



Using Anthropology to Unite with Users

Breakout Sessions
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 acrl 2011
peer reviewed

March 30–April 2, 2011
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



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Breakout Session 1:
Developing Research Questions

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A Good Research Question...

- Is sufficiently narrow
- Answers the “So what?” question

-For further reading: Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., Williams, Joseph M. *The Craft of Research*, 2nd Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

3

Research Topics: Libraries and Users in Social Context

- Library Users
 - Knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, socioeconomic status
- Library as a System
 - Library administration, library faculty and staff, library policies, architecture and technology

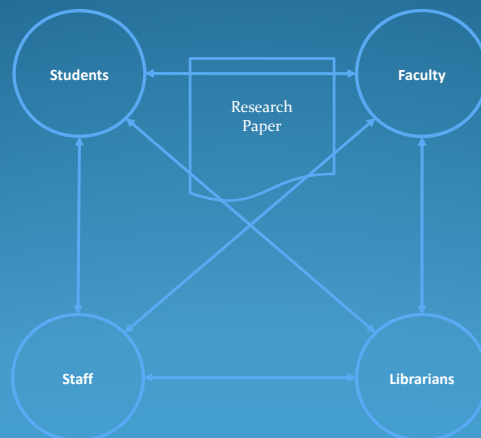
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Research Topics: Libraries and Users in Social Context (cont'd)

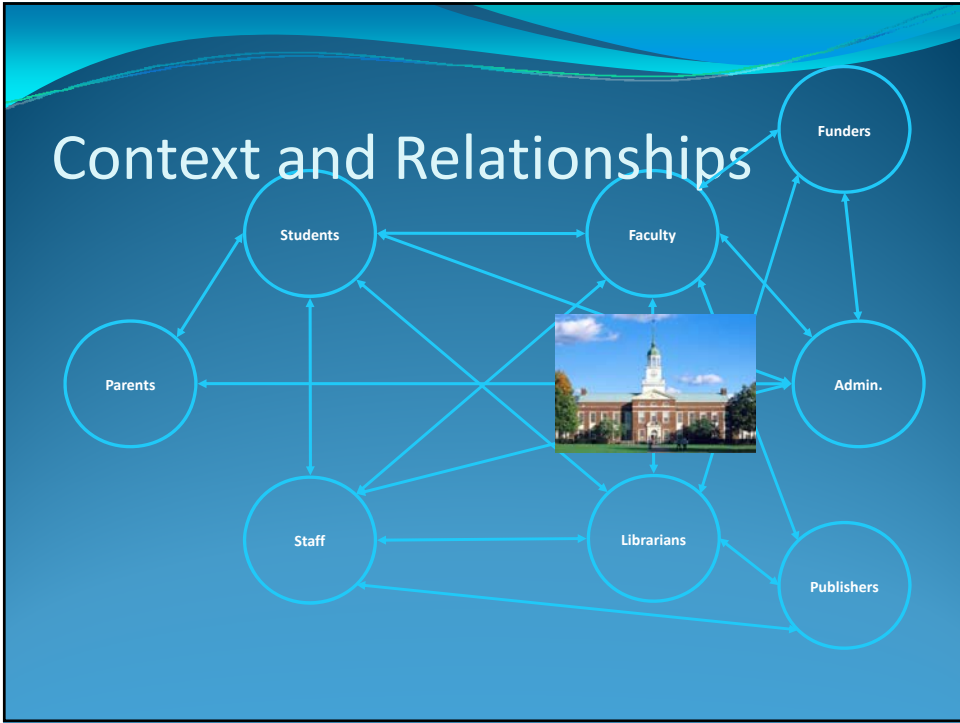
- University as a System
 - University administration, departments, faculty, university policies
- World in which the Library and University Exist
 - Information world (e.g., Google, public libraries), policymakers that affect the library and univ., funders, vendors, library schools, library professional associations

5

Context and Relationships



6



- ## Reviewing the Literature
- Look at relevant data your organization has collected (focus groups, user testing, surveys like LibQual)
 - Look at relevant library studies and others (e.g., anthropology, sociology, psychology, social work, medicine)
 - Decide in advance if you want to publish

Summarizing Tool for Lit Review

Citation	Methods	Participants	Results & Conclusions	Critique	Ideas for Research Topic/ Objectives	Ideas for Methods
Article 1						
Article 2						
Article 3						
Etc.						

Questions?




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Breakout Session 2: Interviews



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Developing Interview Questions

- Topics/Subtopics to cover.
- Level of detail:
 - To answer your research question.
 - To include in reports/recommendations
- Be specific.
 - Ask questions about actual experiences

2

Types of Interview Questions

- Unstructured
 - Looks like a conversation; topics to cover but not necessarily a list of questions
- Semi-structured
 - A list of open-ended questions
 - Example: “Tell me about having breakfast this morning.”
- Structured
 - A list of questions with pre-determined answers
 - Example: “What did you have for breakfast? Please choose one or more of the following: a) cereal b) coffee c) toast d) other?”

