

***Conceptions of student  
engagement: putting our students  
at the heart of the 'people-centred'  
'academic library***

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# Overview

- What do we mean by student engagement?
- Student engagement with higher education
- Student engagement with learning
- Student engagement with academic libraries
- Engagement with learning
- Partnership and collaboration
- Student voice
- Bringing it all together
- How are you engaging with your students

# Student engagement: some propositions

- “If we continuously observe how students use our libraries and library services, we’ll be able to continuously improve them and deliver what our students require and expect!”
- “If we engage with our students and keep asking them what they want in the library and from our library services, we’ll be able to keep on responding and improving our services”
- “Being professional and striving for excellence in service delivery, means that we’ll always be delivering an excellent student experience”



# What do we mean by Student Engagement?

- Engaging students in their learning and attainment
- Engagement with respect to partnership and collaboration
- Student voice and opinion
- Techniques and methods for student engagement



## **...and student engagement with the academic library?**

- Three broad contexts:
  - Engagement in forming partnerships between students and librarians
  - Engagement through seeking student voice and opinion about library services and facilities
  - Engagement in learning in the library and through library instruction

(Appleton, 2020)



# Student engagement in (their) higher education

- Active across all aspects of university and college life
- Resulting from the commodification of higher education – need to position students so that they have greater influence on the sector
- Accountability – expectation of universities to deliver a more student-centred higher education

(Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2011, 2016)

“Student engagement is the time and effort that students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities.”

(Kuh, 2009, p. 683)



# Student engagement with learning and development

- At university level (Kahu, 2013):
  - Behavioural
  - Emotional
  - Cognitive
  - Psychological
  - Socio-cultural
- How do we see students engaging? Are these areas in which we are observing our students engaging with learning in the library?





# Students and academic libraries

- How do your students engage with you?
  - How do they use the library to achieve desired outcomes?
  - How do they engage with learning in the library and through your services, facilities and resources?
- How do you engage with your students?
  - How do you encourage effective usage of your library by students?
  - How do you enable effective learning in your library?



# Student engagement with academic libraries

- *Student learning* – students actively engage with learning opportunities (e.g. information literacy, etc.)
- *Citizenship and service based learning* - engagement with facilities and resources)
- *Technology and programmatic learning experiences* – reengagement through technology and digital
- *Relational engagement* – intentional customer service relationship building

(Schlak, 2018)

- ‘What does an engaged student look like as opposed to a disengaged student?’
- Academic libraries can create favourable conditions (e.g. supportive frameworks and opportunities) to facilitate the likelihood of more engagement behaviours

(Pittaway, 2016)



# Engagement with learning

- Information literacy teaching
- Active learning in both physical and digital environments:
- Problem based learning approaches
- Flipped classroom approaches
- Games, gamification, digital badges
- Student sharing library reflections
- Peer to peer learning





# Partnership and collaboration

- Co-collaborators
- Co-Creators
- Co-producers
- ... in planning and development processes – removing power relationships and dynamics
- Leads to more meaningful engagement and students empowered to influence their library services
- Relationships, communications, dialogue!



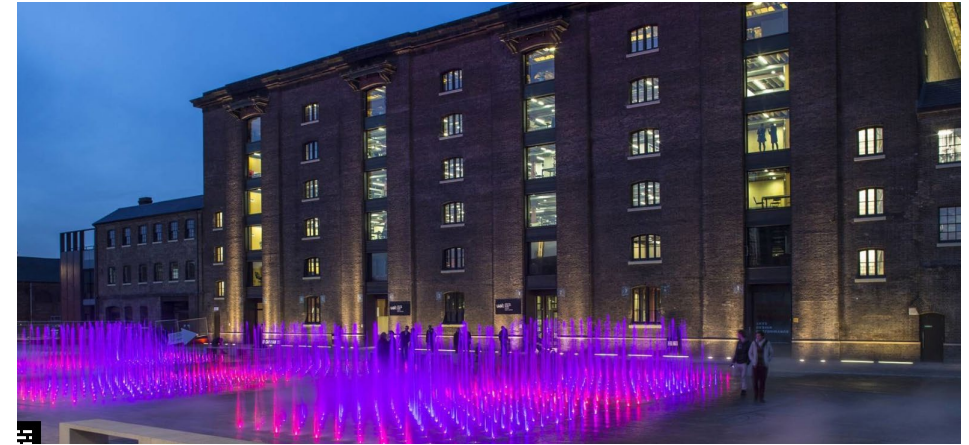


# Student voice

- Traditionally achieved through the ‘library survey’
- Becoming more dialogic and bespoke, able to target specific groups of students: interviews, focus groups, etc,
- Student employment / student internships – with a strategic objective of capturing student feedback
- Student representation – on projects, boards, committees, etc.
- Student ambassadors
- Ethnography and space planning – User Experience (UX)

# Bringing it all together in practice

- We said – We did
- Customer Service Excellence (service development and improvement)
- ‘A day in the life of a Goldsmiths student’





# We said – We did!



- Partnership approach
- Student representation on 'New Library Management System' and 'New Search Platform' project teams
- Student representation and consultation on SERIG project board and project team
- Regular meetings between Student Union and Library Management Team
- Library and Learning Resources Centre Critical Friends Group
- Better University Forum (Student Union led)

(Appleton & Abernethy, 2013)

# Partnership in Service Development

- Customer Service Excellence / Customer First
- Using quality kitemarks to improve and develop services are an excellent way to engage with students
- Student focus groups
- Students involved in training and development
- Students involved in policy development
- Students involved in developing service standards
- Students involved in developing performance indicators

# uall





# Going beyond the academic library

- A Day in the Life of a Goldsmiths Student
  - Staff development initiative inspired by the existing library and student services relationship with the Student Union
  - Student led – diversity of students presenting their ‘holistic’ and university experiences
  - Discussions around challenges and barriers to university facilitated by students

**Goldsmiths**  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

# Keep the dialogue going!

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- Relationship with student body is key to successful student engagement!







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# Student engagement champions

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- How do you engage with your students?
- How do your students engage with you?





# What are you already doing?

- Comments / complaints / suggestions
- Observing students in spaces
- Observing student movement
- Interactive teaching sessions
- Interaction on social media
- Employing students in the library
- Touchstone tours
- Student focus groups
- Interviews with students
- Systems usability testing
- Student user groups
- Love letters, break-up letters
- Reflective learning diaries
- Student library ambassadors
- Student involvement / representation on library projects
- Student consultation on changes (restructures, services, etc.)
- Student consultation on library policy
- Student involvement in library staff development

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# Questions

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