New Hires Focus Group UX Study – Final Report
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Introduction

Over the past year McLaughlin Library has seen an unusually high amount of new faces roaming the building, including myself. I wanted to take a closer look at the experiences and opinions of my new colleagues. The focus group provided a format where I could bring together the new hires and we could collectively engage in a meaningful conversation. We explored the interview and orientation processes as well as Library space and culture. There were 7 participants representing the Learning Commons, Archives, Access Services, and the RE & SC, IL and D & A Teams.

Results

1. Interview Process
   • Overall new hires thought the interview process was fair and relatively standard.
   • Suggestion: Librarians in the focus group agreed that building in some alone time for the candidate during the interview process would help reduce overall stress levels.

2. Orientation
   • On a scale of 1 – 5 (1 = disappointing; 5 = exceeding expectations) participants ranked their orientation experience on average at 2.7.
   • Suggestions:
     o Participants indicated that a more structured orientation with relatively standardized “steps” would be beneficial;
     o Some participants expressed that they were unsure how to proceed in their work after orientation. The focus group agreed that having a meaningful project to immediately start working on would alleviate this uncertainty and help the new hires feel valued; and
     o Shadowing was seen as a highly successful strategy to acclimate new hires.
   • In response to this conversation the New Hire Orientation Handbook was created.

3. Library as Student Space
   • In general participants felt that the Library was very student-oriented compared to previous places of employment.
   • One participant summed up the general sentiments:
     "The Library feels like students' own living rooms at times and not in a bad way... in a positive student-centric kind of way."
   • Another participant mentioned that McLaughlin Library represents 90% of on campus student space which was very surprising to other participants. Participants perceived that the Library was physically too small to meet the needs of the entire student population.

4. Write Down 3 Words to Describe the Library's Culture
   • The words friendly or caring appeared in 6 out of 7 participants' responses.
• Relaxed, laid-back, or flexible were in 4/7 participants’ responses.
• Words with negative associations included:
  o Disjointed – Some participants thought that more cross-team collaboration would be beneficial. There is a perceived lack of knowledge of other teams and even what other people within the same team are doing.
    "There are so many people I still don’t know even though I was taken around on my first day... I think it is very easy for departments to just exist in their own sphere."
  o Disorganized – Some participants wanted more structure in the orientation process, within their specific teams and throughout the organization, in general. Participants wanted more information about where the Library is going and how each team is helping to realize that goal(s). How is our vision and values being played out within each team?
  o Complicated – Some participants felt that understanding the roles and functions of various staff and teams was the most difficult part of the onboarding process. In fact, most participants still feel like they don’t completely understand this.
    “Some of the complication arises out of the fact that it is a very relaxed workplace so people kind of do their own thing. Some of that also comes out of the fact that there are just so many things going on and so it’s kind of hard to keep track of.”

5. The Area of the Library that Needs the Most Improvement is __________________. Answer: Communication
• Communication was discussed from many different angles including:
  o Enhancing communication of our services, programs and the role of the Library to our users;
  o Better communication/outreach to faculty specifically;
  o More inter-team communication; and
  o Greater communication of strategic directions and how individuals are expected to contribute to that vision.