Libraries as Flexible, Collaborative, Informal Learning Spaces (ILS): The Use of a Multi-method Ethnographic Approach to Understand Students' Use and Perception of the Library's Discovery Centre

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Abstract:

Purpose - Digital disruption is creating opportunities to reimagine the role libraries can play as informal learning space (ILS).

Understanding how students use these spaces and what they expect from these learning environments will better inform the strategic development of university space.

Unfortunately, user needs assessment relating to library space is mostly quantitative and rarely relies on studies using multiple techniques to obtain a holistic view of users perceptions and behavior (Given & Archibald, 2015).

Environment - In September of 2014, Carleton University Library inaugurated its Discovery Centre. This space, along with its furniture and technology, was designed to enable users to configure personal spaces to best suit their learning needs.

Design/methodology - This study examines the lived experiences and perspectives of students using this non-traditional library space.

Data was collected in the Discovery Centre throughout 2015 using a combination of three "**in-situ**" methods: direct ethnographic observation, spot individual and group interviews of students, and one-on-one interviews of staff working in the Centre.

1. Ethnographic observation

Observational sessions were conducted over a period of a year by the same observer. During the spring semester, two additional ethnographic observers collected data. Each observer was asked to write about their view of the use and value of the Discovery Center prior to starting their observational sessions.

2. Group/individual "in situ" <u>spot</u> interviews

Students were asked about their use and perception of the Discovery Centre.

3. Staff "in situ" interviews

Staff working in the Discovery Center were asked about their accounts and perceptions of use of this space by students.

Originality/value - From the preliminary analysis of the data, a number of themes emerged relating to daily, weekly, term behavioral cycles to more focused themes relating to disciplinary differences, group dynamics, noise optimization, furniture preference, technology usage for collaboration. In addition, the frequent positive feedback received by students during interviews validates the use of this inclusive approach in providing a more complete understanding about value students place on these informal spaces for learning.

Public and School Libraries in the Florida Panhandle: Straddling the Digital Divide

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Abstract:

Problem Statement

Broadband in the Florida Panhandle. Investment in Florida's Broadband has been growing steadily since the early 2010s (Broadbandnow, 2015). However, there are pockets of limited or no access to Broadband that still exist in the Florida Panhandle (Broadbandnow, 2015). Additional research into the quality and quantity of Broadband access in these rural areas is needed to highlight how rural young adults can be better served by their public and school libraries.

Library services for rural youth. Rural librarian and rural young adult patrons have received little attention in LIS scholarly literature. This is unfortunate since the majority of libraries in the U.S. are in small and rural communities (Swan, Grimes, & Owen, 2013). More research into library services of rural communities is needed to better understand the current status of rural library services for youth and what improvements should be made.

Research Questions

With this background in mind, the research questions for the proposed study are as follows:

RQ1: What is the extent of Broadband access in the Florida Panhandle area?

RQ2: How are Florida Panhandle youth impacted by this level of access?

RQ3: How are public and school libraries in the Florida Panhandle designing youth services in light of this level of access?

Methodology

The proposed poster illustrates mixed methods research which quantitatively assesses the current level of Broadband access for public and school libraries in the Florida panhandle, and what services they offer that might bridge the Digital Divide for youths in rural communities who do not have home access to Broadband. This will be accomplished via the use of a survey instrument. Follow-up interviews will qualitatively explore the factors that affect access and services.

References

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Social Support for Autism Patients and Caregivers: Is the Q&A Forum Helping Users?

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Abstract: Autism spectrum disorders (ADS) have become an important public health concern and are the second most common serious developmental disability after mental retardation/intellectual impairment. For autism patients and their relatives, the World Wide Web is apparently the most frequently used way to obtain autism-related information (Mansell & Morris, 2004). The open social Q&A discussion forums provide an efficient platform to autism patients and their relatives where they can ask for help and advice from other users, make contributions to others, receive assistance from the forum, and share their experiences in the community.

This study centres on the investigation of user behaviour patterns and user-oriented term use patterns regarding autism based on the analysis of logs from a social Q&A