User Experience in Libraries

Modern library services can be incredibly complex. Much more so than their forebears, modern librarians must grapple daily with questions of how best to implement innovative new services, while also maintaining and updating the old. The efforts undertaken are immense, but how best to evaluate their success?

In this groundbreaking new book from Routledge, library practitioners, anthropologists, and design experts combine to advocate a new focus on User Experience (or 'UX') research methods. Through a combination of theoretical discussion and applied case studies, they argue that this ethnographic and human-centred design approach enables library professionals to gather rich evidence-based insights into what is really going on in their libraries, allowing them to look beyond what library users say they do to what they actually do.

Edited by the team behind the international UX in Libraries conference, *User Experience in Libraries* will ignite new interest in a rapidly emerging and game-changing area of research. Clearly written and passionately argued, it is essential reading for all library professionals and students of Library and Information Science. It will also be welcomed by anthropologists and design professionals working in related fields.

Andy Priestner manages Cambridge University's pioneering FutureLib innovation programme, employing user experience and design thinking to develop new library services across the university. He is the founder of the UX in Libraries Conference and provides training and consultancy on the subject to institutions across Europe.

Matt Borg was an academic librarian at Sheffield Hallam University for fourteen years, during which time he was responsible for a new research-based approach to user experience. He is now a Solutions Expert at ProQuest's Ex Libris, where he works to bring new technology to libraries across Europe, as well as a freelance trainer in UX techniques.

User Experience in Libraries

Applying Ethnography and
Human-Centred Design

Edited by
Andy Priestner and Matt Borg

First published 2016
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2016 selection and editorial matter, Andy Priestner and Matt Borg;
individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Andy Priestner and Matt Borg to be identified as the author of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this title has been requested

ISBN: 9781472451002 (hbk)

ISBN: 9781472484727 (pbk)

ISBN: 9781315548609 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Contents

<i>List of tables</i>	vii
<i>List of figures</i>	viii
<i>Preface and acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>List of contributors</i>	xi
1 Uncovering complexity and detail: the UX proposition	1
ANDY PRIESTNER AND MATT BORG	
2 Using ethnographic methods to study library use	9
BRYONY RAMSDEN	
3 Embracing an ethnographic agenda: context, collaboration, and complexity	21
DONNA M. LANCLOS	
4 Holistic UX: harness your library's data fetish to solve the right problems	38
MATT BORG AND MATTHEW REIDSMA	
5 Applying human-centred design to the library experience	49
PAUL-JERVIS HEATH	
6 The why, what and how of using ethnography for designing user experience in libraries (and a few pitfalls to avoid)	68
LEAH EMARY	
7 Identifying the barriers: taskscape and the social contexts of library UX	84
ANDREW D. ASHER	
8 Illuminating study spaces at Cambridge University with spacefinder: a case study	94
ANDY PRIESTNER	

9 WhoHas?: a pilot study exploring the value of a peer-to-peer sub-lending service	103
HELEN MURPHY	
10 User experience beyond ramps: the invisible problem and the special case	108
PENNY ANDREWS	
11 Changing the dialogue: the story of the award-winning Alan Gilbert learning commons	121
ROSIE JONES AND NICOLA GRAYSON	
12 UX and a small academic library	137
MARGARET WESTBURY	
13 Understanding our students and ourselves: transformative library instruction through an ethnographic lens	145
MICHAEL COURTNEY AND CARRIE DONOVAN	
14 What makes an informal learning space?: a case study from Sheffield Hallam University	155
BEA TURPIN, DEBORAH HARROP, EDWARD OYSTON, MAURICE TEASDALE, DAVID JENKIN AND JOHN MCNAMARA	
15 Spaces for learning?: using ethnographic techniques: a case study from the University Library, Edge Hill University	173
HELEN JAMIESON	
16 Are you sitting comfortably . . . ?	178
ELIZABETH TILLEY	
17 UX in libraries: leaping the chasm	190
ANDY PRIESTNER AND MATT BORG	
<i>Index</i>	197

Tables

7.1	University profiles of Illinois Wesleyan University and Northeastern Illinois University (enrollment figures as of fall 2009)	86
7.2	Demographic characteristics of Illinois Wesleyan University and Northeastern Illinois University undergraduate students as of fall 2009	87
14.1	Typology checklist	169

Figures

4.1	University of Michigan students' 'ideal library'	39
4.2	Heat map of Grand Valley website showing where users click	42
4.3	Summon Best Bet	43
4.4	Grand Valley empathy map	46
4.5	Two sample Grand Valley personas	47
8.1	A cognitive map depicting how a Judge Business School student regularly visited multiple libraries in Cambridge for different purposes	96
8.2	Librarians and students working together at a co-design workshop	98
8.3	Modern Human's Paul-Jervis Heath and Jenny Willatt sharing the Spacefinder prototype with students at the stall on the University's Sidgwick site	99
8.4	Members of the Spacefinder project team testing the service at the English Faculty Library	101
12.1	The Wolfson College computer room	138
12.2	The Karen Spärk Jones Room	140
12.3	Two student cognitive maps depicting their 'learning landscapes'	141
12.4	Three examples of study space use in Wolfson College Library	143
14.1	Phases of learning centre redevelopment	162
14.2	Adsetts Learning Centre Level 2 learning spaces showing the additional walls and half walls	165
14.3	Furniture plan of part of Level 5 of the Adsetts Learning Centre	167
16.1	Zotero Group use for story recording	186
17.1	Technology Adoption Life Cycle	192

Preface and acknowledgements

We came up with the idea of this book at the 2014 LILAC conference, by which point we had already started to promote the inaugural UX in Libraries conference planned for the following year. There was some trepidation at the thought of putting together a book as well as the conference given how groundbreaking and interactive we were planning the latter to be – to say nothing of our respective day jobs. As soon as we started talking about such a tome, we realised how valuable it would be to gather together great stories about UX in libraries – stories which would advocate for more ethnography and design thinking, encourage discussion and debate, and help kick-start library UX projects, big and small. Whether we have achieved our aim or not we will have to wait and see, but the contributors to this volume remain convinced that in today's highly complex library and information world we must adopt user experience research methods to observe, listen to and question our users if we are to understand them more fully and offer services that they need.

We are hugely grateful to all of our contributors, not only for their mindful chapters, but also for their patience – suffice to say we embarked on this book in different jobs to the ones we have now. Thanks also to Dymphna Evans for readily agreeing to publish the book and immediately recognising the need for it in the library literature. One person whose name should probably be on the cover alongside ours is Marisa Priestner, who proved indispensable as eagle-eyed second proofer, queen of reference checking and manuscript preparation – thank you!

Matt's acknowledgements

I'd like to thank those I've worked with in all walks of my professional life. Thanks to Andy for being a genuine friend, supporter and collaborator. Above all, thanks to my family; Rachel, Dylan and Oz. You are, as they say, the best.

Andy's acknowledgements

I'd like to thank Bryony Ramsden who I hold directly responsible for igniting my ethnography flame, and Donna 'force of nature' Lanclos for fanning it. Grateful thanks also to everyone who made UXLibs such a success, especially Georgina

x *Preface and acknowledgements*

Cronin who shared most of the pain. I'd also like to thank her and Ange Fitzpatrick for starting the UX journey with me, for singing with me in the office and for otters. As for Matt – back atcha fella!

