Stop listening to your customers!

Andy Priestner

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“If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said a faster horse.”

HENRY FORD
“It's not the consumers’ job to know what they want”

STEVE JOBS
And yet, in libraries we are constantly asking our users: “How we can improve the services we offer?”

Are we wasting our time?
I would argue that we are.
We are very poor at predicting our future behaviour and at knowing what services or products we will end up using.

If someone had told me 10 years ago that I would rarely use a desktop and do most work on my iPad and iPhone I would not have believed them.

So it’s often a waste of time to ask.
Household energy conservation study (Wes Schultz and Robert Cialdini)

Which of the following messages would persuade householders to conserve energy?

1. You will be helping the environment
2. You are protecting future generations
3. You will save money
4. Your neighbours are already conserving energy

Meter readings were taken after householders received each message
After all the messages had been relayed, householders said the least persuasive was...

4. **the fact that their neighbours were already conserving energy**

However meter readings showed this message to be the MOST effective in changing behavior.
As well as not knowing what they want it would appear that it is also not the consumers’ job to reliably know **how they behave**
More singles who are more your style.

38,000,000 singles worldwide and 3 million messages sent daily.

Sign Up*

By selecting “Sign Up”, you agree to our Terms of Use, Electronic Records terms and consent to our Privacy Policy. For our mutual protection, Zoosk uses third party services to analyze accounts for potential fraud. Read more in our Privacy Policy.

Over 30 million downloads.
Shayan Zadeh, cofounder and co-CEO of Zoosk:

“There's a gulf between what people say they want, and what their behavior reveals about what they actually want.”

Zoosk chooses to watch what their customers do, instead of just focusing on what they say.
Users state preferences that are contrary to the profiles they click on and the dates they go on.
Individual user behaviour on the site is tracked and fed into the algorithm which informs which profiles are shown

Why don't people know what they want?

Zadeh: “It's not that they don't know what they want; it's what they perceive that they should want. It's a complex psychological thing. It's, ‘What do my friends expect me to go with?’ ‘What does society expect me to like?’”

“All these combined create a mask over what you truly like, and you might not even know you're interested in something until you see it.”
So what does all this mean for how we deliver library services and seek library feedback?

Let’s look at what we currently do...
We’re regularly asking our users what they think and what we can do to make our services better – tends to ONLY be through surveys and focus groups.

How do they react to these questions?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we ask</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>What they say:</th>
<th>What they may be thinking:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the library?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>‘It’s good’</td>
<td>They’re nice I don’t want to upset them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate library staff?</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>‘They’re really nice’</td>
<td>I’m not sure what they do beyond shelving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What library service need to be improved?</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘More books’</td>
<td>I can’t think how else to answer that question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you use the new ‘X’ service?</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘No’</td>
<td>I don’t think I’d use that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you got any other comments?</td>
<td>&lt;Blank&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t really think about the library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Users don’t think about libraries all that much. They use them but they don’t think about them. They have got much more interesting things to think about than how to help us improve our services”

Andy Priestner
### Pros
- quick to produce and fill in
- straightforward to analyse
- easy to distribute
- universal understanding

### Cons
- mainly filled in by pro-library users
- low response rates
- self-reporting is unreliable
- mainly quantitative data
- closed or leading questions
- frustrating to complete
- too long
- survey fatigue
- don’t reveal how users truly behave or feel
What about the quantitative data we collect?
library footfall stats - don’t tell us how successful those visits were
database visits - don’t tell us whether the article or data was useful
high teaching scores - don’t tell us if learning has taken place
So how can we work out how to improve or develop new services for our users?

Just rely on our own instincts and knowledge?

We are professionals after all…
By improving and varying our user research methods...

to uncover a deeper and more meaningful picture of our users’ research and study lives

But how exactly?
...with a set of techniques designed to reveal the experience of our users (and non-users) by exploring their behaviours and attitudes

- observation
- behavioural mapping
- semi-structured interviews
- cultural probes
- usability testing
- cognitive mapping
- card sorting
- user journey mapping
- photo elicitation interviews
- graffiti walls
- love letters/break-up letters
- touchstone tours
- guerilla interviews
- affinity mapping
User Experience is everything that happens to your users when they interact with your service in any way (physically or remotely). It includes everything they see, everything they hear, everything they do, as well as their emotional reactions.
Observing our users: seeing how they use spaces, websites, research materials and other library services
Talking to our users: interviewing them more effectively to find out what they really think and do – a holistic picture
If executed well, both approaches – **behavioural** and **attitudinal** – should help us to improve the design of our services by identifying failing ‘touchpoints’.

