Building an understanding of users and their needs

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Why involve users?

To create content, tools and environments that are:

**Useful**
- is this the right tool?

**Usable**
- is the tool easy to use?

(Nielsen, 2003)
What roles will users play in your library? In your website?

- Users can be:
  - Undifferentiated “users”
  - Audience segments
  - Research respondents
  - Co-designers/creators
  - Content providers/creators/aggregators
  - System/tool developers
  - Decision-makers
# Types of user involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
<th>Periodic</th>
<th>One-off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisional Role</strong></td>
<td>▪ Board</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
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| **Advisory Role**    | ▪ Advisory Groups  | ▪ Strategic Planning Consultations | ▪ Project-based consultations regarding:  
                        | ▪ Community Partners | ▪ Annual Surveys               |  
                        |                    | | ▪ Facilities / Renovation  
                        |                    | | ▪ Service Development  
                        |                    | | ▪ Website Development  
                        |                    | | ▪ Patron comments    |
| **Service Role**     | ▪ Volunteers       | None          | None                             |


Providing multiple ways to be involved

- **Multiple Channels**
  - Phone
  - Face-to-face
  - Online

- **Multiple Research Methods**
  - Interviews
  - Town Halls
  - Meetings / Workshops / Focus Groups
  - Surveys
  - Contextual Inquiry
  - Usability Testing

- **Different Levels of Commitment/Effort/Anonymity**
Taking consultation online

- **Web 2.0 technologies** (Stephens, 2006):
  - Blogs (Ann Arbor District Library, [http://www.aadl.org](http://www.aadl.org))
  - RSS (Hennepin County Library, [http://www.hclib.org](http://www.hclib.org))
  - Instant Messaging (St. Joseph County Library, [http://sjcpl.lib.in.us](http://sjcpl.lib.in.us))
  - Wikis (St. Joseph County Library, [http://sjcpl.lib.in.us](http://sjcpl.lib.in.us))
  - Photo-Sharing (Gwinnett Public Library, [http://www.flickr.com/photos/gwinnettcountrypubliclibrary](http://www.flickr.com/photos/gwinnettcountrypubliclibrary))

- **Web 1.0 technologies**:
  - Forums
  - Live Chat
  - Surveys
  - Polls
  - Internet Conferencing (e.g. NetMeeting, WebEx)
Improving ongoing involvement

- Find ways to capture and utilize unsolicited comments received through all channels
- Provide ways for users to discuss ideas, issues and concerns with one another, as well as with library representatives
- Consider recruiting users for long-term involvement in programs, projects or services, in advisory or decision-making capacities
- Engage users as co-designers and co-developers
- Support users as content providers, creators and aggregators
Building an understanding of users and their needs

- Make research tools and findings from all initiatives easily available within your organization
  - Share surveys, scripts, technologies, etc. between research initiatives
  - Gather findings and recommendations from all research activities
  - Don’t forget to include findings from informal research methods

- Share the high-level findings, along with significant project-level findings, with the entire organization
  - Do high-level analysis i.e. overall, what is our research telling us?
  - Assign responsibility for this high-level analysis to a person or group
  - Schedule regular research updates to the entire organization
What roles will librarians play in your library? In your website?

- Librarians can be:
  - Invisible Enabler
  - Information Broker
  - Trusted Authority
  - Advisor
  - Partner
  - Researcher
  - Facilitator
What roles will your library play?

- Libraries can be:
  - Collections - physical and virtual
  - Services
  - Environments - physical and virtual
  - Information commons (Kranich, 2004)
Key thoughts

- Consciously consider the role of users and of librarians
- Provide multiple types of user involvement as well as multiple channels and methods, requiring differing levels of commitment/effort/anonymity on the part of users
- Find ways to start, continue and deepen conversations with users
- Consider ongoing ways to involve users
- Use what you learn through your engagement with them to build an understanding of users and their needs

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References