Matt Borg
Andy Priestner

Contributors

Andy Priestner (editor) is a freelance trainer and consultant specialising in user experience, social media, storytelling, marketing, communications and team-building, working with libraries (academic and public), universities and the private sector in the UK and mainland Europe. He originated the UX in Libraries conference after embarking on several ethnographic research projects at Cambridge University's Judge Business School, where he was Head of Information & Library Services between 2007 and 2015. His interest and expertise in user experience has most recently led to his appointment as manager of Cambridge University Library's FutureLib innovation programme, which employs ethnography and human-centred design to explore and deliver innovative new services and products across Cambridge's many libraries. This is his second co-edited academic volume; the first, with Elizabeth Tilley, was *Personalising Library Services in Higher Education* (Ashgate, 2012). Andy was President of the European Business Schools Librarians Group (2014–2015) and Chair of the Business Librarians Association (2006–2010). He is a trained LEGO Serious Play facilitator and blogs regularly as 'Constructivist'.

Matt Borg (editor) is a librarian, trainer, geek and troublemaker. For over 14 years he worked in academic libraries in a variety of roles. At Sheffield Hallam University he was an academic librarian, where he coded and designed the library website and was a lecturer in the Business School on information management. He also co-created the Information and Creativity in Libraries conference (I2C2). His passion for UX enabled him to initiate a research-based approach to user engagement at Sheffield Hallam, focusing on interaction with library tools. This led to a number of talks and keynotes on the topic, and an invitation to collaborate with Andy by joining the organising committee for the UX in Libraries conference. In September 2014 he moved to ProQuest Workflow Solutions. He works with libraries across Europe on library technologies including discovery systems and library services platforms. Previous academic publications include chapters on responsive web design for libraries ('Best of Both Worlds' in *M-libraries 4: From Margin to Mainstream*, Facet, 2013) and information literacy and discovery systems (*The Road to Information Literacy: Librarians as Facilitators of Learning*, IFLA, 2012). Matt is also a part-time freelance

trainer and a LEGO Serious Play facilitator, and can often be found trawling his kids' LEGO sets for neat pieces to use.

Penny Andrews is a writer, performer, para-athlete and librarian. She'd call herself a polymath, but that would imply a greater objective level of success at these things, when she's probably better known for deconstructing popular culture and engaging in professional debate via social media. She managed not to swear or stutter that one time she performed on BBC Radio 4. *Doctor Who* is one of Penny's special interests (she's autistic, so that implies a very special level of interest), but she can often be persuaded to talk about libraries, Open Access to research, accessibility and other slightly less cultish topics.

Andrew D. Asher is the Assessment Librarian at Indiana University Bloomington, where he leads the libraries' qualitative and quantitative assessment programs and conducts research on the information practices of students and faculty. His most recent projects have examined how 'discovery' search tools influence undergraduates' research processes, how students locate, evaluate, and utilise information on research assignments, and how university researchers manage and preserve their research data. From 2008–2010, Andrew was the Lead Research Anthropologist for the Ethnographic Research in Illinois Academic Libraries (ERIAL) Project (<http://www.erialproject.org/>), a two-year study of student research processes at five Illinois universities and the largest ethnographic study of libraries undertaken to date. An ethnographer and anthropologist by vocation, Andrew holds a PhD in sociocultural anthropology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and has written and presented widely on using ethnography in academic libraries, including the co-edited volume, *College Libraries and Student Cultures* (ALA Editions, 2012). He is also currently writing a methodological handbook for librarians on developing and implementing anthropological and other qualitative research methods in libraries.

Michael Courtney is the Outreach and Engagement Librarian for the Indiana University Libraries. Michael is also an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Information and Library Science, School of Informatics and Computing (IUB) where he teaches the reference course. Prior to coming to IUB, he has worked in many facets of librarianship, in both public and technical service positions within public and academic libraries over the past 20 years. Current areas of scholarship and publishing include future trends in academic reference service, library history, instructional design in online learning, and the connections between service learning and libraries. He credits his formative years at Barningham CEVC Primary School (Suffolk) as the foundation for a lifetime of inquiry.

Carrie Donovan is Head of Teaching & Learning for the Indiana University Libraries, where she works with students, faculty and instructors to connect the libraries to student learning. Carrie's contribution to information literacy and learning assessment is made evident through her publications and presentations

on the topic, as well as her engagement in professional organisations. She currently serves as a facilitator and curriculum designer for the Association of College & Research Libraries' Assessment in Action initiative. At IU, Carrie advocates for information literacy assessment across the curriculum to ensure the libraries' centrality to disciplinary discourse and student learning. Carrie's own research areas of interest include the review and reward of librarians' teaching, student-centred learning for library instruction, and critical information literacy. Carrie received her Master of Library Science degree from Indiana University.

Leah Rosenblum Emary is an American librarian who has worked in libraries in Brussels, Berlin, San Francisco and San Diego. Her main research interests are information literacy, user-centred design in libraries, and scholarly communication. She is now an Academic Liaison Librarian at York St John University in the UK, where she lives with her husband and two sons.

Nicola Grayson has worked in academic libraries since 2005. In 2012 she secured a post at the Alan Gilbert Learning Commons which is part of the University of Manchester Library. Nicola is currently a part of the Learning Development Team, responsible for developing the award-winning 'My Learning Essentials' Open Training Programme. She focuses on academic skills and broader student support in her work, designing and delivering workshops, and is also responsible for the library's team of 'Student Rovers' and their research. In 2015 Nicola completed her doctorate in the subject area of philosophy and her research centred heavily on the communication of ideas in the works of Immanuel Kant. In her current position she contributes to key library and strategic projects and works generally to promote and sustain student skills support at the University of Manchester.

Paul-Jervis Heath leads the design studio at Modern Human, a design practice and innovation consultancy. He and his team of researchers, designers and technologists apply human-centred design to imagine future services and meaningful digital products. He is a designer and innovation consultant with 17 years' experience of helping companies make fundamental changes to their business by combining design thinking with business strategy and cutting-edge technology. He has led design on a wide variety of projects including in-car information systems for driverless cars, smart home appliances, future libraries and retail stores of the future, as well as many multichannel services and digital products. Paul works closely with the University of Cambridge on their FutureLib programme, which explores the future of academic libraries at the institution. He continues to be involved in designing future libraries around the changing needs of their patrons through a variety of design and strategy projects.

Helen Jamieson is Customer Services Manager within Learning Services at Edge Hill University, Lancashire, UK. Her current role involves overall responsibility for the libraries' learning spaces as well as managing and developing all

physical and virtual enquiry services. Helen has worked in higher education libraries for nearly 20 years. Her roles have been varied and have included managing services for distance learners and delivering learner support. Recent management roles have focused more on operational and strategic responsibilities in relation to learning spaces and service provision. A particular interest for Helen is the area of customer service and she is the service lead for the Customer Service Excellence award.

Rosie Jones has worked in academic libraries since 2001. In 2011 she moved into a specialist role, project-managing the development and implementation of the award-winning Alan Gilbert Learning Commons at the University of Manchester Library. After the success of this project her remit grew to planning, initiating and managing a wider range of complex library projects covering all library spaces and any plans for library management of a learning and study space. She is now Associate Director of Library Services at Liverpool John Moores University, where she continues to develop her expertise in this area through the new Copperas Hill development, an ambitious project to create a community for learning and knowledge in the heart of Liverpool city centre.

