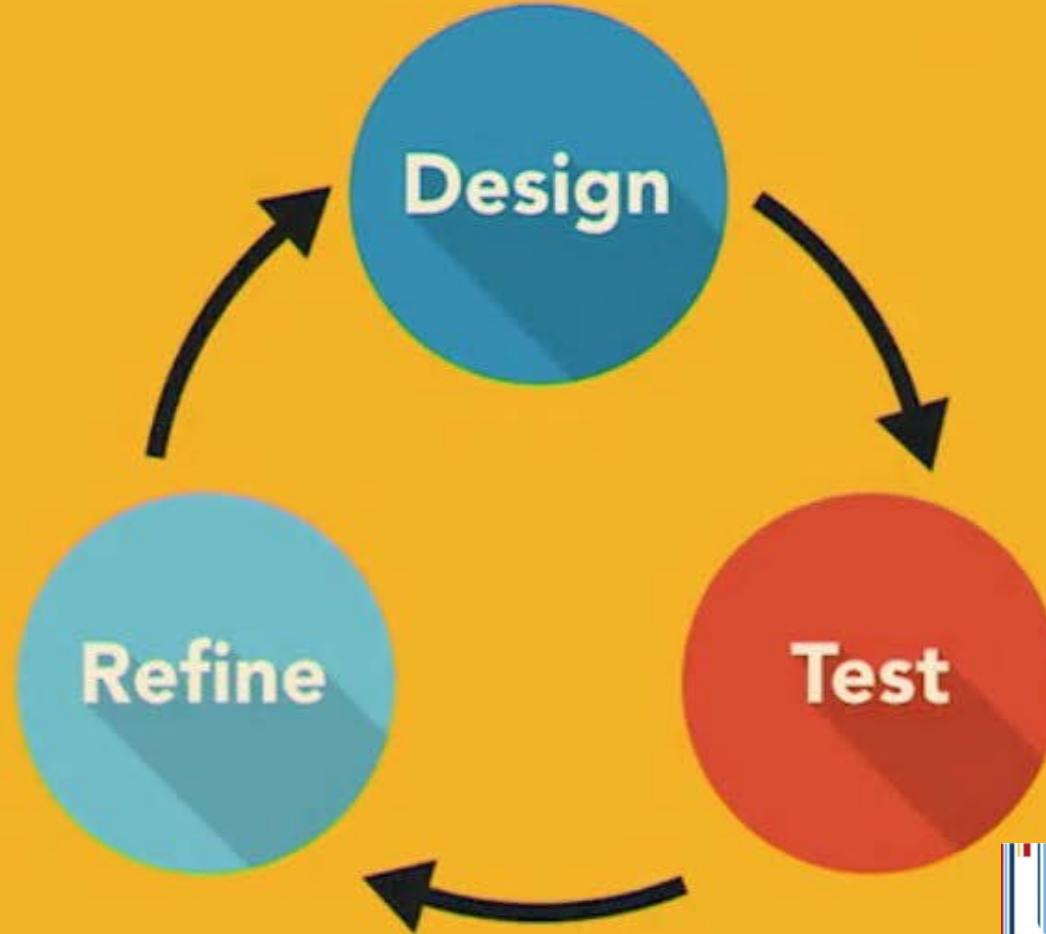
8. fear of failure

- accepting failure is integral to UX design; for example, during the prototyping phase, recognising that some things will work and others will not, but that's fine as you are always moving forward – learning and refining
- the consequences of failure are exaggerated and we also overreact to negative comments: we fear failure too much rather than embracing it as crucial to development and knowledge
- we also don't model or communicate that failure is OK to our staff thus paralysing them unnecessarily with fear



4 example prototypes

from research findings to inexpensive design via iteration with library users



~ 1 ~

reading garden



Research finding: need for spaces that were more intimate, organic and less overwhelming (autistic students)



Iteration: no-one sat in the deckchairs, but once we replaced them with sofas the area was well-used; staff disliked the space, users loved it



Iteration: moving the deckchairs outside was a great way of promoting that this was a different, relaxing area



~ 2 ~

deserted foyer



Research Finding: seats in the foyer area were never used as users felt overlooked by staff, also a nearby fiction collection was barely used



Iteration: several layouts until we arrived at the optimum arrangement in which seats were used and fiction was browsed and borrowed





Iteration: some staff were again unhappy with the change: 'it looks too much like a library' !!!



~ 3 ~

playing libraries





Research finding: kids wanted more to do in the children's section: how about they got to play at libraries?



