Showing the Way
A UX project into navigation and wayfinding in 21 libraries

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Head of Assessment
Background
Aims of the project

1. Make changes so it is easier for users to find things within the physical libraries
   a) Books on shelves
   b) Physical features (e.g. stairs; toilets)
   c) Services (e.g. printers; self-issue machines)

2. Cascade UX techniques across libraries

3. Development opportunity for lower-level front-line staff

4. Embed culture of assessment
Project teams

- Health Care Libraries
  - David Phillips
  - Jack Perkin
  - Sally Phipps
  - Bridget Lucas
  - Aleks Brett
  - Sue Riley
• Humanities 1
  • Natasha Kennedy
  • Colin Walker
  • Mary Atkinson
  • Harriet David

• Humanities 2
  • Jo English
  • Tom Dale
  • Ross Jones
• Humanities 3
  • Chloe Bolsover
  • Erin McNulty
  • Madeleine Ahearn
  • Ben Gable
  • Grace Brown
  • Jennifer Bladen-Hovell
  • Alex Zaleski
• Humanities 4
  • Lidio Ferrando
  • Hitomi Hall
  • Li Zhang
  • Radhika Jones

• Social Sciences 1
  • Craig Finlay
  • Joanna Soedring
  • Rebeca Otazua
  • Sam Truman
• Social Sciences 2
  • Kate Jackson
  • Sarah Alam
  • Tom Vickers
  • Sarah Wilson
  • Shehzad Naqvi
  • Kat Steiner
Project plan (x 7)

- Senior management buy-in
- Project teams briefing
- Training – data gathering methods
- Data gathering
- Data review (eye tracking)
- Training – analysis & prototyping
- Prototyping and data gathering (A1 and A2)
• Training – deep analysis
• Prototyping B1 and B2
• Data gathering
• Analysis and conclusions
• Costed proposals
• Write up and present to senior management
• Written handbook of principles
Methods – data gathering

• Observation - repeated observations of people at specific ‘navigational decision points’
• Touchstone tours - experienced users give tour of the library
• Treasure hunt - experienced users take photos of things e.g. “what I would show a new student” and talk through choice
Methods – data gathering

• Eye tracking glasses - novice users asked to locate a book, take to photocopier then go to group study room.
Methods – prototyping

- Fast, low cost, temporary
  - Flip charts, printed A3 and A4, cardboard
    “This is a window blind” “This is the copier”
Methods – analysis

- Rose-thorn-bud
- Empathy mapping
- Affinity mapping
- Storytelling
- 6-8-5 (potential solutions)
- How? Now. Wow!
Findings: General

• Library users navigate differently from library staff.
  • “Permission” to be in space – go ‘round the back’ of shelving
  • Considerate of others – not browse shelves in Reading Rooms
  • Unaware of whole picture – “there is a downstairs?!”
Findings: General

• Library users feel anxious and uncertain when navigating the library, so need reassurance that they are on the correct ‘track’.
  • Duplicate classification runs give false assurance
  • Need to remember original instructions
  • Map orientation
Findings: General

• Signage cannot make up for poor layout design.
Findings: General

- Not all information has to be presented at once – step-by-step at decision points.
Findings: General

• Library users are not psychic. They will not know how it used to be 5 years ago. They are unlikely to refer to a compass. Labelling of physical spaces has to match labelling on ‘catalogue’.
  • “North stairs”
  • “Phase 2 seating”
  • “Nissan collection”
Findings: Across libraries

- Users can cope with more than one classification scheme in the same space if and only if they are obviously different.
Findings: Specific to each Library

• Best location for the self-issue machine
Findings: Specific to each Library

• Change background colour of signs so more noticeable against white walls
Findings: Specific to each Library

- Inject local ‘flavour’ into signage
Findings: Specific to each Library

- Use signs that can project so users can find the start of the main LoC sections.
Impact of findings (COVID edition)

• Successfully engaged 34 front-line staff with UX process, providing them with the skills, experience and confidence to continue user-focused assessment.

• Demonstrated that library users accept prototyping and experimentation, even in historic libraries.
Impact of findings (COVID edition)

• “Good navigation and wayfinding seems even more important in these times when we want readers to be self-sufficient and minimise face-to-face interactions with staff.”
Next steps

• Cost proposals to implement changes:
  • new signs and maps
  • changes to the catalogue
  • moving collections / services

• Write up and present to senior management

• Write handbook of the principles of useful signage, maps, navigation and wayfinding for the Bodleian Libraries, including templates and examples.
Thank you

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- @qualitydog

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