

2020 12 14 UX-design - user experienced design and organization of research support at university libraries

Would love to talk to you Larissa about the plants and study spaces - at VU we're getting good reports from students about our plants!

- Indeed plants are the latest talk with students. Just before I joined the UVA library the library participated in a study done by the VU and Wageningen University about the effects of plants and green environments on the ability to concentrate. They packed one of our study rooms full of plants and left another similar room completely barren. Unfortunately our part of the study never really got studied but the effect it had made the library put plants in every new study room if possible. Our university even has a subscription on plants and their maintenance and by both staff and students, this is really appreciated. The results of the larger study can be found on the website of Ruimtelijke Adaptatie however they are all PDFs in Dutch:
<https://ruimtelijkeadaptatie.nl/hulpmiddelen/overzicht/factsheets-groen/>

@Larissa: This picture serves as an inspiration for the concept of a green library.

- Thank you, it really shows how with limited resource but loads of creativity you can still accomplish a lot

Green library - nice!

- Thank you!

I thought there was a study that for the positive effect of plants on humans, it does not matter if the plants in the room are real or plastic. Green is green. Also, fake plants are quite expensive. Put an empty watering can next to the flowerpot, to show it's a real plant. ;-)

- That could be a good idea! The university has a subscription with a supplier of plants who delivers, replaces and maintains all the plants as well as advice on which plants are best suited for the room. I was thinking once this study room opens up again to maybe add little signs in the plant with a bit of information on it about what kind of plant it is and which environment it is best suited. I also say some university libraries in America offer plants for loan to study with for a few hours. At one of our locations, the rooms aren't suited for permanent plants however the back-office staff there has quite a collection in their office which they often take cuttings from and give away. I have been lobbying before the lockdown to have a few of the cuttings that aren't big enough that they need to go to be available for loan for students. (currently, there are not enough staff in the back office to maintain the plants so most of them have moved into staff homes)

What kind of methods do you use to involve users?

Yes, How do you involve users in your projects?

- A whole variety, as most of my UX work, is project-based I always sit down with the project leader to discuss the project and its main question. Based on the main overarching question they want to know I pick a suitable method or even combine several. The Nielsen Norman Group has an excellent article to help you navigate the different methods out

there while reflecting on which stage the project is in.:
<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ux-research-cheat-sheet/>

@Larissa How much time did you have to realise this project?

- It depends on the project as I often fly in and out different projects offering advice or helping with the research. However for the old study room in the example, it was renovated over the summer (windows and doors fixed, everything was painted, furniture was moved in) it opened officially in September with that start of the new academic year. In prep work it took about six hours which consisted with meeting and touring the new room, writing documentation and drafting a plan, putting up the graffiti wall and several rounds of monitoring whether several issues were fixed. Once the room was open for students my colleagues added it to their daily rounds counting and monitoring for anything unusual. Because I was based in their back-office I regularly asked them for their observations. Changing and analyzing the graffiti wall took about 4 hours each time. I changed it three times but after 3 months it lost its purpose as students started to use it only for their social media promotion. I did three hours and a half observations, spend an hour and a half with a commission to decide the winner of the art project for the walls. After about 3 months of adding and moving stuff we announced success, the room was a cosy happy place where many students spend their afternoon for casual group work. I left the project with the advice to remove the large circular table and replace it with a couple of comfortable couches as many groups gathered there for casual group work. However, that never materialized as the lockdown was upon us and the building has been closed for students ever since.

Yes, even a wall painted green or a photo works (smile)

thank you very much for sharing your experience with us. I'm a UX designer working in a library too; currently mostly focused on web, but I am also a Service Designer, so this approach really helps.

- Absolutely Service Design and UX are very complementary. I often work together in workshops with the service designer from the central university administration. I am even starting to see the change in my work where I am moving more to service design as I am taking in the bigger picture of the processes and where they need to change to fix the front. UX in that view is really the practical side of Service Design but they need each other to be effective.

Which methods do you use to reach the users?

- Students are always hard to get online especially because the university constantly sends them surveys. However, students are emotionally connected to the library which when asked in person they almost always take the time to help you out. I often speak with students in the hallway or at noisy study rooms. The key with asking students when they are doing something else to state your business in one short sentence such as: "Hi I am conducting a little research on study spaces, can I ask you a few short questions about your spot."

If the research takes up more than 10 minutes but less than 20 than I loiter around the good coffee machine and offer students a free coffee for a chat.

I have even set up shop at student events or in the entrance hall where students get classical Dutch cookies in exchange for a little exercise (such as writing a love letter, doing a short test with an application, I even did an A/B inspired test with posters).