Donna M. Lanclos is an anthropologist working with ethnographic methods and analysis to inform and change policy in higher education, in particular in and around libraries, learning spaces, and teaching and learning practices. She is Associate Professor for Anthropological Research at the J. Murrey Atkins Library at UNC Charlotte. Her research includes how students and staff engage with the nature of information and knowledge, how ethnography and anthropology can be used as tools in academic development and can influence policy and practice in higher education, physical and virtual spaces in academia, and how technology impacts learning, teaching and research. She collaborates with librarians, engineers, anthropologists, sociologists, education technology professionals, architects and designers. Donna has conducted anthropological research on academic practice in libraries not only at UNC Charlotte, but also University College, London. She collaborates with colleagues in the US and the UK, investigating the nature of learning landscapes and academic taskscapes, so as to better contextualize the behaviors that take place and problems that erupt in library spaces. She has conducted workshops for professional development at Imperial College, Kingston University, NUI Galway, Parsons the New School (NYC) and Carnegie Mellon University. Details about this work and other projects can be found at <http://www.donnalanclos.com>.

Helen Murphy is Assistant Librarian at the English Faculty Library, University of Cambridge, where she co-runs the library's ever-expanding teaching programme and takes a leading role in new initiatives, especially those that involve fabricating spurious excuses for the rest of the staff to do fancy dress. She likes talking to students and academics, fixing broken things, her cats, watching *Murder, She Wrote*, and avoiding writing biographies like this one. UX appeals to her because it's about making libraries better for the always complex and

often brilliant human beings who might use them and because – until now at least – it hasn't involved writing any biographies at all.

Bryony Ramsden is a Subject Librarian at the University of Huddersfield, and has worked in libraries since the late 1990s. She was research assistant on the first phase of the 'Library Impact Data Project' (<https://library3.hud.ac.uk/blogs/lidp/>) which proved a correlation between library use and level of degree attained. She has also worked as a research assistant on an internally funded library project investigating post-occupancy informal learning space use. The results of the project led to her current research for her PhD on user behaviour in academic libraries, which utilises ethnographic methods to collect the data from a number of universities.

Matthew Reidsma is the Web Services Librarian at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. He is the co-founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Weave: Journal of Library User Experience*, a peer-reviewed, open access journal for Library User Experience professionals. He is the author of *Responsive Web Design for Libraries* published by ALA TechSource, and the forthcoming *Customizing Library Vendor Tools for Better UX* from Libraries Unlimited. He speaks about library websites, user experience, and usability around the world. *Library Journal* named him a 'Mover and Shaker' in 2013, which led to many unfortunate dance-related jokes in the Reidsma household. He writes about libraries and technology at <http://matthewreidsma.com>.

Elizabeth (Libby) Tilley has successfully managed both a science library and an arts library at the University of Cambridge and has been regarded, in both places, as an expert in the subject. This expertise has come about by being embedded in the life of the discipline, observing what students and researchers 'do', and subsequently leading and adapting library services to better suit user need. A PGCE from an earlier life, librarianship qualifications, and being a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy have contributed to her focus on teaching in addressing the user experience. She currently also manages the School of Arts and Humanities libraries at Cambridge. However, tea@three at the English Library remains her self-confessed number-one opportunity for building relationships with students. A recipient of tea and cake commented recently: 'Thank you for being such a good listener and discussant; I really appreciate your sense of humour and taste in cakes.' It's clearly all about the stories.

Bea Turpin, Deborah Harrop, Edward Oyston, Maurice Teasdale and John McNamara were all colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University and members of the learning centres redevelopment project team. This team, along with others, was responsible for the redevelopment project which radically changed and updated the way learning centre spaces function and feel. The team was also responsible for developing the evidence-based approach which underpinned the project. Edward and Maurice led the project, provided the strategic vision and, working with John in the Estates department, ensured the project's successful implementation. Bea and Deborah led the research into learners' preferences.

David Jenkin, Design Director at Alexi Marmot Associates (AMA), worked in a collaborative way with the SHU team to develop the learning centres. He is a highly experienced architect known for his design and planning of interior space. His skill is as an enabler, matching the complex and changing requirements of users to the building design, recognising the need to be pragmatic whilst maintaining a vision for possible future needs.

Margaret Westbury is the Librarian for Wolfson College, University of Cambridge. She has worked in a variety of libraries and library services during her career, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the University of California at San Diego, and Jones International University (a 100% online university) in various capacities, most of them technology related. She has a passion for UX, using social media and creating usable library spaces, and is keen to find ways to make the academic libraries relevant for twenty-first-century researchers. She is currently working on a PhD in technology-enhanced learning which explores the implications of new educational technologies on library services and spaces.

3 Embracing an ethnographic agenda

Context, collaboration, and complexity

Donna M. Lanclos

The decision to incorporate ethnography and other qualitative methodologies into the work of libraries can have a transformative effect on institutional practices. Adopting such an approach signals the conviction that institutional spaces should be comprehensible, and not just to insiders. Qualitative approaches to understanding library users provide opportunities, provide space, give chances for breath, reflections, possibilities, and perhaps most important of all, for persuasion.

Libraries are portals today – as they have always been – to content, to information. They are also increasingly locations that provide access to people and tools and places for the creation of something new. As locations for collaboration – among students, among staff, among community members – libraries stake a claim to something new, and something terrifically difficult to quantify. Universities are not just in the business of reproducing their faculty, nor should they be, not any more than they are simply vocational training grounds. Thus, libraries must be about access for all, not about the narrow range of users who will go on to be professional scholars.

Here I discuss traditional usability (UX) work as a subset of ethnographic practices, as one particular way among many of eliciting qualitative data about user behavior, and more importantly as an avenue to transforming institutional practices and increasing the role of library voices in shaping such practices. Taking a policy stance grounded in qualitative research requires reflection, backing away from assumptions and accepting the risk that what is revealed might be uncomfortable or contradict long-standing practices and beliefs about user needs and priorities. Institutions willing to take on those complications can thrive. Institutions that want the publicity that comes from ethnography but not the work, not the ambiguity, and not the full-time commitment will fall short. They will miss the opportunity to transform their practices and fail to find new ways of making arguments about how and why to spend money, resources, and time effectively. However, a methodological turn to the qualitative is not enough; insight also requires an openness to an anthropological worldview, and a willingness to not-know on the way to greater comprehension (Harouni, 2009, 2013; Stommel, 2014).

Ethnography is literally ‘writing culture’ (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), but is often taken to mean the cluster of techniques that researchers engage in to gather detailed descriptions of everyday behavior. Ethnographic techniques can

include but are not limited to participant (or immersive) observation, structured and unstructured interviews, visually based instruments such as photo diaries, and mapping techniques intended to elicit people's interpretations of landscapes and social structures. They provide ways for researchers to gain insight into the logics behind people's behavior by situating their choices in broader social and cultural contexts.

Via ethnographic work, we gather stories, we gather what anthropologists call 'ethnographic authority' – the authority to speak that is grounded in 'being there', in effective representations of our users' realities, because we did the work. Stories can be ambiguous and powerful. Stories can encourage us to learn more. Stories, taken together, can begin to reveal patterns. Those patterns emerge from a better and better known past and present, as revealed in the qualitative data. Interpreting such qualitative data is risky, and opens us up for uncomfortable moments, debates, and possibilities that we might be wrong. I would argue that it is less important to accurately predict changes, for example, than to be able to recognize what is a change, as it is happening, and not be so locked into 'The Way We Do Things' that it's impossible to respond to changes. This is what 'agile' should mean; libraries that purchase furniture, or build a website, or take any other decision thinking that they are establishing something that will last 10 years, cannot respond as effectively to change as those who accept that they may need to change things in 6 months, a week, a year. Perhaps if institutions think decisions should stand for 10 years it does feel more important to predict the future. But a better path is to be plugged in to the present, so that responding quickly to conditions on the ground is more possible, and more effective. 'Agile' then comes from a genuine connection to what is going on, a recognition that sometimes our understanding of what is going on is incomplete, or incorrect, or both, and then a willingness to act on that recognition.

