



# UX CAFÉ AT THE LIBRARIES

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## PROPOSAL

### RESEARCH PROBLEM

As the Penn State University Libraries (PSUL) migrate the web content to Drupal, many questions regarding how to improve the libraries' web presence are raised. Questions like: "Can users find this piece of information?", "Does the top menu fit into user's categories?", or "Does the terminology or labeling make sense to our students?" to name a few. By looking at the web site analytics, A/B testing, and heat maps, we are able to answer some of the questions. However, these types of data fail to record the personal context of individual users, for example, their background, information needs, perceptions of the web site, and satisfaction with the interaction with the site.

I have done several in-personal user studies throughout my career. In addition to conceiving and preparing effective approaches for research objectives, another main hurdle I have to overcome is recruiting participants. I have tried setting up a table in the libraries, talking to strangers, notifying library managers to inform their student workers, or asking acquaintances to spread the word, etc. Though I always manage to get enough participants, the size of my research sample is not something I can fully control.

### DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RESEARCH

Several user studies and blog posts (see the references below) have observed that users generally prefer an agile and iterative process of web development to a complete web site re-design. For the current migration and for the future, the UL Web Implementation and Management Team (WIMT) makes it a goal that changes will happen progressively based on the results of regular user studies. Thus, the collection of user data, both remotely and in-person, needs to be a commitment from the libraries instead of sporadic events.

To facilitate user input channel, I would like to propose a "UX café" (UX short for user experience), a setting where the library users can come in and chat with me about their experience in exchange for a free cup of coffee and maybe some snacks (depending on the budget). The UX café will be held regularly, once or twice a week, on the same day(s), at the same time. As the UX librarian and the host of the café, I will either prepare some questions that WIMT needs to answer, or let users show me how they find resources online with no specific guideline. It will not be a setting for in-depth studies, such as completing usability tasks on the libraries web site, but rather, it is a chance for me to get to know our users and their experiences, thoughts, and ideas. Moreover, I envision UX café will pave the way for us to conduct more in-depth, time-consuming research for all types of user experience for the libraries, for example, the library spaces.

For a small cost, I can see extra benefits coming out of this. First, we can compile an e-mail list for students who are interested in participating in the user studies for the libraries. Second, students would know that we care about what they think and feel encouraged and appreciated when sharing their experiences. Third, through the UX café, the libraries can promote the concept of user experience and how it can be applied to the decision making process.

My regular deliverables for this project will be gathering inputs, sharing my findings during the weekly WIMT meetings, and following up with strategies for improvements. My ultimate goal is to help the PSUL website evolve into an easy-to-use, user-centered web environment for our users.

## REFERENCES

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## PROPOSED PLAN OF WORK

If the fund is granted, I plan to have the UX café launched in Fall 2016 and the program will be held regularly for both fall and spring semesters. The following is the tentative plan and timeline.

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### MARKETING

- Contact the Outreach Coordinator for the possibility of setting up a table to promote the UX café during the Open House week. (Summer 2016)
- Contact Public Relations and Marketing Department for signage and social media exposure. (Summer 2016)

- Contact the library operation managers to email the student worker about the program. (Two weeks before Fall 2016)

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## COFFEE & SNACKS

- Arrange with McKinnon's Café for one Coffee Traveler delivered on the day of the program, for example, every Wednesday morning. Inquire into the possible sponsorship or discount from McKinnon's Café. (Summer 2016)
- Possibly purchase granola bars in bulk to reduce cost and for long preserving time. Chocolate bars for students who are allergic to nuts.

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## LOCATION

If the proposal is accepted, I will submit my plan to the Administrative Office and work with the Facility Department to finalize the location of the UX café. Here are some of my ideas:

- The area by the revolving door entrance in Central Pattee.
- The area next to the Common Service desk.
- One of the instruction rooms inside the Knowledge Common.

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## FORMAT

As mentioned earlier, I will be the host of UX café. Other librarians and staff are welcome to join me, but preferably one more co-host at a time. I can see that the members from the WIMT gain some insight from observing students on site. The plan is to have a conversation with one student at a time. A sign-up sheet will be available 15 minutes prior to the opening of the café. Each slot is 15 minutes. I can talk to eight students in one two-hour session. During the meeting with students I will explain the goal of this initiatives, and ask for the permission to record the interview and screen capture if needed. I will submit my proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

This is not a Usability Team's project. Currently, the team does not meet regularly and the team leader, Bonnie Imler, is on sabbatical. Nonetheless, the result will benefit all the campus libraries since we share most of our web presence and resources. I see this initiative as a proof of concept, which the format may be changed or refined based on the turnout and the feedback from the participants.

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## REPORT

In addition to submitting the final report to the LFO Research Committee, I would like to present my studies within the libraries as well as submit proposals to conferences about the idea of the UX café and the outcome.

## BUDGET

The following budget is based on the café being scheduled once a week for two semesters.

Coffee Traveler from McKinnon's Café (serve 12): \$12.95 per box + tax	
\$14 x 18 (weeks in one semester) x 2 semesters -----	\$504
Granola bars / chocolate bars (288 bars needed if good attendance)	
Currently \$6 /12 bars in a box from Amazon Pantry -----	\$200
(additional fund sought in case of fluctuation)	
<b>Total</b> -----	<b>\$704</b>