For bigger workshops or test, students always get incentives for anything taking 30 min or more of their time. For this, we use our whole communication force and if necessary extra promotion by front office desk and guerilla flyering (although the cleaning staff is not always too happy with this)

I would be interested in the first steps you took towards UX in the library. How did you start?

- I took a six-day course in UX research and design and my manager put me in contact with our new VOCUS group which was a project to see how the university was going to handle the Voice Of the Customer and User experienSe. The first project with that group was interviewing students in hallways about how the experience the university and in hindsight we did everything wrong and failed every how-to guide UX interview guides. However, it was hugely interesting and allowed for a dedicated university-wide UX-team. Within the library, the study spaces manager took a gamble because she was too busy and allowed me to do some research with the proposed redesign of one of the computer rooms which turned out to be a great success. The first year was, however, a lot of struggle and I spend most of my time talking with colleagues about what UX is and why it is important as well as experimenting with little front desk projects. If it wasn't for the freedom my manager gave to just do things it wouldn't have been possible.

Have you already evaluated the menu change in the website to what you want to do?

- Not qualitatively, but there is quantitative monitoring. I have been wanting to conduct qualitative research on the website for a long time, but I am not getting enough enthusiasm for it at the moment. This is partly because the website is currently under construction and a new work process for adaptation is being set up, which does state that adaptations must be evaluated through research.

@Larissa: Very intriguing ppt. Given the fact that you speak of UX as a people-driven concept that takes into account the whole social milieu, so do you make use of sociological concepts like actor-network theory to conceive of UX innovations from time to time.

- Yes and no. Yes because the foundation of UX lies in the application of social science, communication, psychology, information and media theory (there is a lot of overlap between these disciplines). New concepts within UX often originated from scientific research within these disciplines and within the different UX communities, the exchanges and publications do take form on a scientific level. However, no because the practical side of actually doing UX work is not necessarily scientific, you do not need to have a scientific background, you do not need control groups, you do not need representative sample sizes. It is quick and it is dirty and that is perfectly fine. I have even noticed that it also lowers the bar for support; as colleagues imagined very complicated research designs and large testing groups (that is after all, what they are used to in their work) they quickly dismiss my offer to research, however, when I explain to them that I just need an afternoon to do research and another afternoon to summarize the results they are easier to persuade. I

always offer them to come and see me in action if they have time or even to participate as if a student on other projects to gain their confidence. Also, our front office colleagues do not always have a university degree or even that background but they are very capable to do UX projects if no with a little guidance. I always say anyone can do this as long as their heart is in the right place.

Are users more satisfied with this setup?

- I assume this is still about the menu. Because we have not yet officially evaluated this, we now only have ideas that users will now get to the right page faster. Colleagues also notice that there are fewer questions at the desk and telephone about topics that can now be found on the website. The menu is part of a large clean-up of the website where we want fewer pages and more effective content. Recently I passed the Access 2020 Library Conference where two presentations are given that I used as a basis for my advice about the website: What is a library website, anyway by Amy McLay Paterson and Web librarians who do UX: We're sad, so very, very sad by Shelley Gullikson. I found the youtube videos via twitter, but I now see that their twitter account has been deleted.

Hello, please, how did you create questions for user research? How long did user research take? thank you

- I have two ways in which research questions are formed. As I work on a project basis I often get asked by a running project to help do user research. For these, I always make use of an intake talk which takes roughly 30 min in which the project leader explains what the project is doing and what they are trying to achieve, why they want to do user research and what the user research is going to add to the project. During this intake, I tend to discover the question behind the question, the true motivation of wanting user input. On basis of this, we discuss possible methods as well as restrictions such as budget and time. Afterwards, I make a summary of everything discussed as well as a formulated main research question and possible smaller questions and a research design to make sure that I have understood their wishes and that they know what to expect. The other way is while I am doing research I always catch more information than I can use for the project I am working on. If it sparks my interest or concern I always try to find out who is responsible for that part and contact them about this. This sometimes returns with a question to further investigate and sometimes falls on dead ears. However, do not lose hope once it falls on dead ears, these things either get picked up internally or come back around after some time passes when those responsible are ready for change.

Are you using the Personas concept as well?

- Not currently no. Personas, as well as customer journeys, are currently buzz words, however, setting them up is a costly business which requires a lot of time. Often when I have colleagues coming by saying they want a customer journey or personas for their project, but when I do an intake with them often interviews or short activities suffices for their questions. So think carefully and do your research before starting with personas or customer journeys. Saying that I am playing on making personas on basis of study habits of students in the library because I spend a lot of time researching study spaces and in 4 years our main library is going to move to a new building. For this, the project groups working on the new library might benefit with personas as it is hard for our current students to

imagine themselves in the new building as most of them have left university by then. Personas can also be beneficial as we currently do not have a good view of our students habits and whether they differ from each campus (we have 3 large campuses).