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Iteration: prototype was so popular that the old spray-painted laptop broke and lost its keys, so staff invested in a more robust wooden version



~ 4 ~

garden window



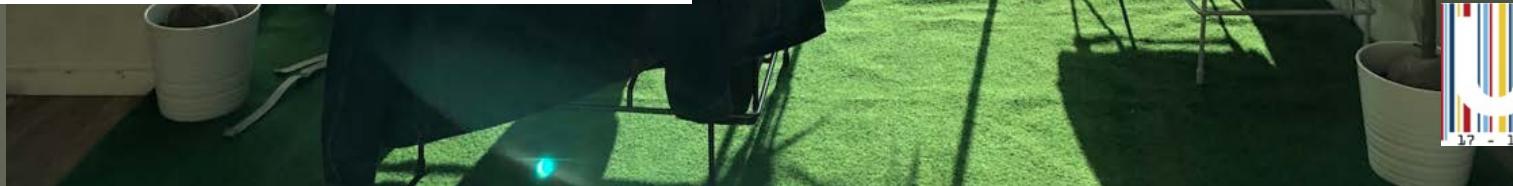


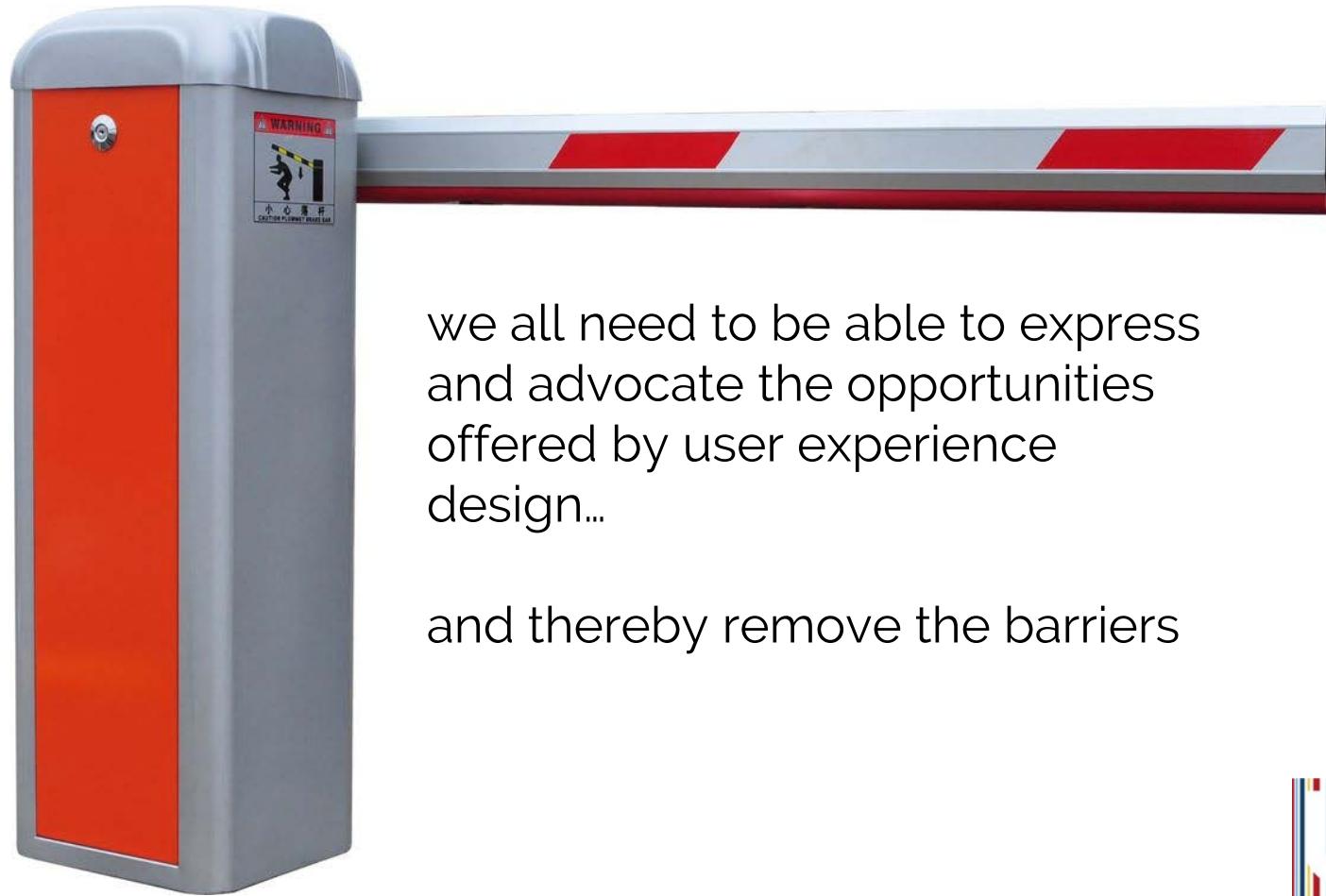
Research finding: users wanted to feel closer to nature (and cladding had fallen off all the window surrounds)





Iteration: different plant arrangements,
need for more seating than anticipated





we all need to be able to express
and advocate the opportunities
offered by user experience
design...

and thereby remove the barriers

- testing with users not staff
- being OK with 'good enough'
- does not have to be expensive
- learning from failure
- trying things out quickly
- actionable insights not lots of stats
- it's only a pilot – you're just testing so you should not need arduous permission
- iterating based on user behaviour

the result...

**truly relevant user-centric
library spaces, products and
services**





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