Ask the People, Serve the People: a collaborative assessment project at UCLA

Allison Benedetti • ARLIS/NA Annual Conference • May 2014
Charles E. Young Research Library pre-renovation
Challenges and questions

- Many more undergrads in the building
- Complaints from graduate students about being pushed out
- Group work areas not being used for group work
- Comments from a small group, but piecemeal, reactive interventions might not solve problems

- How is research being conducted on North Campus?
- What do graduate students need from the library?
- What support and resources are students getting elsewhere?
- How can we position the library to be most relevant?
North Campus Research Community Study (NCRCS)

Study Components
- Questionnaire
- Behavioral observation
- Headcounts
- Faculty interviews
- Graduate student focus groups

Team members
- Allison Benedetti, project manager
- Zoe Borovsky
- Marta Brunner
- Diane Mizrachi
- Jennifer Osorio
Survey comments

We have a great collection of research materials, but I go there as little as possible because the environment is hostile to actually doing research.

There should be a study space in YRL that is reserved for graduate students only. We study differently than the undergraduates, and we need a space to do so.

Again, I don't find the YRL conducive to studying because of general dinginess, clutter, and smell in the areas near the stacks where PhD carrels are located. The new spaces on the first floor of YRL seem too busy for work.
What we learned in the Research Commons

The pods were designed for this...

Photo © 2012 Kyle Alexander
Pod reservation system launched mid-October 2012

Orange = group work
Stripes = individuals in a group
Blue = solo studying
Yellow = not working/leisure

October 5 at 5:00pm

- 72% SS
- 22% N
- 6% IG
- 6% GW

November 7 at 5:00pm

- 50% SS
- 34% N
- 11% IG
- 5% GW
Interviews

- Economics
- Education
- English
- Film/Television
- History
- Information Studies
- Linguistics
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
- Sociology
- Urban Planning
Focus Groups: Key Themes

- **Space**
  - Quiet, secure
  - Separate
  - Differs by department

- **Teaching**
  - Syllabi
  - Assignment design
  - Using Moodle

- **Writing & Presentation Skills**
  - Discipline-specific styles
  - Posters and PowerPoint

- **Community**
  - Dissertation isolation
  - International students
  - Cross-departmental collaboration
Actions taken and planned

**Quick Wins**

- Communication/marketing of existing services
- Signage
- Tailor workshops and other programming to specific needs/demographics

**Longer Term Goals**

- Gallery
- Graduate student space
  - Research/writing space reservations
- Crowdfunding for design contest and demo space
Lessons learned

- We were really ambitious; this is hard.
- Scheduling during a 10 week quarter adds complexity.
- Learned a lot about research design, especially surveys and IRB paperwork.
- Funding can be complicated, even for small things, if the library’s budget isn’t structured for it.
- Need to develop a less labor-intensive/more rapid way to get feedback because it is really valuable information.
Activity snapshot

Group work = purple
Individual work (sitting together) = pink