3

Piloting Your Interviews

- If you are doing structured or semi-structured interviews, you will want to test (aka pilot) them
- Helps you learn whether you are getting the information you want with your questions

4

Recording Your Interviews

- Advantages and Disadvantages to Recording
 - Advantages to Recording
 - Affords greater detail
 - Disadvantages
 - Can make respondents uncomfortable
 - Requires funds and time for equipment, transcription
 - May require additional staff helping out with interviews to manage equipment

5

Pre-Interview Preparation

- Schedule in advance for a specific location.
 - Private enough to ensure confidentiality.
 - Quiet enough to allow for good quality recordings.
- A “neutral” location
 - Some students are uncomfortable meeting in a faculty member or librarian’s office.
- Remember to get contact information.
- The location should have all the equipment required for the interview.
 - Arrive early to set up and test any equipment.

6

Starting the Interview

- Introduce yourself and briefly explain the research.
- Present and explain the consent form.
 - How the data will be used and retained.
 - How the participant's confidentiality will be protected.
- Give the participant time to read and sign the form.
- Answer any questions the participant has.
- If you are offering incentives give them to the participant.

7

The First Few Minutes

- Open with a few "ice breaker" questions.
 - Not directly related to the research.
 - Build rapport with the participant.
 - Get the participant used to talking to the researcher and being recorded.
- The first few minutes of an interview can be intimidating.
 - Participants will vary in how fast they get used to discussing themselves.
- Be sure to double check if your recording equipment is working.

8

During the Interview

- Prepare an interview guide in advance.
- Use this guide as a reference rather than a script, and allow the interview to flow as naturally as possible from topic to topic.
- Be mindful of the timing of the interview.
- Avoid making interviews that are too long.
 - Forty-five minutes to one hour.
- Thank the participant for their time.
- Remind them of your contact information.

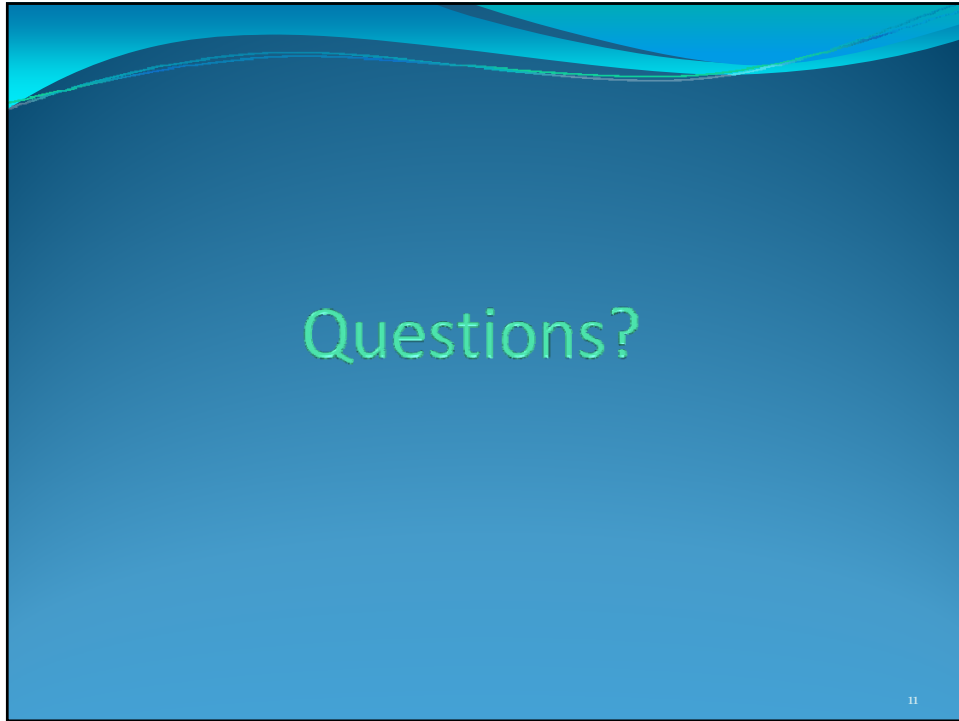
9

During the Interview (cont'd)

- Active Listening
- Sensitive Silence
 - Encourages people to talk
- Repetition & Summary
 - Encourage elaboration and clarification
- Naïve Questions
- Talking about Sensitive Subjects

—Adapted from DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. New York: Altamira Press.

10






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Breakout Session 4: Transcript Analysis



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Analysis Meetings

- As you are coding and working through your data, plan to hold regular analysis meetings.
 - Thinking deeply as a group about library issues.
 - Keep the project moving.
- Primarily for discussion and brainstorming
 - Prepare materials in advance.

2

Transcription

- Most interviews need to be transcribed for effective analysis.
- Budget enough time/money.
- Hire a professional or experienced transcriptionist.
 - This will pay dividends in speed and accuracy even if his/her hourly base rate is higher.
 - Utilizing student assistants can be also be effective.
 - Transcription is often more difficult than expected.

3

Coding

Coding is the process of generating short phrases, or codes, and assigning them to sections of interview text in order to summarize and/or interpret the meaning of the text.

