INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER 1

Participatory Design in Academic Libraries: The Second CLIR Seminar

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In this volume, we hear from a number of librarians and library staff who have taken CLIR workshops and gone on to conduct their own participatory design projects. In these papers, they explain how they learned about the people who use their libraries, whether in person or online, and how they applied their findings to the design or improvement of library technologies, spaces, and services.

More than 250 people have gone through workshops in participatory design and work-practice study methods through the generosity of the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). They represent 95 colleges, universities, and cultural institutions across the United States and are augmented by about two dozen librarians and library IT professionals from colleges and universities in Europe, Central Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. Additionally, nearly 400 people participate in a listserv devoted to participatory design in academic libraries. As a consequence of all of this activity, the library community is now awash in just the sort of exciting design projects discussed in the following pages.

Participatory Design

Participatory design refers to a relatively recent approach to the design of technology, spaces, services, and resources in all kinds of workplaces (Shuler and Namioka 1993; Spinuzzi 2005; Foster, Bowen, and Lindahl 2011). Participatory design begins with the belief that relying on precedent—on the way things have always been done—no longer serves us as well in these times of rapid and even disruptive change. It used to make sense to build an academic library that looked and worked like other, older academic libraries. To imitate older academic libraries now would be to build a library that is

obsolete even before it opened. It is not simply that physical collections are shrinking, or that more people than ever are using devices that rely on plentiful power outlets and a good Internet connection. The reality is that people work differently now, forming scholarly communities remotely across vast geographic areas and collaborating, sometimes in real time, with the support of communication devices and technologies.

It is no longer easy to imagine a separation between library buildings and library technologies, as today it is possible for either to be the site of using or providing the other. In this complicated and unstable situation, we look to our communities to participate in our design projects and keep us informed about the work they do, how they want to do it, how they overcome obstacles, and how they would do their scholarly work in an ideal environment. Participatory design provides methods for including non-traditional participants—faculty members, staff, graduate and undergraduate students —in projects to design and develop new library technologies, spaces, and services.

The Second CLIR Seminar on Participatory Design of Academic Libraries

The University of Rochester's River Campus Libraries hosted the second CLIR Seminar on Participatory Design of Academic Libraries in Rush Rhees Library in Rochester, New York, June 5–7, 2013. At this seminar, 35 people who had conducted their own participatory design projects met to discuss recent work and the ongoing challenges of improving academic library services, facilities, and technologies. Interspersed with the presentations were facilitated discussions led by Katie Clark, Judi Briden, Cynthia Carlton, Ann Marshall, and Sarada George on the following topics: project planning; getting support from peers and administrators; and taking action based on project findings (see the Appendix, p.109, for highlights of the discussions). Key outcomes of the seminar included confirmation of the value of the methods; new approaches to gaining support for projects and implementing recommendations based on findings; and renewed commitment to the community itself.

The Seminar Program

David Lindahl, of the University of Missouri–Kansas City, opened the meeting with a keynote speech on institutionalizing user-centered design in every function and at every level throughout the library. Using this approach, he remarked, the library can be organized "into groups of people that are each responsible for a discrete step of the user-centered design process" as a means to build competency and, more importantly, to identify emerging needs for the library as old needs evolve or disappear. As Lindahl told us in his presentation, "academic libraries must … answer questions like these: What is the work that people need to be able to do? What technology

and terminology will they understand? How are current tools working?" Lindahl argues, "Growth based on carefully identified needs of the academic community that a library serves … will lead to organizational growth. This approach comes with the benefit of keeping library staff on board with the direction, because decisions will be grounded in data."

After the keynote, we heard three methodological papers.

Sue Cardinal, of the University of Rochester, kicked off the project presentations with a "recipe" for improving course pages. Working on the usability side of user research, Cardinal conducted a quick, low-cost project to reconceptualize two course pages based on an understanding of how students use them in the context of their daily course-related activities. Tracing the evolution of course page technology, Cardinal described her efforts over the years to make these pages usable. In her latest project, she moved beyond usability and examined the way students work on course material and the terms they use to express their resource needs. She writes, "Categories on the page should be based on what students are doing or feeling, rather than on the type of item. For example—textbooks might be listed under 'books' but students suggested that one category should be 'forgot my textbook' … and another should be 'feeling behind'—the place for supplementary textbooks."

Mark Werner and Mark Mabbett, of the University of Colorado at Boulder, presented an effective use of an iPad running *Penultimate* and *Evernote* to gather, organize, store, and analyze data from library walkthroughs. The method allowed them to engage participants in a conversation as they moved through library spaces, capturing images with the iPad and annotating them with the participants' comments in real time. This method made it possible to pick up small but extremely significant details during data collection and then to communicate the needs of students quickly and convincingly after data analysis. As Werner and Mabbett put it, "showing is better than telling," and their method makes showing both easier and more effective.

