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Information Experience Design:
An approach for exploratory, user- and information-centred outreach

Outreach in libraries is about finding ways to connect with non-, infrequent, or traditionally underserved library users, and make them feel part of the library community and even the broader community that the library serves.

Successful and effective outreach only happens when the library can offer information environments, services and programs that the abovementioned user groups find meaningful, accessible, and relevant to their needs and problems. Development of such outreach should be underpinned by a rich understanding of users and their engagement with information, as two key elements of a library's mission.

One approach that allows such an exploratory, user- and information-centred outreach is "information experience design" (IXD) (Bruce et. al. 2017). This is an approach usable for service and program design that places users' engagement with information in its focal point.

Information experience design is constituted of two phases. The first phase, as any design process, starts with user-type research. This is to obtain a clear understanding of the target users. However, having an information lens, the research phase of information experience design gives special attention to understanding users' information worlds. This is an in-depth investigation into how the individual understands information, what information is for them, or how they engage with information. In the information research field, this is studying people's "information experience" (Bruce, Davis, Hughes, Partridge, Stoodley, 2014).

Research into people's information experience is often a deep qualitative investigation that results in rich insight into their engagement with information. Such an investigation attends to all aspects of the relationship between the individual and their information use. Therefore, the outcome of information experience research is far beyond a surface understanding of demographics and the explicit information needs of people. It not only describes mechanical and observable elements of people's engagement with information (e.g. their information behaviors and skills), but also touches on other more hidden and implicit elements involved in engagement with information (e.g. how they feel or think as they engage with information).

It is important to note that in researching people's information experience, different communities of users should be studied separately. This is because of the differences in people's characteristics, contexts in which they engage with information and their motivation for engaging with. Altogether, these factors

make their information experience unique to their group and varied from all other user groups.

Information experience design continues with a second phase, which has a practical nature. During this phase, tailored services and programs are designed and developed for specific target user groups and based on the understanding of their information experience resulting from the research phase.

In the second phase, the library goes through their current programs and services and determines the extent to which the current practice addresses the target user group's information experience. This reveals overlaps and gaps in the current practice. Such a review informs the library about what is functioning well, what needs to be improved or changed, and what is overlooked in their current practice. Based on the outcome of the review, the library designs and develops new actions or modifies what they have in place. This ensures that their target users' engagement with information is catered for in what they offer so the specific user group is more likely to be attracted to the library and its activities.

Composed of research and practical phases, and holding an information lens, information experience design is translates theory of people's information experience into practice. Such a structure makes it a suitable strategy for the design and development of exploratory, and yet user- and information-centred outreach.

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