**Touchpoints** – points where users interact with our service, affecting and shaping their experience and future use: website, staff, space, signage, furniture, collections, WIFI etc.
Psychic experiment:
Which of your library touchpoints are currently failing users?
Some example UX research techniques
OBSERVATION

• Observe users in a library space for a set period of time at regular intervals
• Make extensive notes on what they are doing, what equipment they have with them, whether they came alone or with others, if they take breaks, etc.
• Record movement in the space and occupancy/popularity
• Change the layout, furniture and features and monitor user reactions
• *When you’ve done it once, you’ll understand how much you’re missing!*
COGNITIVE MAPPING

• Ask participants to draw a map of the library/their study routine: Where they study, how they study, who with etc.
• Ask them to annotate the map with explanatory text
• Analyse the map: What did they draw? What did they draw first? Where did they draw it on the page? What was omitted?
• Use as the basis for a face-to-face interview
Boyfriend's room
- usually reading on the bed
- not too taxing work

Pub
- dinner

Room
- bed, reading
- pile of notes
- window
- desk
  - essays
  - maths work

MILL LANE
- L2
- listen to lectures

Judge Info Centre
- printing
- textbooks
- reading

St John's Library
- revision, when really need to get work done

Room at home
- holiday revision
  - home comforts

Whipple Library
- research, quiet
  - (old department)
CULTURAL PROBE

• Users fill in a daily diary and complete a series of tasks over a set period of weeks.
• Designed to reveal rich and detailed information about research and learning behaviour
USER JOURNEY MAPPING

• Exploring and recording how long it takes a user to complete a library-related task

• What do they have to do, how does it make them feel, what parts of the process are failing?

• What design interventions can be made to improve the process and address the failing touchpoints
An embedded UX research programme delivering new and innovative library products and services
Where does ‘library’ actually fit within the wider student experience of University?

And what does that landscape look like?

And how can we become more relevant?
‘Detail your entire experience of University life – warts and all – with one element per sticky note. Use as many notes as you need.’
WIFI
phone
signal
interviews
pursue
course
elsewhere

laptop
power
CV
job
search

phone
tablet
pursue
academic
career
Of all the sticky notes collected, only 10 were library-related...

library  study space  printing  IT support  readings
WIFI  data  revision  PCs  power

But what if we could design a product that incorporated other elements too?
A research project not centred wholly on library...
The idea for Spacefinder was derived from UX research: diary studies; card sorting; Interviews; observation.
Students were not finding spaces that matched their study preferences and these needs were hugely diverse...
types of space used:
cafes, pubs, bars (not just libraries)
Spacefinder would seek to illuminate and uncover the University’s many spaces, together with public spaces in the city, and match them to study needs and preferences
The website that'll change your studying life forever

Story: Jenima Jobling  Twitter: jenima_jobling

OCTOBER 21, 2015

Image credit: Andy Freisher

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“I wanted to write personally, to thank you for Spacefinder, and tell you how useful students are already finding it. This is an achievement which shouldn't be underestimated. I thought you might be amused to know that the general response has been one of sheer astonishment that the University have helped produce something so up-to-date and relevant to student life!”

Poppy Logan
(Cambridge University Students Union – Welfare and Rights Officer)
Spacefinder is now an established part of Cambridge University life
Spacefinder has been so successful because it responds to behaviours and needs beyond the library AND recognises a broader student experience and learning landscape...
Survey results, quantitative data, and a focus solely on library would never have led us to Spacefinder.

We had to become interested in a wider picture of user experience and we pieced that together through UX research.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/francisco_osorio/8424407891
‘the library in the life of the user not the user in the life of the library’

Lorcan Dempsey
Why does UX matter now?
Yes, it’s interesting, but so what?

https://flic.kr/p/5cQ6tF
1. We need to find out what our users really do and need, not only what they tell us in surveys

2. Users have higher service expectations than ever

3. Users and non-users are very willing to participate in UX research methods – they’re fun

4. Strongly evidence-based approach with very persuasive results

5. Help us to design services and products that are more relevant and needed

6. Can be inexpensive
Case studies, theory and techniques, written by

- Library UX practitioners
- Anthropologists
- Designers

“User Experience in Libraries is an engaging combination of library UX theory and practice. Both those new to the subject and those with more experience will learn from it”

Aaron Schmidt, Principal, Influx Library User Experience
UX research is about exploring the experience of our users AND building better services as a result.

This being so, why would you choose NOT to adopt these methods?
Stop listening to your customers because they often don’t know what they want. Adopt UX research methods to find out what they do and what they really need.
Thank you!

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