Marilyn Pukkila of Colby College presented a paper that she wrote with her former Colby colleague, Ellen Freeman, about the value of co-viewing video, both with project team members and with key faculty and administrators who may benefit from visual confirmation of students' academic practices and needs. Co-viewing is, simply, the viewing of research artifacts—DVDs, photos, maps, and so on—by a small group of people who pause to discover and debate the meaning of artifacts during the session. According to Pukkila and Freeman, co-viewing makes it possible to dive deeper into data, bring multiple perspectives to bear, and develop a better understanding of the artifacts' meanings. Co-viewing can also extend the benefits of the project by bringing results to institutional leaders in a compelling way, thereby increasing support for implementations based on findings.

The next pair of papers presented the results of observational studies.

Susanna Cowan and Joelle Thomas, of the University of Connect-icut, presented the methods and findings of a comprehensive study they and their coauthors conducted at Babbidge Library. Called a "portrait of one floor," the study collected data on every single seat on one entire library floor, on a nearly hourly basis. This "portrait," which included almost 600 seats and an acre of floor space, gener-ated almost 50,000 data points. Among their many findings were the requirement to think through the goals of the work before starting it and the difference between assumptions—even ones based on long experience—and hard data.

Next, Nisa Bakkalbasi spoke about an observational study she conducted with her coauthors and a team from the Columbia Uni-versity Libraries. Like the University of Connecticut group, the Co-lumbia team recognized the importance of preparation, especially in training the team to code observations in order to achieve inter-rater consistency. The Columbia study turned up some surprising find-ings. One was that many students engage in "camping"—staking out a space with personal possessions to reserve it in the owner's absence. Another was a proliferation of devices that occurred even more rapidly than was anticipated by librarians, and the lengths to which students will go to charge their phones, tablets, and lap-tops. Many of the team's findings will enable team members to anticipate emerging problems and address them while they are still manageable.

The next two papers reported on large-scale projects, one a cross-institutional effort and the other a plan for a large new campus building that will combine library and classroom spaces.

Jeanne Link and Jonna Peterson, of the Library of Rush Univer-sity Medical Center, write about the planning phase of a project to apply the "Studying Students" approach developed at the University of Rochester to the case of students at Illinois medical schools and health sciences programs (Foster and Gibbons 2007). In the planning year, the question was whether the methods could address clear and significant questions while meeting practical targets such as feasibil-ity, affordability, and relevance.

Echoing Dave Lindahl's presentation, Link and Peterson write, "The collaborative nature of this work yielded much more than the means to make an informed decision. As libraries strive to meet the ongoing challenge of adapting to user needs in the clinical environ-ment, what could be more important than correctly defining what those needs are?" They go on to cite the secondary values of the planning process: engagement and community-building for the li-brarians and libraries involved.

Jeremy Garritano and Jane Yatcilla, of Purdue University, de-scribed a large project to engage library staff, university faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates in the conceptualization of a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) library in the twenty-first century. The fact that the new building would combine library and classroom space complicated the project in in-teresting ways. Among their findings is that a classroom, when used

for a class, may seat twice as many people as it can when used for non-class purposes. The team also learned that students need a clear message when classroom spaces are open for studying, as they will not want to walk in unless they are completely sure the spaces are available to them.

In the final project presentation, Geoffrey Swindells and Mari-anne Ryan, of Northwestern University, demonstrated how library practice could engage librarians and library staff in participatory design as a matter of course through "continuous engagement with students, faculty, and staff." Covering a range of topics, including the need for training and the problems they encountered and addressed, they described a transition to a more user-centered organizational structure that would provide an "infrastructure for engagement" through such local innovations as a class librarian program, liaisons for non-academic units, and a library ombudsman.

Susan Perry, college librarian and director of library, information and technology services emerita, Mount Holyoke College, concluded the seminar by facilitating a rousing discussion of the role of librarians in the emerging hybrid-teaching environment.

Papers from the Seminar

This book compiles written versions of the seminar papers, including a number of images from the presentations themselves. They demonstrate the range of ways in which library leaders, librarians, and staff have assimilated the approach and methods of participatory design. As the papers show, there is much to gain from these efforts. For one thing, library spaces, technologies, and services that are built with broad participation work better and are more responsive to the work practices and needs of real people. Beyond that, focusing on the people who use libraries, and organizing libraries in a way that supports that focus, is a good way to ensure that libraries will identify emerging needs and shift plans and resources to meet them, rather than continuing to address disappearing ways of work. Participatory design, then, is an essential tool for libraries that aim to support scholarship now and in the future, in ways that ensure continued excellence and relevance in a world of change.

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