Transforming Public Services in the “Amazon/Google” Age

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Outline

Organizational theory literature
  - Organizations that fail
  - Organizations that succeed

Pathway for Public Services’ success
  - Information vs. Knowledge
  - Knowing your users
Organizations that Fail

Clayton Christensen’s *Innovator’s Dilemma*

- Well-managed, customer-focused, yet still fail
- **Disruptive technology**
  - Allows a broader group of people do things that only experts or the wealth could do
  - *Initially* inferior in quality
  - Dismissed by established organizations
  - Realization of threat comes too late
Is the Internet the Disruptive Technology for Academic Libraries?

- WWW versus Library Catalog
- Google Answer versus Reference Desk
- Google Scholar versus Disparate Article Databases
Organizations that Succeed

Jim Collin’s *Good to Great & the Social Sectors*

- What you are deeply passionate about
- What you can be the best in the world at
- What drives your resource engine
Information & Knowledge

J.S. Brown & P. Duguid’s *The Social Life of Information*

- Knowledge
  - Entails a knower
  - Hard to transfer
  - Assimilate and digest
- A shift away from information to knowledge means a shift toward people
Librarians’ Unique Roles

Librarians as insiders
- part of a community of practice
- Importance of subject expertise

Librarians as outsiders
- able to translate differences
  - Can’t write or can’t write in the discipline?
  - Can’t research or can’t research in the discipline?
Know Your Users

- Historically focused on faculty
  - Parallel to high-end customers
- Future is with undergraduates
  - Vulnerable
  - Influence work practices
Growing Toolkit

Work practice study

- *in situ* observations
- Dorms, fraternities, gym, student union, dining halls, buses, computer center, and library
- Time matters!
Participatory Design

- Continuous loops back to the user
- Don’t guess, just ask!
- Can still get good input with less than a fully-functional prototype
Usability testing

– Observing *real* users on your website
– Many techniques that can be used throughout the design process
– Classic test- observing *real* users performing typical tasks
– Quality assurance
– 3-5 users is all it takes!
Usability Lite!

1. Define audience & purpose
2. Define key tasks
3. Script the tasks
4. Test & record results
5. Analyze results
6. Translate results into design
7. Repeat steps 4-6

Taken from B. Reeb & D. Lindahl’s LITA Regional Institute on Design Process & Usability
Video Clip from North Carolina State University
Growing Toolkit

Cultural Probes

– a way of obtaining information from the members of our user groups who are more difficult to research by other means

– a way of uncovering or at least shedding light on users social, emotional, and aesthetic values and habits.

– Photography, mapping
Outcomes: Run the Gambit

- Course pages versus subject guides
- Signage redesign
- Furniture design
- Renovation of building
- Leverage their technology
  - Chat services to Instant Messenger
  - Post phone numbers
- Helicopter parents
- Push subject librarians
- Cross-training with Writing Center
Questions?

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