4

Open Coding

- Review the texts/transcript.
- Code all sections that seem important or relevant.
- Codes are not limited in scope, and the researchers are free to add any codes.

5

Open Coding

- Open coding is used to discover themes and patterns within the data.
 - Be careful not to limit their codes to predetermined themes, or a preconceived hierarchy.
 - If it seems important or interesting, code for it.
 - The idea is to open up your understanding of what is being said in the data and to allow you to be attentive to the meanings that participants ascribe to their experience.

6

Open Coding

- Generating open codes:
 - Create codes that describe parts of a process.
 - What participants are doing and how.
 - What meanings they assign to the process.
 - What consequences result from their acting (or not acting)
 - What seems important to you.

- Select a particular process that is of interest.
 - e.g. How students get help when doing research, highlight all of the relevant sections of text, and code only those sections of text. (See toolkit p. 23).

Example of Open Coding

In this example, we first highlighted sections of interviews related to the theme of "getting help" on the left. Then, for those sections of text, we created codes on the right. These codes relate to what students and helpers are doing when students get help, or what seems important to them.

Interview Excerpt	Examples of Codes
<p>I: So, how did you find the different, you said it was articles that you were reading?</p> <p>R: For this, I started with a few books and I talked to my advisor who put me in touch with a few of his friends who work in this area and I contacted them and they suggested one was a sort of a edited volume of articles on the area and for that I just mostly just followed reference lists to more stuff that was that I found relevant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Getting help from prof</i> • <i>Professor values putting student in touch with other scholars</i>
<p>I: Do you remember the last time you worked with a librarian on a research question?</p> <p>R: I don't know if I ever have. I don't think I have.</p> <p>I: Never in the whole time...?</p> <p>R: Yeah, I don't think so.</p> <p>I: Why don't you think you ever went to a librarian?</p> <p>R: I don't know. I remember a librarian coming in, speaking a few times in some of my classes towards the beginning of the semester about how you guys are going to do this research and this is some of the tools the library has to offer you and I felt that the librarians were very helpful and friendly and stuff but at the same time I didn't interact with them on a daily basis or anything. So to me when I'm thinking about like I don't know what I'm looking for or something, that just wasn't the first thing that came into my mind, I guess. I don't really know.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not asking for help—despite having had instruction</i> • <i>Not asking for help—due to lack of relationships with librarians</i>

Open Coding

- Produces a great number of codes.
 - Redundant and unnecessary codes.
- Organize the codes into a thematic hierarchy:
 - Group codes related to similar topics.
 - Combine redundant codes.
 - Eliminate codes that are not relevant to your research topics.
 - Create new codes to address any gaps you discover.
 - Cross-reference codes that fall into multiple categories.
- Much of this organizational work can be automated using coding software.

9

Closed Coding

- Once you have a final list of codes, select the themes that are most important.
 - Themes that have recurred most frequently in the data,
 - Themes that seem most important to participants or groups.
- Apply the codes that fall under these themes to all your transcripts
 - Use only codes from a predefined list
 - Creates a standardized group of codes
- Allows all the data under analysis can be queried in a uniform fashion.
- If any codes are added at this point, they must be retroactively applied to all transcripts.

10

Memoing

- Throughout the coding process, you should write memos about the data
 - Explore what different concepts mean.
 - Range in length from a few sentences to a few paragraphs.
 - Can elaborate on the meaning of a code in various transcripts
 - Relate different codes to each other.
- Memos help the researcher explore more fully what he/she is learning during the research process.

11

Summary

- Even with the help of specialized software, coding is a time consuming process.
- Not simply drudge work but a first and vital step in data analysis.
- Creates a framework of meta-data that guides later stages of analysis and reporting.
- Helps break down seemingly overwhelming amounts of information into more manageable pieces.
- It can be difficult to maintain a standard set of coding language between individuals.
 - Consider delegating coding to a small number of people

12

Analysis Meetings

- Typically address a specific theme.
- Transcript “experts”
- Screening interview videos as a research team

13

Brainstorming

- Principle of no censorship
- All ideas are listed, even if they seem impossible, crazy, or silly.
- At this stage, consider keeping meetings confidential

14

Brainstorming

1. List all the important observations found in the transcripts about a particular theme.
2. List any important patterns and commonalities observed in the data.
3. Consider what service changes might be made to address these observations and patterns.
4. List any additional research questions that need to be answered.

15

Research Meeting Summary

- Topic of Meeting
- What Did We Learn?
- General Observations
- Patterns Found in the Data
- Exceptional or Interesting Cases
- Hypotheses about the Data
- New Research Questions (either to use on this data or for a study later)
- Service Implications (e.g. how can library address any problems observed)
- Additional Analysis Required?

16

Developing Service Changes

- Generate service change ideas at the same time as analysis.
- Allows you to create services that respond directly to students' experiences.
- Master list of proposed service changes.
 - Rank these changes for importance and feasibility.
 - Use these lists to communicate with stakeholders within the library.
 - Start conversations about how to effectively implement new service initiatives.

17

Questions?

18