The problem of library legibility, visibility, and voice

Historically, libraries in Western culture have been heavily mediated spaces, with collections/materials as well as buildings that were configured to facilitate that mediation – gates, desks, collections behind doors that could only be accessed by the professionals. Academic buildings, libraries included, are not generally laid out for the benefit of the people who will be using them. They are designed by architects hoping to make a statement about themselves and the institution they are working for; the rooms are numbered by facilities managers who organize the space according to the work their staff need to do. The locations of the buildings are often determined as much by where available space to build exists as by where it would 'make sense' to have the buildings constructed. The ways in which such buildings as libraries, classrooms, and student unions (among others) 'make sense' are not uniform, and depend very much on who is navigating those buildings, and for what purpose. We are now in a time when people are increasingly accustomed to using digital tools (such as Google Maps) and mobile devices (like smartphones) to navigate physical spaces. When they enter most academic

buildings, those expectations are thwarted. Library buildings (and, not incidentally, library websites) are traditionally not terrifically intuitive, except to people who have been trained to use them. Unfamiliar buildings and websites can read as unfriendly. And places perceived as unfriendly swiftly become invisible, as they are avoided in favor of places that are familiar and comfortable, such as cafés, bookstores, and the open web.

What makes libraries visible to students? Research indicates that it is not librarians, or library websites (Connaway, White and Lanclos, 2011; Connaway, Hood et al., 2013; Connaway, Lanclos and Hood, 2013; Schoenfeld, 2014). Library resources and the people who work within the library are made visible when attention is paid to the ways that people already search, the cues that they are looking for, and the conventions of the open web. Leveraging relationships that people already have with each other, with their instructors, and with familiar digital tools and places such as Wikipedia, Google, Facebook and Twitter can then make all of the different possibilities within libraries (as spaces, as collections, as communities) visible in the wider web. For libraries to be visible to their communities, discovery cannot depend on prior knowledge of specialized systems. Rather, those specialized systems should become natural extensions of the networks people bring with them to university, and build and extend while they are there.

Library websites are perceived as useful or usable according to the vernacular of the wider web, not just our own local environments. This is likewise true for our physical places – useful places are comprehensive and navigable, not just by expert users but by most people who walk through the doors. Library spaces become more visible as they are more easily discoverable, whether it is through face-to-face opportunities or digital proxies such as virtual tours. Tours, events, classes, and digital tools such as wayfinders and study room booking software can be leveraged to make the library building familiar and more friendly long before students need to use it (and the resources within) during exams, research projects, and collaborative projects. And the tools and spaces in libraries can be made familiar by paying attention to the kinds of places, libraries or otherwise, that attract people. In the same way that the conventions of the open web should inform library (or any institutional) web design, the conventions of comfortable productive ‘third places’ (public gathering places that are neither homes nor institutions, but in between [Oldenburg, 1989]), such as cafés, can help libraries feel accessible to people who have never been in academic spaces before. When I collect photo diaries from undergraduate students, one common response to ‘favorite place in the library’ or ‘most useful place in the library’ is a photo of the library café. This contrasts with the many photos of library stacks filled with books submitted in response to ‘most confusing place in the library’ or ‘least favorite’. If people think there is a café in the library, they have something comforting and known to ease them towards the rest of the less familiar components.

There are increasing numbers of libraries in higher education whose agendas have been taken over by information technology (IT), or dictated by central administration, rather than being approached as partners in the work of the university. But traditionally, library reporting and analytics are largely responses to

interlibrary queries and library-centered accreditation processes. Library staff are talking in tight loops to staff in other libraries, or to themselves, with and about their data (ACRL, 2010). The near-frantic levels of quantitative data collecting are therefore going into reports that may or may not get to the people who libraries need to influence. These data reports are the equivalent of LibGuides: tools used by librarians that primarily communicate with other librarians – even if, in the case of LibGuides and quantitative data, they are assembled with the intention of also communicating outside of the library. At the same time, people who run and work in libraries are worried (and rightfully so) about getting the right sort of attention, generally in the form of resources, from their universities.

The kind of quantitative data traditionally collected by libraries has not proved effective for talking outside of the library, not for reaching the people they need to reach within and outside of their institutions. The problem of library visibility is evident from the persistent anxious discourses about the Future of Libraries, the Threats to Libraries (especially the Threats to Funding of Libraries), and the Utility of MLIS Degrees, and the problem of the lack of library voices in higher education policy made evident in the examples of academic libraries being radically cut, or taken over by non-library parts of the university – their voices muffled if not silenced altogether. Too many libraries have lost their voices, or are only using them to talk to individuals or parts of the institution who cannot help with their agenda. Buildings being built or spaces being planned on university campuses powerfully resemble things that I would call ‘libraries’, but many are not called that. There are ‘hubs’ and ‘learning centers’ and ‘commons’. ‘Library’ is a word that has associations that some people think should be left behind, but part of the power of the word library is that it can mean so much:

Books. Quiet. Shelves. Distraction. Friends. Computers. Space. Librarians.
Refuge. Anxiety. Café. Printing. Scholarship. Community.

Qualitative data and the research agendas that yield such data can provide paths towards a stronger voice for libraries in higher education, and more effective policies on behalf of library users. Qualitative approaches point the way to building the relationships necessary to demonstrate and further develop the important role of academic libraries within higher education. Libraries cannot build relationships by counting things. Rather, connections emerge from work, with collaboration, from being embedded into the work of higher education. This is work that has always been done within libraries, and it is more important than ever to make that work visible and explicitly connected.

The complicated strengths of qualitative research techniques

Qualitative research in libraries has two primary purposes: to improve user experiences and to more effectively communicate with those who fund and otherwise support libraries. Qualitative research is messy, in execution as well as in the data

it yields. The stories it can tell may be unclear or contradictory. Paradoxically, this can lead to simpler policies, less messy procedures, a clarity of configurations born from a sense of the sheer variety of human behavior, and the need for flexibility to accommodate that variability. Telling stories, using the data to tell stories, can sound trivial, and can be rejected as ‘anecdotal’. But there is a power in stories, in their relationships with one another, their resonance with a lived reality that is not effectively represented in spreadsheets and bar charts. Qualitative data gives us a chance to represent our patrons as people. This is not trivial. Numbers get in the way of our recognizing that we work with people. Being forced to transform human experiences into numbers by the institutional assessment requirements is not just awkward and time-consuming, but frequently does not facilitate effective arguments for human-centered, grounded policy.

Qualitative practitioners such as anthropologists should ideally be embedded in libraries as full-time members of staff: capturing, collecting, collating and disseminating those stories is far more possible in a situation where one is consistently present, capable of seeing things as they happen, capable of absorbing and collecting more context. This is the model for my own position at UNC Charlotte, and was for Nancy Foster’s position at Rochester (Foster and Gibbons, 2007). Allocating a full-time position to such work can be a challenge to resources, but can yield benefits in voice, in influence, and ultimately in potential for more and different resources in the long term.

For example, on the ground floor of my workplace, the J. Murrey Atkins Library, ethnographic methods helped give us the information we needed to tell effective stories to administrators about the kinds of spaces we needed to configure for our students (Lanclos, 2015). Taking photos of student workspaces in the library revealed the amount of ‘spread’ they required for all of the materials that they have with them while studying: books, tablets, laptops, paper notebooks, phones, calculators, food and drinks. Observations on the main floors of the library revealed that students working together at computer tables didn’t have enough space to sit, and could not easily share materials on one regular desktop computer screen. Photo diaries we collected over several semesters revealed that students do not just sit at desks in task chairs when they are writing research papers, but sit on couches, or even in their beds. Academic workspaces are varied outside of the library, but were fairly homogenous in Atkins pre-2009: there was only one couch, and the two modes were either at hard furniture (tables or carrels) or in soft (single) seating with coffee tables. Group study was only possible in a few bookable rooms. Our new ground-floor study commons has varied types of furniture; bookable spaces for small and large groups; and many screens with integrated computers, so that students can either plug in their own device or walk into the library without any technology and still be able to do the work they need for their classes. Glass walls throughout ensure that students can see the work that their peers at the university are doing, providing a visual for the academic community of practice of which they are members. The library has become more usable, in adding this space that did not exist before. The students have more access, institutionally, to the resources they need for their studies.

