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UXLabs:
UX research at the University of Huddersfield

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Myself and colleague Bryony Ramsden presented our work at this year's conference at UXLabs. It was a great opportunity to talk to interested UXLibbers about the ongoing UX work we have been doing at the University of Huddersfield. Awareness of ethnographic research in libraries has been slowly growing in our library service and a UX research group endorsed by the Senior Management team has been established. Lots of positives have come from the setting up of such a group and it has been a good way of getting UX research embedded in many of the practices that we do within Computing and Library Services (CLS), as well as getting staff engaged with using many of the methods. It has helped get the message out there that using this line of research can bring a far richer picture about our users, their experiences and preferences than more traditional research methods could ever do. It even helped to get the service a compliance plus in the Customer Service Excellence award. There have been challenges with no extra time to carry out the work and staff have had to fit it into the busy day job.

For UXLabs, to help convey the four projects that have been started since the group was established, a chatterbox (also called a paper fortune teller) was devised to highlight the four main challenges that we faced as a service: how to maximise library space; how to increase library usage of both International and Computing Students; and how to increase staff competence and confidence in using the IT/AV equipment within lecture rooms – see Figure 1 for our template. The idea was that conference delegates would relive their childhood by using the chatterbox to select one of the challenges, giving us a chance to talk about how we set about doing UX research to help bring about some solutions. We also included the 8 methods/resources we'd used to do the research: cognitive mapping, retrospective process interview, semi-structured interviews, graffiti walls, observations, LEGO, Post-its and resource cards.

It was an interesting way of stimulating conversations with delegates and people did come up with solutions for some of the issues/ways of progressing the research. Other delegates were interested in the chatterboxes themselves and asked how we had made them. There are many templates available (e.g. at: https://vintagetoysblog.wordpress.com/2013/02/25/paper-fortune-teller-free-printable-template/) – just search on Google for 'chatterbox template word'.

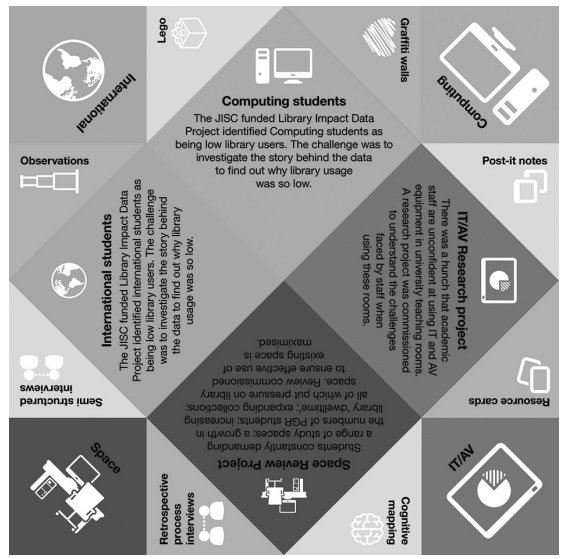

Figure 1 UXLabs chatterbox template.

I had an opportunity a few weeks later to repeat the exercise at an internal event where CLS have a chance to showcase projects and service developments to the wider university. This time we made attendees make up their own chatterbox using the instructions. There was an opportunity to talk with academics, librarians from our collaborative colleges and even the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching & Learning about the research we had undertaken, and again it produced a useful exercise for spreading the message and telling the stories.

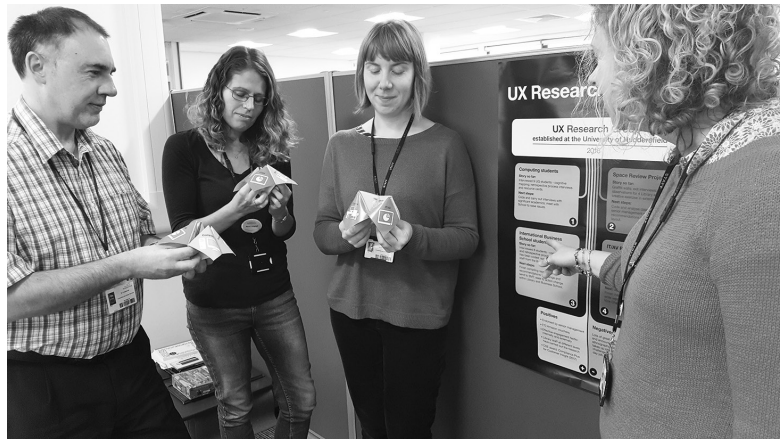

Figure 2 Using the chatterboxes at the CLS showcase.