Redefining Academic Librarianship for the Net Generation

Susan Gibbons
Associate Dean, River Campus Libraries
University of Rochester
sgibbons@library.rochester.edu
AIM: susanlgibbons
Outline

Future of Academic Libraries
- Organizations that fail
- Organizations that succeed
- Information vs. Knowledge

Knowing Your Net Generation Users
- Methodologies
- Preliminary results
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 wealthy could do
  - *Initialy* inferior in quality
  - Dismissed by established organizations
  - Realization of threat comes too late
Is the Internet the Disruptive Technology for Academic Libraries?

- Amazon 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
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 as Mediators

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

- Librarians as faculty outsides
  - 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
  - Can't rely on our own experiences
Net Geners- 1982+

Each generation is unique
- Shared history
- Social & cultural center of gravity

Digital technology
- Digital natives
- Digital immigrants

More than just a typical generational gap
- Acquire, assimilate and generate knowledge differently
Ways to Understand Net Geners

- Work Practice Studies
- Reflection Exercises
- Participatory Design
- Usability Studies
- Cultural Probes
Work Practice Study

- *in situ* observations
  - Notes
  - Video
  - Just the facts

- Dorms, fraternities, gym, student union, dining halls, buses, computer center, and library

- Time matters!
Reflection Exercises

Writing & Research
- From assignment to submission
- Focus on where, what, who & how
- Be careful of the “why?”

Intellectual Self-Assessment
- Strengths & weaknesses
- Defining moments & individuals
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
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
Developing R&D Culture

“When I was in college...”
- Best way or only way
- Viable alternatives

OK to fail

Student demonstrations

Provide “safe” spaces for staff learning

Provide gadgets

Audit classes

Visit dorms, dining halls
Developing R&D Culture

- Play with furniture
- Food, money & sleep
- Read/Watch & discuss
- Everyone is involved
Questions?

Contact info:

AIM: susanlgibbons

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