Hey! Thanks a lot for advocating for proper UX in libraries! My question would be how you got to the point that there actually is a librarian whose main job it is to do UX research? :)

(2 liked)

- For the start see Sina Menzel's question. Unfortunately I currently only spend 50% of my time on UX (on paper) as upper management isn't fully convinced of the benefits of UX for the library. Although I do strive to go for a full 100% UX librarian and not library service employee who does front desk and projects, the only way to convince upper management is to keep doing projects and document them well to show their effectiveness. UX works like a wave in a lake it starts small but soon it is becoming bigger and bigger. Talking and promoting also helps a lot, having colleagues vouching and promoting the UX work helps to not just be the only voice. One thing that absolutely does not work is forcing UX. The less glamorous side of UX is the hard emotional labour, often I have to break the news to people that the work they have done over the years is no longer relevant, wanted or even helpful. Nobody wants to hear that they are doing a bad job but often in the library world that is reality, so if they are not ready then they are not ready, it will come.

Have you had an extra budget for this evaluation?

- Nope, I work on a zero budget and 16 hours a week. I make use of everything and anything in the stock room and sometimes request a budget of cookies or coffee for students. If I do workshops it is often the project's budget I make use for incentives, drinks and snacks. For the study room example, I think next to the rent we pay for the room we have spend about 500 euro's which was for plants and painting supplies, but this is a very wild guess as most money came from different budgets due to collaboration with other university services. Stuff I can't do without are paper, posters, notebooks, post-its, pencils (coloured) and markers, but they are always in ample supply.

Larissa, do you have any publications or reports from your research? Thanks

- Currently, none that I can share outside my organization, however, I have been nagging my manager for an online space where I can share my stuff for colleagues and public but due to Covid, it is not currently a priority.

Btw, nice SNES and Botw decorations :)

- YAY thank you for noticing!

that is great to get the answers, thank you very much!

- Then this document will be even more interesting.

Thank you for your presentation! Do you have a comparison between the old and the new website design?

- Not on file but our library website is viewable via the Wayback machine in the internet archive. Here you can view the example with 11 main items in the menu: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200329234924/https://uba.uva.nl/home> (somewhere in 2018 the university wide new web design was implemented, which was immediately followed by a new design as the website now worked nicely on mobile (which previously was horrendous) but now looked awful on desktop. They forgot to implement their user research so the university spend about as much for the first design just to have another company come in to fix the new design. To this day we are still struggling to find a happy balance on the website)

I like the idea of having the users draw their wishes - great!

the drawings are a really neat way to get people in a different mindset too in my opinion; basically moving them to a different brain mode. that's genius.

@Nicole: Have you ever thought about implementing the idea of Third Space at the ZBW. If so, how do you intend to go about it.

- We are trying to implement a lot of this, such as neutrality and quality of stay. But the ZBW is a supra-regional library, the local libraries are only one task among many others, such as Open Science. And so the third place project is a little to big for us.

Thanks a lot for the input! Are you planning on implementing UX Research continually after this project?

- :) We're planning one project each year. Together with a new colleague for UX&Discovery System we want to take a closer, more scientific look at UX.

if we make the library for everyone the best place to be, we will never have enough study places...!

- it is not always about creating more spaces but creating the right spaces. Find out which type of spaces they are missing and why less popular spaces are not in demand. For example, I found out that when we are at 80% capacity students perceive that there are no places available, at 60% they find it busy but at >20% they feel awkward to sit down as they are not sure they are allowed to study there, especially if they haven't been there often before. So at when we are nearing 80%, we are sending front office staff to see where it is less busy and actively divert students to those spaces.

So with the current lockdown (in germany) from wednesday on, do you have ways to still lend out books? Were trying a "stabi to go" where people can order books for a timeframe, that they can then come and get at a specific time

- We're open for lending at the moment.

@Nicole: Have you ever thought about implementing the idea of Third Space at ZBW as a part of your UX agenda.

- We are trying to implement a lot of this, such as neutrality and quality of stay. But the ZBW is a supra-regional library, the local libraries are only one task among many others, such as Open Science. And so the third place project is a little to big for us.

Do you make also studies about the use of documentation, the research process of users ?

- Not actually

where do you find the methods you finally use after choosing the topic?

- We follow the methods described by andy priestner and try out the appropriate ones. (<https://www.zbw-mediataalk.eu/2020/08/user-experience-for-libraries-the-best-tools-and-methods-for-beginners/>)

impact studies? statistics on the UX? How do you do this ?

- We don't conduct impact studies at the moment. We collect the results of our projects statistically and cluster them.