Institutions that do not have the resources to dedicate a full-time position to qualitative data collection and analysis would do well to carefully consider how they can incorporate qualitative practices into the workflow of their current staff – what are they currently doing that is less effective than qualitative approaches? What more can be gained, substituting or supplementing current library work for some of these techniques? In addition to providing an opportunity for more and better learning places for our students, the attention paid to UX and ethnography has made Atkins Library, at this point 5 years after we started with agendas, an authoritative voice in our university around physical and digital policies. The library is not just in the library anymore. Our engagement with these methods has given us a voice that is heard, a place at the table, and resources for our community.

Usability as a motive

Why do we care about usability? Institutions can care about usability in the service of selling more things to more people. They can care about the behavioral logic of their ‘customers’ so that there are increasing levels of satisfaction with what is bought or consumed, and also a loyalty to institutions who provide good experiences. That is the marketing approach: ‘Try us, you’ll like it, we’re easy.’

Usability is a perspective, a philosophy, a conviction that systems and buildings and signs can be created that are self-evident, widely intelligible, and do not require mediation. Being motivated by usability signals a concern for access – if the environment surrounding resources is not usable, then it does not matter how high a quality the resources are, they will not benefit any user, because they will not be engaging with those resources. If patrons cannot figure out how to navigate EBSCO, it does not matter how much libraries have paid for access to the peer-reviewed articles in those databases; the articles will not be used.

Higher education is a public service. Universities are portals of information, and resources for people who need more than information. Education should ideally facilitate the development of people who can use information effectively and think critically about information. Such people need partners in navigating the information landscape – libraries can be those partners, and can also contribute to building the information landscape so that it is as accessible and usable as possible.

If libraries are about access, then usability is a crucial part of that mission. One has to only think about all of the things public libraries are used for – medical knowledge, legal knowledge, job seeking, psychological seeking, social reaching-out. Some things people will not do if they have to be mediated; they will just give up. Making sure that library resources are accessible is the reason that it is important to take the risk of de-centering our expertise, to allow people who are not librarians to speak to what libraries mean for them, independent of our individual or institutional intentions. This is not to say that libraries should give up their voices, but that they make an awareness of the priorities of all of the people using their physical and digital spaces a central part of policy discussions, and so inform the library voice with a grounded knowledge of the priorities and behaviors of their academic community.

Usability is about more than our own places and how they work, and also far more than the digital. It is about the places our users go, and what they need to do in the course of their academic work, and how our resources do or don't articulate well with those environments. The persistence of books as resources that students want and need (either as library resources or bought to own) is in part because of the places where they need to work – not necessarily with Wi-Fi, not necessarily with electricity, not necessarily with the resources themselves to buy the devices that require Wi-Fi and electricity, and that can also serve as e-readers. To what degree can buses and trains be seen as learning spaces? Why or why not? If you are concerned about usability of websites on mobile devices, are you paying attention to whether or not people have access to mobile devices at all? Do they have access to the textbooks they need? What impact do electronic texts have on access? Usability is implicated in all of these questions.

For example, when we in Atkins Library committed to only buying electronic book packages that are unlimited use and DRM-free, that was a decision that facilitated access for students and instructors to materials they use for teaching and learning (<http://library.uncc.edu/etextbooks>). At least 100 textbooks per semester are available through the library, at no additional cost to our students or faculty, because of proactive policy decisions around vendor contracts and electronic resources. Simply making sure that the contracts allowed for the sort of use of these materials that we know our patrons need is paying attention to usability and to access.

Effective usability: time-wasting and accessibility

Digital spaces such as library websites are operational spaces where information has been organized according to principles that are likely to be unfamiliar to non-expert users (Kim Wu and Lanclos, 2011). Even outside of academia, the need for attention to usability looms large in an environment of increasing expectations by everyday users of those digital spaces for easy navigability and intuitive content – think about the difference between the interfaces of the Google search page and that of EBSCOhost. Corporate and commercial spaces engage in wayfinding practices to drive their customers into places that the company wants them to go. In IKEA, for example (Potente and Salvini, 2009, pp. 38–41), the path is clear, and laden with things the people could buy; the directional pathmaking is masterful, clearly intended to walk customers past as much merchandise as possible, so they can be maximally encouraged to purchase something. Recall, too, that the motives of entities such as Google and IKEA are not the same things that motivate libraries (increased access to knowledge) but by increased access, ultimately, to money.

Those working within academic spaces should not be in the business of directing people to where we think they should go, or in profiting from the information we gather about their behavior, but we should be invested in helping people find where they need to be. Individuals enter university spaces with their own priorities. Effective usability, in this context, is about allowing students and faculty to

find their own way to the resources important to them, swiftly and effectively, in physical and digital environments alike.

If our systems are so complicated and our buildings so illegible that they require mediation, that people walking into our libraries or encountering our web environments for the first time have to come to us for help in navigating links or hallways, we are wasting everyone's time. We are wasting time being tour guides, traffic cops, gatekeepers, that could otherwise be spent having conversations, picking things apart, writing things, producing content, analyzing thoughts, or making something new.

Universities and their libraries have a responsibility to be accessible. The purpose of education is not to produce people to work at jobs. It is to produce effective citizens, engaged human beings, people not just capable of independent thought but people who revel in it, who are so good at it that they come up with solutions to problems, that we make the world around us a more engaging, more constructive, more supportive, better place. If the only people who can comprehend what we are doing are the people who already know the ways to navigate complicated institutional places, then we are not educating, but sorting.

Critical thinking happens in groups – distributed critical cognition about value and authority happens all around us. It is particularly visible on the web in the form of reviews of things such as books, movies, and products to purchase, but is also present in blog conversations about theory, in Twitter discussions of policy, in Facebook fights about inappropriate jokes and memes. Libraries and universities provide nodes where people can come together to think, to argue, to consume with an eye to produce. Usability study techniques can help us think about the kind of environments that provide shortcuts to that production of content. UX approaches can facilitate thinking about physical and digital places that don't get in the way but that accelerate the process of scholarship, of communication, of effective policy, of education.

The most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it.

(Weiser, 1991, p. 78; see also discussion in
 Dourish and Bell [2011], especially pp. 9–11)

Ethnography as a method

An effective ethnographic agenda in libraries should be about the comprehension of behavior whether it involves the library or not. Ethnographic practices, anthropological understandings of what is going on, can help situate the very idea of usability, and in particular help us realize that even notions of 'usable' are culturally constructed. In terms of usability, ethnographic techniques can help answer broader questions than whether the website is usable or intuitive. Once engaged with ethnography, we can ask: What are people doing when they talk about 'intuitive' design? Intuitive for whom? What constitutes 'intuitive'? Who defines it? What is that experience, of feeling something 'intuitive'? In a slightly

different context, we can ask: What is studying? Is it the same as 'learning'? Who is in charge? Is that a meaningful question? What are the power structures we can reveal by tracing the actions and reactions of students, faculty, and staff in academic spaces? What is made, what is observable? What can we see, what needs more work before it can be shown?

