Embedding collaboration into improving the student library experience

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PRIFYSGOL
ABERYSTWYTH
UNIVERSITY
1872
1872 150 2022

Developing and embedding UX

UX training for individuals

Attended talks at conferences and training day

2015

UX training at AU

Involving nearly all library staff. Small scale UX work

2018

Embedding and expanding

Attended UXLibs. 1st large-scale project

2019

Reviewing and refining

More strategic approach to UX work

2022

What we wanted to solve

- Being too reactive in our UX work
- Struggling with generating ideas and implementing change
- Lack of staff time and resource
- Support employability

What we did

- Used our scheduled "Sample Weeks" to plan UX activities in advance
- Worked with students to collect data, analyse data and generate ideas
- Cancelled our annual User Survey (but were over-ruled)

Sample Week 1 November 2022

Sample Week 1 November 2022
- Induction feedback
- Technology in the Library

Sample Week 2 February 2023

- International students experiences of the library
- AberSkills webpages and content (a few weeks later)

A student's perspective

Why take part?:
- Work experience
- Learn more about the profession *in situ*
- Interesting area

What I did:
- 21st–25th November 2022: observation, touchstone tours, focus group, write-up
- 13th March 2023: useability testing
- 10th May 2023: UX ideas generation (university websites useability testing)

Level E Hugh Owen Library: UX observation

Date: 23/11/22
Time: 3:30 pm – 4 pm
Who: Jon Foster

KEY
- Observer location
- Main thoroughfare (fairly quiet)
- Toilet traffic (light)
- Alt toilet route (1 user)

Llyfrau'r Gwyddorau
Q - T
Science Books

Cyfnodolion y Gwyddorau
Science Periodicals

Ffolio'r Gwyddorau
Q - T
Science Folio

Shhh...

Troliau Ar Gyfer Eu Gosod Ar Silffoedd
Items for Shelving

Cyfnodolion Cyfoes y Gwyddorau
Science Current Periodicals

Ystafell Gyfrifiadurol
Computer Room

Ystafell Grŵp 3
Group Room 3

Ystafell Hyfforddi
Training Room

Ystafell Grŵp 4
Group Room 4

Ystafell Grŵp 5
Joy Welsh
Group Room 5

Ystafell Hermann Ethé
Room

Ystafell Ms De Freitas
Room

OBSERVATION – LEVEL D

Activities	Tech
- Using laptops / PCs	- Own laptops
- Reading (for pleasure?)	- Desktop PC
- Talking / conversing	- Headphones
- ~~Getting for~~ Using food/ coffee machines	- Laptop + desktop PC
- User opposite me photocopying sth. after reading for ≥15m	

Groups? Collab or individual (within groups)	Popular areas / AREAS	Unpopular
- Some groups, but some be working indiv.	- Front of lib	Fairly even distributions
- Be Using walking thru - most alone, some small groups (usually)	- Windows with	
- 4 congregated outside group study room		

Problems using service?	Suggestions?
- Printer guy user not using? Bagged them left	
- Photocopier – users ② having diffs?	

	Misc. obs
- Someone took their shoes off at desk!	- People studying in 'café' area
- One user left laptop on desk while carrying itself	- Low level of noise but conversations going on
- Comfortable temp	- No-one using tech surv?
	- Fairly stable users in 30 mins (can study & concentrate)

What did we learn?

We collected so much data

Idea generation and analysis worked so much better with student involvement

Noise:

- Have ear defenders available at the issue desks for student with low tolerance of noise

- Improve signage and clarity of study zone and noise expectations. Have clear pop-up banner at entrance (or wall directory like in department stores) showing the facilities on each level and the noise expectations

- Install a noise alarm – a short sharp sound if the levels become unacceptable. People stop talking if they hear an alarm

- Provide soundproofed study pods in the louder areas enabling students to study in their preferred surroundings

Lack of understanding of organization:

- Have biweekly or monthly 'coffee mornings' or 'library afternoon teas' in library vending area. Informal drop-ins with library staff – providing drinks and biscuits, where people can get answers to any questions they have about the library

- Offer how the library works sessions – like a tour but more detailed

- Mark familiar subject areas on library maps / floorplans

- Provide interactive digital kiosk to help people locate their subject areas / shelves

