Embrace Data

Finding Unexpected Benefits in Qualitative Methods for Organizational Change

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About me

Librarian, University Library System, University of Pittsburgh
  Pitt: 32,000 students, 13,000 faculty and staff
  The ULS: 200 librarians and staff

Background in ULS digital library program, currently Coordinator of Digital Scholarship

Working on strategic planning within ULS

Working on developing new programs, services, relationships, and partnerships
Our organization:

Like many, in a time of shifting services and repositioning

Education Advisory Board. (2011). *Redefining the Academic Library: Managing the Migration to Digital Information Services*.
Our organization:

Like many, in a time of shifting services and repositioning.
Our organization:

Like many, in a time of shifting services and repositioning

Embedding Academic and Research Libraries in the Curriculum
Solvable Challenge: Those that we understand and know how to solve

Rethinking the Roles and Skills of Librarians
Solvable Challenge: Those that we understand and know how to solve

Sources of data for decision-making

"In the past 2 years, has your library regularly solicited feedback about services or collections from library users in any of the following ways?"

We also like to survey

Q30: Non-use or Nonawareness of ULS Services by Respondent Type: N=968

Undergraduate  Grad/PhD  Faculty

from University Library System, University of Pittsburgh: 2013 General Survey
Sources of data for decision-making

"In the past 2 years, has your library regularly solicited feedback about services or collections from library users in any of the following ways?"


Doing more down here
2014: “Strategic Audit” of Digital Scholarship

Qualitative methods, but not a formal research study

Semi-structured interviews (n=22), transcriptions, open and closed coding

Interviews with internal groups, faculty, and peer libraries
Collected great data, supported findings like these...

**Finding:** Faculty are working, and sometimes struggling, to build communities of practice in the area of digital scholarship.

**Finding:** For themselves, faculty question the efficacy of existing models for technology trainings.

**Finding:** ULS staff feel services and resources are not visible or known well enough outside of the library. ULS staff possess expertise and conduct training in a variety of areas that are not visible or do not have a consolidated presence.

**Finding:** Peers are experimenting with organizational structures to support digital scholarship, but commonly make use of cross-organizational collaborative groups.
...but the act of data collection had its own effect

“The researcher acts as the ‘human instrument’ of data collection” (Hoepfl, 1997); the act is a social exchange

The Observer Effect

→ Participatory Design
Data collection is a social action: Unanticipated benefits from qualitative methods

Externally

- Registered library’s interest and stake in key areas
- Repositioned library as *listener* instead of *seller* of services
- A gateway to partnerships, participatory design in spaces and services
- Gentle advocacy
- Builds relationships, identifies networks
Data collection is a social action: Unanticipated benefits from qualitative methods

Internally

• Excites staff, builds confidence, socializes new initiatives
• Models further work, broader repositioning
• A gateway to participatory design in spaces and services
• Seeds new spaces and services with actual, not hypothetical users
Other Examples
Ethnographic Studies in Libraries

“...the methodologies used in the project helped to create an environment conducive to generating new perspectives, which in turn has affected staff members’ day-to-day work.”

“This collaborative atmosphere was also fostered by the research and ethnographic aspects of the project. A focus on doing research created a wonderfully neutral, exploratory environment. “

Other Examples
Qualitative Toolkits to Support Data Management

CARDIO enables you to:
- collaboratively assess data management requirements, activity, and capacity at your institution
- build consensus between data creators, information managers and service providers
Challenges

Time and labor-intensive, questions of scalability

Requires some expertise, appropriate interviewers

Limits on use of, sharing of, conclusions from data
Thanks! Questions?
References