What happens when we approach Google not as a competitor to the library, but as a made thing, a result of cultural processes? (Beer, 2009; Asher, Duke and Wilson, 2013). What happens when we see that students are writing research papers on subway cars using their phones? (Smale and Regalado, 2014).

Ethnographic approaches necessarily explode usability out of the library into the spaces where people are, because the things that people do in the library are only part of the wide range of things that they need to do, and are often informed by those other things (schedules, people, other commitments, etc.). This is very effectively revealed in cognitive mapping exercises (Asher and Miller, 2011, p. 14), wherein students and faculty are invited to draw their academic landscapes. In 6 minutes they produce a color-coded sketch (occasionally a list) of all of the places they inhabit or visit when doing their academic work. At this point I have collected maps from the UK and the US, and in each case participants map the library as part of a larger system (Gourlay, Lanclos and Oliver, 2015). An undergraduate map from Charlotte, North Carolina, shows the dotted lines of the movement of a student from her apartment, to her friend's house, to the fast-food restaurant (which has free 24-hour Wi-Fi) near where she works, to the university campus, and the classroom buildings where she lurks in hallways between lectures until she has time to settle into the Student Union for a break and more studying (thanks to more Wi-Fi), or the library for the same, depending on where her next class is located on campus. A map from a faculty member shows not only all of the different university libraries in the Bloomsbury area of London that he frequents, but also the chair and footstool where he sits to work at home (along with his cat), his office at the university, the nearby café where he meets with his graduate students, and the universities in the US where he does archival research. Each location mapped is visited because of a nested series of motivations, including the need for resources (information, archival materials), space (for sitting, reading), and people (meeting with professors, fellow students, colleagues); to work, to eat, to access Wi-Fi, to have a place to land between classes when the commute to the university is long and it is not easy to get home in the middle of the day.

Think about the difference between a map of a university and the kinds of subjective representations of places and connections yielded by cognitive maps. Such maps reveal all the things we cannot see if we limit our observations to institutional spaces. The mapping exercises reveal that libraries are places within a network of places, institutions embedded in larger structures. Being aware of the wider context in which libraries exist can help us realize, for example, that solutions to problems that do not originate in the library cannot be offered only by the library and hope to succeed. If there is a general shortage of study space on campus, that might be revealed in the library, but might not be solvable by the library working alone, particularly on large university campuses where it can be hard for students

to easily get back to the library from their lecture hall, on their way to another lecture or tutorial. If there is a problem with printing on campus, it may be particularly visible in the library (particularly when end-of-semester papers are due), but it is seldom possible for the library working on its own to solve that problem, either. Once we see the network, it is possible for libraries to call on other parts of the network to work towards a solution. But without seeing the network, it is too easy to assume that libraries exist in isolation, and have no resources beyond themselves to address problems, or to reach for new resources for new initiatives.

Ethnographic approaches to usability studies can draw attention to the ways that people think with tools, and address the need to attend to the play of the physical and digital together. In his work on embodied cognition, anthropologist Kirsh (2001) describes situations when ‘we literally think with things’. Behavior studies can capture the moment when thinking occurs with (or is stifled by) things – with places, with tools, with websites.

People can often realize the potential of certain tools and resources only after they are using them. It is hard to think about what will happen in the abstract, when it is in fact the whole experience that is relevant. Asking people to think about ‘the digital’ or ‘technology’ and asking them to describe it as separate from their everyday lived reality ignores how integrated it is into their physical relationship with the world. When I interview students about technology, they spend very little time before switching over to talking about tasks, or people, or places. It is necessary to think about digital and physical places and tools together because that is how people experience them. Counting the number of students who have mobile devices, how many times laptops circulate from the library, or the number of hits on particular web pages does not capture this holistic experience of digital tools in physical places. Qualitative methods, some of them ethnographic such as observation and participation, can yield a holistic perspective, beyond whether something is either used, or indeed ‘usable’. People perceive the world as a related whole, and institutions require techniques such as those in the ethnographic toolkit to reveal these perceptions, and make them part of the information available to help inform policy decisions.

Asking questions

In his discussion of learning spaces, Bennett (2007, pp. 14–15) points to the importance of persistently asking questions, and to careful attention to the actual practices of people in spaces, regardless of the intent that went into the design of spaces. One cannot mistake the intent of the architect for the actual behaviors that then take place in the places post-construction. Studying and other academic practices are embedded in particular cultural histories. Libraries are rife with controlling processes (Nader, 1997); they are cultural institutions infused with very particular senses of what scholarship and studying looks and sounds like, what the proper material environments are for such activities, and what resources should be provided by institutions (and what should not be). Rules around noise and quiet, consumption of food and drink, occupancy of space (When is the library closed?

Does it close? Who is allowed in? Who is prevented?) are all performances of institutional control of library spaces. These rules are shot through with power: Who determines what is quiet? What is noise? Who makes the decision about who is allowed in the library?

Bennett's article treats questions as important, and does not assume they have easy answers. How might one answer them? Ethnographic techniques can be a part of the solution to that dilemma. It is important to keep asking questions, and in particular important not to presume you will always know the answer, and to involve lots of people in answering them. And keep (persistently) asking them. Questioning can be teaching as well as learning. Effective questions require knowledge beforehand. You have to know something about the situation on the ground before you start asking good questions, ones that will yield insight and paths to solutions and innovations. This is a pedagogy of questions, a way of teaching and learning by asking, by deliberately positioning oneself as not-knowing (Bruss and Macedo, 1985; Harouni, 2009, 2013; Stommel, 2014; White, 2014). An anthropological perspective is one that generates questions. And in the process of asking questions, we discover that it is more than a pedagogical practice, but an ontology – queries nested within other queries, things we do not know influenced by what we never found out.

Finding a voice in higher education depends in part on generating interesting questions. This is far more useful than telling people what they should do. An anthropological perspective is one that generates questions. Asking questions is crucial, as is accepting the fact that many of the answers we uncover are problems. Ethnographic techniques can be a part of that exploratory process, of figuring out what questions to ask, which ones might be answerable, which ones are important to follow up on. And it is in our accurate identification of problems that we can be truly useful. When people think that one sort of thing is 'wrong' their perceptions of why that situation has come to pass can be incomplete, or completely off-base. When some of the answers we provide are the outlines of problems, we are also creating space for identifying opportunities. Then we become truly worth listening to.

And the joy of it all is that we, for all the answers we offer, do not have to come up with solutions alone. That is the other part of what is at stake. Once people are listening to us, we can engage them as part of the solution, or many solutions. We no longer, in this scenario, have to be subjected to solutions imposed on us from without. We can generate solutions as a team, with our colleagues in higher education.

Anthropology as a worldview

Engaging with qualitative techniques provides chances to elicit and tell powerful stories. Quantitative techniques tend to reduce or hide complexities, and give us the impression that we can predict the future, that we can see where things will definitely go. The 'Library of the Future' has a strong pull, inspiring conferences, blogposts, articles, and even jobs with the title 'future' in them. Perhaps

it seems to those talking about the future of libraries is that they are talking about the importance of libraries. The danger is that there is actually no accurate way to predict the future. Predicating library's argument for attention, resources, and influence on a nebulous future is potentially less effective than arguments grounded in what is, and the vivid potential of the current opportunities, in the present (Boellstorf, 2014).

In anthropology, there is a long tradition of historical approaches to current cultural practices, and a similar tension between the desire to know what might come next, and the need to be grounded in current practices. Matti Bunzl (2004, p. 441) argues that effective anthropological approaches constitute a 'history of the present'. Anthropologists attempt via description and interpretation to represent the result of historical processes, to describe the product of prior processes, to get a picture of where we are now.

