



ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEASTERN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

**Session Abstracts**

**"It's All About U: The ASERL-Auburn Forum on Library User Studies"**

**Co-sponsored by ASERL and Auburn University Libraries**

**July 31, 2008 - Georgia Tech**

**Keynote: User Studies: What are We Learning, and What Does it Mean for the Future of Research Libraries? - Crit Stuart**

Research libraries are at various stages of engagement with their student and faculty constituents. Recent attention paid to the needs of undergraduates has heightened the expectations of graduate students and faculty for whom a different set of responses are required. This address will highlight innovations in service and support to students and faculty, as well as propose a more comprehensive and penetrating approach to user studies that could inform new directions.

**The Realities of Virtual Space: Lessons from Observing Library Users - John Law**

Understanding how users in real world situations go about conducting research is essential to ensuring that library resources are best positioned to meet their needs. This presentation will reveal key findings of an ethnographic study observing users in the context of performing actual research for real-world needs.

**Case Study #1: Georgia Tech's User Studies of Their Physical Spaces -- Bob Fox, Susan Whitmer**

Bob Fox will discuss how user studies guided the development of the Georgia Tech Library's East Commons (LEC) and are being put to use in current planning for its next renovation project. Susan Whitmer will discuss the role of the Herman Miller Company in developing technical infrastructure for the LEC.

**Case Study #2: Translating User Studies into Everyday Services and Spaces - Katie Clark**

The University of Rochester Libraries undertook a two-year study of undergraduate students, focusing on how they do research. Anthropological methodologies, such as cultural probes, were used to construct a holistic picture of the lives of undergraduates. The study results have informed the decisions and changes necessary to align our efforts with the needs and expectations of Net Generation undergraduates. While this project focused on undergraduates, some material and results from a current study of graduate students will also be shared.

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### **ASERL Panel on User Studies: Who is Doing What? – Marcia Boosinger, moderator**

Panelists will discuss their institutions' involvement in a variety of experimental or innovative approaches to user assessment and studies resulting in new user-focused designs and services. The presentations will include a mix of what has been accomplished and where those initiatives are headed.

#### **North Carolina State University – Joe Williams**

The NCSU Libraries Learning Commons offers a wide range of services, including individual and group research support, digital signage, video gaming, technology lending, productivity computing, and a presentation practice room. The Commons is a student-focused and student-defined space. Some ongoing methods of evaluating student use include gathering Student Advisory committee input, analyzing online discussion board comments, tracking technology lending and other service desk statistics, and observing use patterns using GIS software.

#### **University of Virginia – Erin Mayhood**

The University of Virginia Library has recently begun to implement a "SWAT team" approach to user studies, in which a pair of consultants from the library staff - one user requirements specialist and one usability specialist - intervenes at the early stages of project development. This model has been adopted in two of our recent major projects: the Clemons Laptop Pilot Project, which seeks to encourage and enable personal laptop usage while reducing the number of desktop computers, and the Blacklight library catalog interface project. Together these projects show how different approaches to user studies can be integrated effectively to improve both physical and virtual library spaces.

#### **Georgia Tech – Brian Mathews**

##### **Stages, Sequences, Storyboarding, and Segments: User Experience Planning at GT**

The Georgia Tech Library has a strong commitment to understanding how users interact with services, spaces, and staff. The user experience position was launched in 2007 to conduct assessment and develop communication initiatives. This section will include an overview of ongoing strategies for measuring, anticipating, and improving library experiences.