Ethnographic Research and Participatory Design at the University of Maryland Libraries: Pioneering Partnerships Beyond Library Walls

Tanner Wray, Cinthya Ippoliti & Jane Williams
ACRL Research Forum, ALA Conference
Anaheim, CA June 24, 2012
Thank You!

Contributing Authors

• Lutgarda Barnachea
• Eric Bartheld
• Patricia Kosco Cossard
• Stacey Grijalva
• Kevin Hammett
• Carleton Jackson
• Yelena Luckert
• Trevor Muñoz
• Nedelina Tchangalova
Presentation

• Project Overview
• Library-Led Activities
• Anthropology and Architecture Classes
• Use of Data Collected, Next Steps
• Skills and Partnerships Developed
Project Overview
University of Maryland (UMD)

- 38,000 Students and Faculty
- 4,000 Faculty
- Flagship Campus of University System of MD
- Inside Beltway (College Park)

Eight UMD Libraries
- McKeldin is the largest
- Hornbake houses Special Collections
- Largest University Library System in DC-Baltimore
McKeldin Library

For access to 5 stacks please return to the 4 floor and take the elevator to 5.
Thank you.
University of Rochester
Ayers Saint Gross Architectural Firm
University of Maryland
Libraries
School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
Anthropology Department
iSchool

The Players

Nancy Foster
Sandra Vicchio
Pat Steele
David Cronrath
Michael Paolisso
John Bertot

Jane Williams
Ethnography’s unique contribution to qualitative research is that it deeply examines the context in which activities occur, usually involving a researcher working with participants as they go about their daily lives.

-College Libraries and Student Culture: What We Now Know, ALA 2012
Participatory Design: Trusting Community Expertise

Every stakeholder is an expert, each in her or his own way:

In unstable times a physical re-programming can no longer depend on traditional, professional experts (architects and librarians), for whom precedent is now unreliable. We looked to our user community’s expertise.

-David Cronrath, Dean, UMD School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation
Methodology

Fall 2011 (Inputs)
- Library Participatory Design Team
- Anthropology Methods Course
- Architecture Students

Spring 2012 (Results)
- Architecture Studio Class

Library and Campus Stakeholders
Three Library-Led Participatory Design Activities
Imagine that we could create a new space inside the library that would be exactly as you want it. Imagine that we ask you to design it and then we get a team of people to come in and build it. You walk into the space and it’s perfect. It meets your needs and enables you to take full advantage of your academic opportunities.
Design Workshop Analysis Themes

- Atmosphere
- Openness/visibility
- Privacy
- Dedicated space by function
- Shared areas
- Workflow and support
Design Workshop Analysis
Faculty Work Needs

- Library collections
- Deep, sustained thinking, reading, writing
- Inspiration from “heart” of Library
- Connection to nature, culture
- Solitary AND collaboration/seminars
  - Being in one’s own space
  - Conversation, community building
- Equipment
- Occasional break, sustained energy from food/coffee
Design Workshop
Librarian & Library Staff Work Needs

- Light
- Ability to see across space
- Being in one’s own space
- Meeting with others
- Technology
- Storage
- Instructing/Training and receiving instruction/training
- Specialized equipment
- Maintaining a sense of self
Design Workshop
Undergraduate Work Needs

• Solitude and concentration AND group interaction
• Noisy AND quiet
• Equipment
• Library computers
• Areas to spread out
• People to assist them
• Furniture with some comfort
• Be with others, whether socializing or just being together
• Frequent shifts among courses, disciplines
• Sustained energy from rest, food, coffee, etc.
• Physical comfort, emotional security
• Sense of self, opportunities to experiment/build identity
Design Workshop
Graduate Work Needs

• Ample light
• Solitude, intense concentration
• Containment of noise
• Equipment
• Development of connection to one’s discipline
• Focus: attain degree
• Inspiration from “heart of the library”
• Sustained energy from occasional rest
2. On-the-Spot Interviews

1. When did you last study for an exam?
2. When did you last work on a class project or lab?
3. When did you last work on a full-blown research paper?