Deeply understanding the present of libraries and higher education can help us think more clearly about how we are limiting or facilitating a wide range of possibilities, not just the ones we think the numbers might be telling us. We can point to numbers as a supplement to a particular picture of reality. The decline in print circulation is a good example – that fact needs to be informed by the larger context, which is that people are still reading, just in electronic versions. The decline in print circulation may also point to print materials (particularly bound journals and monographs) becoming something that stays in academic buildings rather than going home with users. In interviews I have conducted with students about their research habits, it becomes clear that some of them are using print resources (e.g. books or article printouts) when they want to engage deeply with the material they are reading. Students and faculty alike who are reading something new or challenging often interact with their print resources: highlighting, taking notes on the page, flipping easily back and forth between points that are related. Individuals who have long public transportation commutes take advantage of the fact that print resources do not depend on battery life or Wi-Fi connections to be read. Preferences for electronic versions of resources can stem from concerns about expense (sometimes the resource is available in the library so they do not have to purchase it themselves) and also convenience (if it's available online they might not have to enter the physical building), to name just a couple of examples. Some individuals keep many of the resources they use in electronic form so that they can work with them wherever they are, without having to carry a lot of paper with them. Some individuals want the paper with them because their access to digital devices or spaces is unreliable. The point, from a library perspective, is that there is no universal pattern around the uses of digital or analog resources, because the everyday material conditions of people's lives mean that both modes are still necessary. Institutions should therefore continue to be prepared to offer both, even as they pay attention to innovations in digital resources that close the gap between what is possible on paper and what is possible on screens.

Cognitive mapping techniques can be used to reveal a broader picture of the learning landscapes of students and faculty. Such a picture can be used to inform libraries not just of what their place is in the workflow of the university community.

Recognizing the non-library, non-institutional spaces in which people are doing academic work points to the need for policy solutions to institutional problems to go beyond local conditions. Sometimes library-located problems require larger systemic solutions. Sometimes university-evident problems require city-level solutions. Identifying the larger network allows for the opportunity to identify potential partners in working towards solutions.

This is not, therefore, simply an argument for libraries to engage with ethnography as a method, but ultimately for libraries to benefit from the perspective that comes from anthropology as a worldview. The holistic consideration of the nature of human behavior in academia, in society, can inform the whys and hows of university and library policies, spaces, workflows, and resources. Dourish and Bell (2011) call out ethnography as more than describing and defining bounded categories – it is about tracing, describing, identifying the processes, practices, and associations from which emerge the stuff of culture. Anthropology is invested in the interpretation of what is described, trying to understand the meaning of what has been uncovered in the course of practicing ethnography. Anthropological approaches to ethnography do not settle for descriptions of systems, but strive for explorations of meaning, interpretive acts that lead to insights, and frequently more questions.

Anthropological insights and student experience

When one person sees a library as a system, and the other sees it as an artifact, then there is a need to translate, to recalibrate the frames, so that a conversation, an engagement can happen, not just ineffective talking past one another. This is particularly important with regard to policy discussions. Insights derived from adopting an anthropological worldview should be just the start of a much larger agenda in libraries and higher education. Making systems and spaces navigable and legible is important if we take our mission of access seriously. Understanding why something is unnavigable or illegible in the first place takes a deeper understanding, and can lead to insights beyond design, to organization, culture, and process.

Think of the act of ethnographic description, the moment of anthropological insight, as a simultaneous act of deconstruction. It is theoretical, analytical, and transformative. Libraries need more than ethnographic methods, they need such practices to be informed by anthropological perspectives. For example, competence and incompetence are culturally constructed. Success within particular educational contexts – including universities and their libraries – derives directly from the level of participation within those contexts. Participation can mean a variety of things, and there is not necessarily one ‘correct’ way to participate. Universities are composed of interlocking communities of practice that students and faculty alike need to move among as they pursue their studies (Lave and Wenger, 1991). While all students are non-dominant in the hierarchy of higher education, some have more privilege than others, in terms of familiarity with higher education, as well as economically and socially. The implications for student practice, for

students moving into university or library space without knowledge of practices of scholarly community are that these things can be learned, but are not ‘natural’ and are therefore the responsibility of educators, including library staff as well as individuals in traditional faculty roles.

Ethnographic techniques are methods that provide a way to connect the practices of students with the practices of academia (of the library, of their professors) (e.g. Bhatt, 2014). These methods can also reveal connections between the practices of faculty and those located within the library. And importantly, casting an ethnographic eye on the totality of student experience means that we can more easily reveal the locations where students cannot connect effectively to the places, resources, and practices of academia. Locating the moments where students have less access than they should to resources, less knowledge than they need to effectively use these resources, is a crucial service to the people who work at universities, and who are committed to educating citizens. Anthropological perspectives on academia provide opportunities for pause, reflection, and seeing how to emerge from that moment with new practices that are more effective at meeting needs and providing engagement.

Students socializing in the library are engaging in a form of what Lave and Wenger (1991) call ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ – moments where people hang back on the margins, see what is going on, or engage in a preliminary way with what they need to do. Chatting with friends in the library places students in a location where they can also witness studying all night for finals, poring over the archives in special collections, or writing a dissertation in a graduate student carrel. The practice of ‘studying along’ (Bennett, 2007), neither in groups nor solo, is a perfect example of an opportunity that students give themselves, in the comfortable network of their friends and classmates, to see and assimilate a variety of academic behaviors. We see revealed the importance of recognizing the socially embedded nature of studying, academic practice.

Students, much like faculty and other library users, engage in a variety of ways of defining ‘quiet’. It rarely means silent, and often means still and focusing in a way that isn’t entirely auditory. I have seen this in my own fieldwork in the US and the UK. Students define libraries that are unfamiliar to them as ‘quiet’ in large part because there are no people there who know them, and so they are relatively undisturbed (regardless of actual noise level). In other cases any noise at all being made by unknown people is cast as a disturbance, because individuals do not recognize what ‘those people’ are doing as studying. The social dimensions of learning, the fact that study behaviors are embedded in larger cultural contexts, in class, in race, in gender – these are all things to consider and to ask about when confronted with something like the Noise and Quiet debate in libraries.

Social and cultural contexts of learning apply to both physical and digital places. It is therefore important for us to understand the motivations not just for engagement with physical places and services, but also behind people’s persistent love affairs with digital (non-library) places and resources such as Google and Wikipedia. I have, in the course of several research projects (e.g. *Visitors and Residents*, see Connaway, White and Lanclos, 2011; Connaway, Hood et al., 2013;

Connaway, Lancelos and Hood, 2013) interviewed more than one undergraduate who called Google a ‘best friend’. Libraries don’t run Google (more’s the pity, financially). Our institutional lack of control over the web interfaces that our community members use the most means we need to think about usability of systems that are not local, as well as the ones that are. The usability implications include personnel and workflows – if we know the library website needs to be changed, who do we have to do it? If we do not have control over all of the web environments that patrons engage in, what are the implications? How can we make the leap from describing problems to designing solutions? The key here is that we may find answers through our investigations. But we cannot work alone towards solutions. Finding solutions has to be a collaborative endeavor.

Conclusions

Because problems do not have one particular solution, and because innovation rarely comes from homogenous environments, collaboration is the key to successful solutions to the problems and opportunities identified by ethnographic observation and description, and anthropological analysis. Multiple disciplines, multiple people should be working together within libraries, enriching the policy decisions and grounding them in a rich context of information and meaning (e.g. Delcore et al., 2009). We cannot and should never expect one person to contain all of the expertise necessary for these multidisciplinary efforts; all of these things require expertise, they are proper jobs in themselves, and they deserve the respect of full-time work.