- Colour code the stacks by subject

Lack of understanding of how to borrow books:

- Show video of how to borrow and find books on screens around the library

- Have student volunteers / ambassadors in the library at the start of semesters to show people what to do (more approachable)
- Offer how to borrow and find books sessions

Openness:

- Break up the large open areas with shelving and use these to house fiction / non academic books or displays

- Provide a socialising room which is soundproofed and equipped with comfortable furniture and space for students to eat and drink

- Make the upper floors more colourful and warmer with lamps and recessed lighting

- Have digital screens showing landscapes in darker / more confined spaces

Cold:

- Position more portable heaters around the library / study areas

- Provide blankets or hot water facility (for hot drinks) and hot water bottles

- Encourage students to BYOB - 'bring your own blankets'

- Provide live online 'heatmap' of temperatures in the library so students can identify warmer spots

Cleanliness / faults:

- Have 'clean stations' around the library with cleaning supplies so that students can clear up any mess they make or find

- Have a short report a fault form ([like accommodation services](#)) so that building / equipment / cleaning issues can be reported directly

FAQs and LibGuides :

- Reduce and streamline the FAQs, ensuring all are up to date and require the minimum number of clicks to get the information needed

- Improve FAQ search function

- Provide more video guides

What did we learn?

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Thinking ahead about themes for UX work made us consider different ways of collecting data

Need to schedule time to collate, analyse and report on data

Initiating change requires time and effort

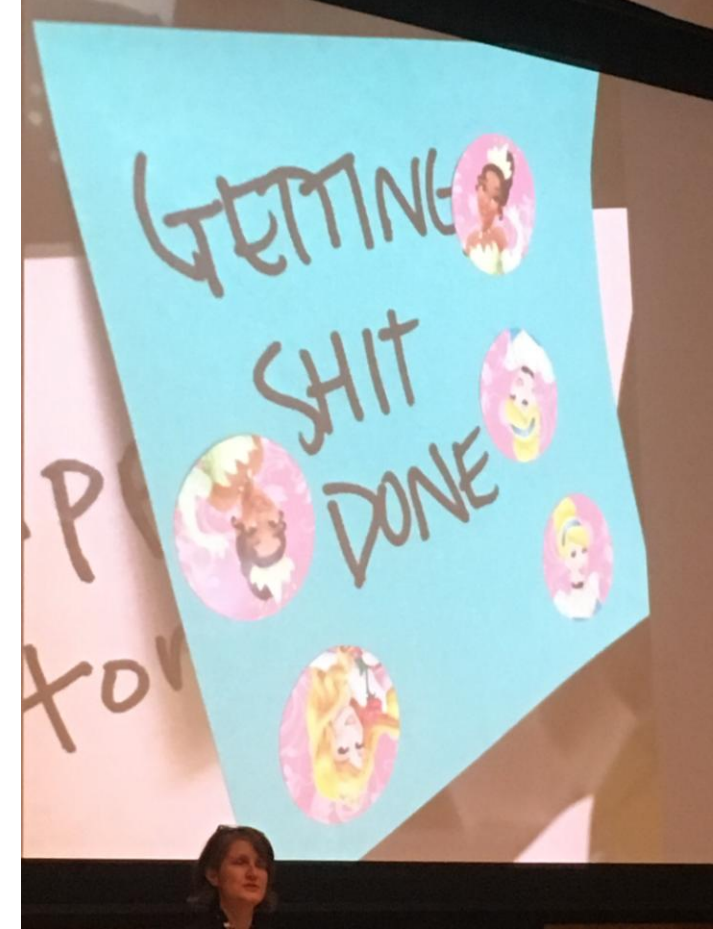# A student's perspective: what I learnt

- UX techniques used offered new perspectives
- Users are very diverse
- Seeing both sides of useability testing: emergence of themes, similarities and differences between me and other users

Plans for improvements next year

Less activity / more action

More student involvement with idea generation

Involve staff across the department / institution

Chapman, S. 2019. Working in Difficult Environments: Lessons from the World of Civic Design. UXLibsV, 19th June, Royal Holloway University

A student's perspective: improving the experience

- Overall good experience
- Little and often throughout year?
- Collab w/other students would have been interesting

Diolch / Thank you