• For each question, state date, time, for how long and where you were
On-the-Spot Interviews Analysis

• Studying for exams
  – ≤ 4 hours
  – > 75% UDGs study afternoons/night
  – 29% in McKeldin; 23% in Bedroom

• Project Work
  – 63% ≤ 2 hours
  – 50% in library, mostly McKeldin, mostly TLC; 25% home; 25% in classroom

• Research papers
  – 1-4 hours
  – 60% at home; 37% in library, 80% in McKeldin; half of those in TLC
On-the-Spot Interviews Analysis

• UDGs want quiet, convenient place, computer access
  – Bus stop, parking lot, classroom building
  – Dorm or bedroom

• Seek inspirational/motivational spaces

• Over course of project/studying students may need variety: quiet and noisy space, or private and shared space

• Comfort supports academic work
3. Public Space Direct Observations

- A  Reading and/or working on an academic assignment
- L  Using own productivity device as part of academic work [also used in combo with A]
- C  Using library computer as part of academic work [also used in combo with A]
- B  Taking a break alone
- S  Socializing with others
- X  Not engaged (sleeping, talking through, etc.)
Picture of the area 1/F. There are 6 PCs on each side of the isle before the aisle narrows (up to the clock) - total of 12 to observe.

1st row of study carrels in periodicals reading room. Observe both sides.
Public Space Direct Observations

• Few if any GRADS/Faculty appear to use public space

• Students observed taking advantage of both group and individual spaces
  – > 2/3 working alone
  – Group work increases throughout afternoon, evening

• Students generally not very engaged with library print materials – mostly engaged with personal materials, tech devices
Public Space Direct Observations

• 85% observed apparently engaged in academic work
  – 19% assignment w/o tech device
  – 47% reading/working on assignment w/laptop
  – 18% reading/working on assignment w/library computer

• 15% otherwise engaged
  – 8% taking break
  – 3% socializing/checking Facebook
  – 4% sleeping, walking, otherwise engaged

• % using both library computer and personal tech device
  not accurately captured
Anthropology and Architecture Classes
Anthropology Findings

Students’ needs and expectations while doing schoolwork...

• Students seek **convenience**
• Students need **various types of spaces and amenities**
• Students seek an ability **to personalize** their experience
• Students want **control over their space**
• Students seek **“comfortable” environments**
• Internet access is important, but can be distracting
• There is a difference in the needs of undergraduate vs. graduate students
Architecture: Existing Building Program

Space Usage (sq.ft.)

- Admin/Office: 4,752 sq.ft.
- Circulation: 25,245 sq.ft.
- Instructional: 42,019 sq.ft.
- Lounge: 11,238 sq.ft.
- Stacks: 82,093 sq.ft.
- Storage: 75,770 sq.ft.
- Study: 6,819 sq.ft.
- Study Services: 5,008 sq.ft.
- Utility: 5,008 sq.ft.
Use of Data Collected & Next Steps
Methodology

Fall 2011 (Inputs)
- Library Participatory Design Team
- Anthropology Methods Course
- Architecture Students

Spring 2012 (Results)
- Architecture Studio Class

Library and Campus Stakeholders
Articulation of the Work with the Architecture Studio

Natural elements
Articulation of the Work with the Architecture Studio

Multistory “slots” or walkways
Student Work by Nicholas Tomaszewski, UMCP
Skills and Partnerships
Partnerships
Skills

- IRB
- Complex Project Management
- Communication
- Data Collection and Analysis
- Collaboration
Unexpected Outcomes

- Studies for Other Campus Libraries
- Listening for Opportunity
- Creating Opportunity
- Redefine Library Role in Academic Enterprise
STAFF EXIT ONLY
WITH PROPER AUTHORIZATION
PUBLIC SHOULD EXIT THROUGH THE FRONT ENTRANCE IN McKELDIN EAST

THIS IS NOT AN EXIT
Questions?

• Tanner Wray, twray@umd.edu
  Director of Public Services

• Cinthya Ippoliti, cippol1@umd.edu
  TLC and Student Support Services Head

• Jane Williams, mjwillia@umd.edu
  Senior Administrative Librarian