Anthropological insights do not necessarily flow directly from the gathering of observations of UX or ethnographic data of other kinds. Training and expertise should not be taken lightly. When qualitative researchers are brought in as consultants, there is some pressure to please customers, however much we researchers might value our potential role as provocateurs. When anthropologists and other social scientists are hired full-time in libraries, we are colleagues, and our provocations, our awkward questions, our explorations of issues and patterns that are not immediately related to problems at hand are in service of the greater good. We are invested in the organization, we want our work to contribute long term, we have the time, the bandwidth, the organizational support for trying and failing and occasionally going into dark corners that people don’t habitually visit.

UX, ethnographic practices, and anthropological insights should all be just the start of a much larger agenda in libraries and higher education. The act of ethnography, the interpretive lenses that anthropology can inspire, can help us fight agendas that are destructive to that educational project – being deeply embedded in the behaviors and in the lives of our students and our faculty can refute the vocational narrative of neoliberal educational policy. It is crucial that libraries contribute alternatives to notions of education that cast the role of universities as places that ‘get people jobs’. The people who make up our institutions are more than a list of certifications, more than the money they might make, far more than the boxes they tick off as they work through their course modules in pursuit of their major. Those people are revealed with qualitative research. Their stories move policy makers.

We do not have to take policy makers' word for it. We do not have to take conformity to web templates lying down. We do not have to believe them when they tell us that students no longer read, or will only communicate via text, or have lost the ability to think critically. We can push back, and point out the explosion of different kinds of reading, of all the different places where communication happens, that it's our responsibility to model and teach critical thinking, not just assume that it will show up as they arrive on campus. We can leverage our grounded sense of the lives and priorities of people to make effective arguments, to drive our own agenda.

References

- ACRL, 2010. *The Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*. [pdf] Available at: <http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/issues/value/val_report.pdf> [Accessed 23 January 2015].
- Asher, A. D., Duke, L. M. and Wilson, S., 2013. Paths of discovery: Comparing the search effectiveness of EBSCO Discovery Service, Summon, Google Scholar, and conventional library resources. *College & Research Libraries*, 74(5), pp. 464–88.
- Asher, A. D. and Miller, S., 2011. *So You Want to Do Anthropology in Your Library? Or a Practical Guide to Ethnographic Research in Academic Libraries*. [pdf] Available at: <<http://www.erialproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Toolkit-3.22.11.pdf>> [Accessed 3 February 2015].
- Beer, D., 2009. Power through the algorithm? Participatory web cultures and the technological unconscious. *New Media & Society*, 11(6), pp. 985–1002.
- Bennett, S., 2007. First questions for designing higher education learning spaces. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 33(1), pp. 14–26.
- Bhatt, I., 2014. Curation as Digital Literary Practice. *Ibrar's Space*, [blog] 21 May. Available at: <<http://ibrarspace.net/2014/05/21/curation-as-a-digital-literacy-practice/>> [Accessed 23 January 2015].
- Boellstorff, T., 2014. Trending Ethnography: Notes on Import, Prediction, and Digital Culture. *Culture Digitally* blog, [blog] 27 January. Available at: <<http://culturedigitally.org/2014/01/trending-ethnography-notes-on-import-prediction-and-digital-culture/>> [Accessed 23 January 2015].
- Bruss, N. and Macedo, D. P., 1985. Toward a pedagogy of the question: Conversations with Paulo Freire. *Journal of Education*, 167(2), pp. 7–21.
- Bunzl, M., 2004. Boas, Foucault, and the 'Native Anthropologist': Notes toward a Neo-Boasian Anthropology. *American Anthropologist*, 106(3), pp. 435–42.
- Clifford, J. and Marcus, G. E. eds, 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Connaway, L. S., Hood, E. M., Lanclos, D. M., White, D. and Le Cornu, A., 2013. User-centered decision making: A new model for developing academic library services and systems. *IFLA Journal*, 39(1), pp. 20–9.
- Connaway, L. S., Lanclos, D. M. and Hood, E. M., 2013. 'I always stick with the first thing that comes up on Google . . .' Where People Go for Information, What They Use, and Why. *Educause Review Online* [online]. Available at: <<http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/i-always-stick-first-thing-comes-google-where-people-go-information-what-they-use-and-why>> [Accessed 23 January 2015].
- Connaway, L. S., White, D. and Lanclos, D. M., 2011. Visitors and residents: What motivates engagement with the digital information environment? *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 48(1), pp. 1–7.

- Delcore, H.D., Mullooly, J., Scroggins, M., Arnold, K., Franco, E. and Gaspar, J., 2009. *The Library Study at Fresno State*. [pdf] Available at: <[http://www.csufresno.edu/anthropology/ipa/TheLibraryStudy\(DelcoreMulloolyScroggins\).pdf](http://www.csufresno.edu/anthropology/ipa/TheLibraryStudy(DelcoreMulloolyScroggins).pdf)> [Accessed 23 January 2015].
- Dourish, P. and Bell, G., 2011. *Divining a Digital Future: Mess and Mythology in Ubiquitous Computing*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Foster, N.F. and Gibbons, S. eds, 2007. *Studying Students: The Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.
- Gourlay, L., Lanclos, D.M. and Oliver, M., 2015. Sociomaterial texts, spaces and devices: Questioning ‘digital dualism’ in library and study practices. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 69(3), pp. 263–78.
- Harouni, H., 2009. High school research and critical literacy: Social studies with and despite Wikipedia. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), pp. 473–94.
- Harouni, H., 2013. The risking of observations in the classroom: Teacher as cultural critic. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 15(1–2), p. 57.
- Kim Wu, S. and Lanclos, D.M., 2011. Re-imagining the users’ experience: An ethnographic approach to web usability and space design. *Reference Services Review*, 39(3), pp. 369–89.
- Kirsh, D., 2001. The context of work. *Human–Computer Interaction*, 16(2–4), pp. 305–22.
- Lanclos, D.M., 2015. Ethnographic Techniques and New Visions for Libraries. In: B. Showers, ed. *Library Analytics and Metrics*. London: Facet. pp. 96–107.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E., 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nader, L., 1997. Controlling processes: Tracing the dynamic components of power. *Current Anthropology*, 38(5), pp. 711–37.
- Oldenburg, R., 1989. *The Great Good Place: Café, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day*. New York: Paragon House.
- Potente, D. and Salvini, E., 2009. Apple, IKEA and their integrated architecture. *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 35(4), pp. 32–42.
- Schoenfeld, R. C., 2014. Does Discovery Still Happen in the Library? Roles and Strategies for a Shifting Reality. *Ithaka S+R Issue Brief*, [online]. Available at: <http://sr.ithaka.org/sites/default/files/files/SR_Briefing_Discovery_20140924_0.pdf> [Accessed 23 January 2015].
- Smale, M. and Regalado, M., 2014. Commuter Students Using Technology. *Educause Review Online*, [online]. Available at: <<http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/commuter-students-using-technology>> [Accessed 23 January 2015].
- Stommel, J., 2014. Critical Digital Pedagogy: A Definition. *Hybrid Pedagogy*, [online]. Available at: <<http://www.hybridpedagogy.com/journal/critical-digital-pedagogy-definition/>> [Accessed 23 January 2015].
- Weiser, M., 1991. The computer for the 21st century. *Scientific American*, 265(3), pp. 94–104.
- White, D., 2014. Wikimania. *Digital-Learning-Culture*, [blog] 21 September. Available at: <<http://daveowhite.com/wikimania/>> [Accessed 23 January 2015].