2017

Space Invaders: Measuring Use and Satisfaction Through Mixed Methods

Susan [Gardner] Archambault

Space Invaders:
Measuring Use and Satisfaction Through Mixed Methods

This recipe measures usage and satisfaction within a designated library space by blending direct observations, user surveys, and a dash of informal polling.

Susan Gardner Archambault, Loyola Marymount University, susan.archambault@lmu.edu

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Discover which areas of your library space users go bananas for and what furniture configurations they cherry pick, along with the ideal blend of technology, resources, and activities. Chop the space into different observation zones in order to peel back in-depth layers of user behavior. Mix apples and oranges together; include both direct and indirect measurements. Whip the results into a recipe for a successful redesign.

DIETARY STANDARDS

ACRL *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* (2011) Principle 6, Indicators 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8

COOKING TIME

Requires several hours of preparation, followed by an extended period of marinating (such as two weeks) for the actual assessment to be carried out.

COOKING TECHNIQUES

Direct observations, surveys, and whiteboard polling

INGREDIENTS

- Online forms for recording the observations
- iPads for recording the observations
- Observers assigned to observation zones
- User survey
- Incentives for user survey
- Whiteboards and markers

PREPARATION

- Create a floor plan of your space divided into assigned zones for observation (see example floor plan linked in the Resources section).
- Create a "direct observation" form (see example direct observation form linked in the Resources section).
- Conduct a pilot with all observers to tweak the observation form and reach agreement on the coding scheme.
- Select dates and times for your observations.
- Create a user survey with questions that mirror the questions on your "direct observation" form.
- Create questions for whiteboard polling.
- Obtain IRB approval.

ASSESSMENT STEPS

1. Assign a different observer to each zone and have them record the behaviors, possessions, and environmental aspects observed in their zone at the designated dates/times.
2. During the same time period as the observations, ask users of the library space to fill out the user survey to capture self-reported usage and satisfaction with the same things you are directly observing so that you can compare results.
3. Post questions as whiteboard polls in the same space during the same time period of your observations. Example questions include: "On this map, put a smiley face next to the things that you like" and "What one adjective best describes this space?" Take pictures of your answers daily and clean off the boards to make way for new responses.
4. Analyze the data from each of the three methods, including the coding of all the comments, and stir it together. Along with frequencies, you can look at selected cross-tabs (such as gender and behavior) and visualize usage through a heat map. You can also look at routine usage statistics of the space during the same time period, as applicable.

5. Identify major findings and make
    changes to improve the space.

ALLERGY WARNINGS
Create the user survey in multiple formats
(print and online) if possible, since user
preferences vary.

Try to be discreet when observing your users
so they don't get nervous. Be sure to have
"can't tell" as an option on your observation
form in case getting too close would
jeopardize user comfort.

Be sure each observation point is clearly
labeled in your physical space.

Due to its informal nature, users may not take
the whiteboard polling seriously.

CHEF'S NOTE
The three ingredients of direct observations,
surveys, and whiteboard polls can be
combined to solidify evidence of what
users want within a designated library
space. Sometimes there are surprising
findings, such as students desiring quiet and
privacy over collaborative space.

RESOURCES
Sample Floor Plan Divided into Zones: https://
lmu.box.com/floor.

Sample Direct Observation Form:
https://lmu.box.com/patronobserv.