

Towards a User-centered Library Design: The Case of Daystar University, Kenya

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Paper Outline

- Introduction
- A brief history of Daystar University and Daystar University Library
- Genesis of the Library redesign process
- The redesign process
- Outcome of the process
- Students' views
- Lessons learned
- Way forward

Introduction

- The 21st-century teaching and learning environment calls for a library that can meet library users' evolving and varied needs.
- This is at the core of user experience (UX) design, whereby the user is at the center.
- Studies and experiences from several best practices have shown that for any library UX design project to have an impact, it has to be preceded by a deep understanding of what the user truly values and the process requires the user's involvement

Brief Information about DU

- Daystar is a private Christian University in Kenya, with a population of approx. 6000 students (undergraduate & postgraduate)
- The University was chartered by the Government of Kenya in 1994
- It currently has two campuses, each with a physical library



The DU Library

- The DU Library comprises the physical and digital platforms
- The focus of this paper is the physical library, and specifically the Main Campus Library



Why the Main Campus Library?

- The University recently executed several redesign activities at its Main Campus Library
- This paper focuses on the redesign process and the students' views on the changes that resulted from the redesign
- The views were sought from undergraduate students who are the main users of Main Campus physical library



The Main Campus Physical Library

- The physical library at the main campus opened its doors in 1997 and had the furniture seen in this picture since then till last year (2022) October



The Redesign Process

- For a long time, students would, through conversations with library staff, express dissatisfaction with the library seats
- They also frequently expressed the same through their feedback on annual customer satisfaction surveys carried out by the library staff
- The spaces in place then only accommodated quiet study. There was no provision for collaborative study or discussions

The Redesign Process

- Three years ago, we temporarily placed some furniture that was due for repair in the corridor at the basement of the library. However, we were surprised to observe that some students chose to study in groups using in that furniture.
- We did not stop them or require them to be silent and we continued to observe them as they felt feel to discuss in that space
- This made us realise that some students were in need of places for collaborative study or discussions
- During the same period, the University introduced the problem Based Learning (PBL) method for all learning and teaching

The Redesign Process

- The following factors became the key triggers for us to do something about the library spaces and furniture:
 - i. The preference for collaborative study/discussions by some students
 - ii. Students' expression of dissatisfaction with the library furniture, especially with the seats which they claimed were quite uncomfortable
 - iii. Introduction of the PBL method which required students to work on real cases in groups

The Redesign Process

- We begun to deliberately informally converse with the students about their requirements
- We also carried out a small survey focusing on the physical spaces of the library. The survey tiool was a questionnaire with 3 open-ended questions.
- One (1) of the questions was as follows:

“Please give your views on what you believe the University can do regarding the library spaces to make the library a more inspiring place for you”

The Redesign Process

After analysis of the responses, the following codes emerged:

1. Increase power/charging points - 8
2. Modernize the library – 6
3. Reorganize/rearrange the library – 3
4. Enhance internet coverage – 2
5. More books – 2
6. Address noise – 1
7. Encourage students to use the library – 1
8. Functional computers – 1

What did we do next?

- Through discussions with the University Management, we identified what needed to be done and were allocated a budget to implement the needed changes
- We then began to identify and source, in liaison with relevant offices in the University, what we determined as required. This we did within the allocated budget.
- We then implemented the changes outlined in the next slide

The Outcome

1. New furniture – seats & tables
2. Various spaces:
 - Discussion/collaborative study spaces – with 6-seater round tables
 - Quiet study spaces – with 2- and 4-seater round tables
 - Private study spaces – retained 2-seater study carrels from the old furniture
 - Social break out spaces – with sofas and low square tables
3. Power sockets and USB ports on the round tables

The Outcome

4. Enhanced WiFi
 5. Technology spaces – we previously had computers for use by students in one room in the library but with the redesign we introduced several computer points in the library
 6. Hot drinks beverages (students buy the drinks at a highly subsidized cost)
 7. Retiling of the whole library
 8. Repainting of the library
 9. Reorganizing the library shelves
- ✓ We considered all these not the end but the beginning of a continuous process of redesigning the library to make it user-centric

Students' Views

- After the students had experience with the redesigned spaces for at least 2 semesters, we decided to seek their feedback on the redesign as well as their suggestions for future design/redesign

- Here are the questions and the responses.

Students' Views

Q. 1: Please indicate the level of importance you attach to each of the following (the options for response given were very important, important, somewhat important, not at all important, and I don't use that space/service)

- i. Quiet study spaces – Very important and important (84%+16%=100%)
- ii. Collaborative/Discussion study areas – Very important and important (58%+29%=87%)
- iii. Social/Breakout Spaces – Very important and important (50%+34%=84%)
- iv. Hot drinks - Very important and important (50%+26=76%) (3% not all important)
- v. Power sockets on study tables - Very important and important (95+5=100%)
- vi. Enhanced WiFi network - Very important (100%)

Students' Views

Q. 2: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each of the following furniture (the options for response given were very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, and I don't use this furniture)

1. Two-seater round tables for quiet study - very satisfied and satisfied (47+50%=97%)
2. Four-seater round tables for quiet study - very satisfied and satisfied (39%+47%=86%) (3 dissatisfied)
3. Six-seater round tables for collaborative study/discussions – 39%+42%=81%) (2 dissatisfied and 1 very dissatisfied)
4. Study desks for silent/private study – (79%+16%=95%) (5% don't use the furniture)
5. Study chairs/seats – (70+19=89%) (5% dissatisfied and 3% very dissatisfied)
6. Low sofas for social/break-out spaces – (66%+18%=84%) (16% don't use this furniture)

Students' Views

Q. 3: In this section, please suggest (freely and with as much detail as possible) new features/innovations you would like to see in the physical library spaces.

i would love to see more washrooms and more refreshment services ie vending machines

working dispensers with continuous water supply

a vending machine

aeration when the temperature is high

water please

free snacks 😄 😄

more charging places

snacks area

i would suggest that the water dispensers in the library to be in a good worki

Students' Views

we would like to be allowed to borrow books

improve the quality of chairs

relevant books should on reach for physical studies

more sockets should be put since we use our laptops in the library very munch, to enable you study at a space you are comfortable with because many at times you have to move in order to access this important commodity in a space you are uncomfortable

snack area.....like sweets which help in improved concentration

increase in drinking water points and its availability

atleast some woven around for cooling the libretto

Students' Views

more low sofas

woven

more upto date law books

easier book search methods

all sockets to be functional, air conditioner or fans, fresh drinking water to be available in the dispenser

air conditioning up to date books

fix the water dispensers and air conditioning as it might sometimes be really hot and one may get dehydrated

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Students' Views

please please provide water. athi is hot and we need to stay hydrated as we read. *otherwise the library is now more reader friendly*

maybe install reading tents where students can shut the world away and read immersively

up to date school of law materials

Summary of Students' Views

1. Water
2. Air conditioning
3. Snacks & other refreshments
4. More washrooms
5. More charging ports
6. Improve quality of chairs

Responses not related to library spaces

- Up to date books
- easier book search methods

Lessons learnt

- Surveys alone are not sufficient in UX research – we would have obtained more informative data if we had observed the students' behaviour
- We needed to have involved the students in all the stages of the library redesign process. We only involved them partly at the research stage.

Way forward

- To fully embrace the UX design process in our continuous efforts towards providing user-centric library services both on the digital and physical spaces

THANK YOU