University of Connecticut

Virtual Focus Group – Free, Easy & Gets Results

Why A Focus Group?

"Focus groups can be very instructive and the results can in fact represent huge swaths of your campus. You collect textured, rich data as opposed to numbers that are hard to parse (I personally have never heard data "speak")."

Susan Herbst
President, UConn
Inside Higher Ed, June, 2011

Why A Virtual Focus Group?

- No need to gather staff and students in one place at one time.
- Reduces the pitfall of negative group dynamics.
- Lessens the influence of the moderator.
- Provides opportunities for ongoing idea development.
- Gains a full, written record of all comments.
- Lowers usage of an important asset: Time.

How We Did It:

- All five regional libraries - common set of very focused questions.
- *Wordpress* software because of blog experience.
- Students were asked to visit the blog to answer each of the five questions and then to revisit later as often as possible to respond to the comments of others.
- We took a very relaxed approach to moderation, attempting to avoid active involvement which might derail or divert discussions.
- Two week project.
- No substantial incentive to participate.
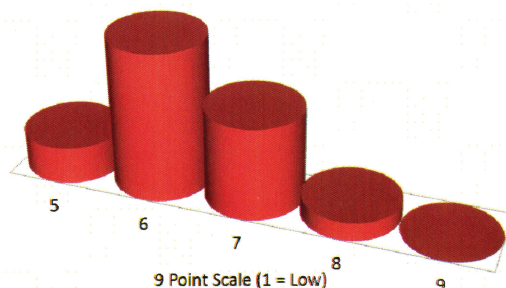- Online satisfaction survey of participants at the end.

How Did It Turn Out?

(One Library's Experience)

LibQual+ (2010)
180 Survey Responses
80 comments,
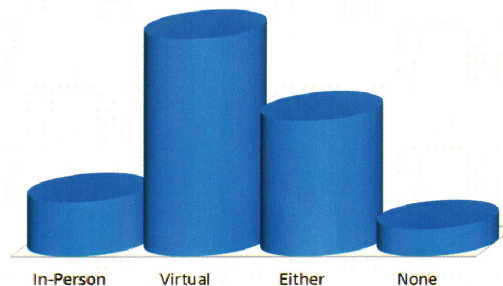60% of which were "I like the library"
or "I like the staff"

Virtual Focus Group (2011)
6 Virtual Focus Group Members
100 comments specific to library use and needs

Watching It Happen Is Fun!

Submitted on 2011/11/14 at 8:52 pm
@uconn.edu

The library does a great job with having books, journals and articles available (in house and online) for a variety of research topics and subjects of interest. I do applaud the library's interlibrary loan system that allows for books that the library does not have, to be shipped free of charge to the library and taken out by the student. This feature is great and helps with staying abreast with developments in my field when I am not financially apt to purchase books on my own. More relevant and low-cost to student features like interlibrary loan would better help students stay abreast with developments in their field of interest. Also better advertising features like interlibrary loans or the new releases shelf at the entrance would be beneficial to users of the library.

Trecker Library Survey Terminology Virtual Focus Group — Q 1 — 8 View Post

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Submitted on 2011/11/13 at 3:16 pm | In reply to uconn first yr grad.
uconn first yr grad
onn.edu

As for hard copies of library materials, recent academic books, course-relevant nonfiction and fiction books, and reference books where you can get an overview by flipping though it (and identifying useful chapters/sections) is great. Otherwise, requesting it, you don't know if it's of the quality you want or if it has the info you need. I, personally, am ok with reading articles online, rather than having academic journals on hand. But the more popular weekly/monthly journals (and maybe newspapers) which people browse may be nice to have.

It's a little more difficult to browse an academic library (the KF500 S73, or QA 13.467 R system is hard to figure out), but the Dewey-decimal libraries I've enjoyed have good browsing. You can find good books this way, by being able to see hard copies (what is out there but that you may have missed in an internet search).

Trecker Library Survey Terminology Virtual Focus Group — Q4 — 9 View Post

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Submitted on 2011/11/13 at 6:16 am | In reply to uconn first yr grad.
uconn first yr grad
onn.edu

I will modify my response to say:

It takes a lot of work for a library to allow people to stay

Trecker Library Survey Terminology Virtual

Did the Virtual Focusers Like It?

Focus Group Satisfaction

9 Point Scale (1 = Low)

Focus Group Preference

In-Person | Virtual | Either | None

Bill Uricchio, Survey & Assessment Team
University of Connecticut Libraries
william.uricchio@lib.uconn.edu