UXLabs: Student engagement and UX @ WUR (Wageningen University & Research) Library

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Student engagement was a topic on Wageningen University & Research Library's priority list for 2017. But its status was also a bit like the pasta machine in your kitchen: it lacked any concrete plan to start working with it, and working with it was postponed because it seemed to be a lot of work. Inspired by UXLibsIII in Glasgow, I wrote a project plan for student engagement in our library. After approval of the plan, we started with the student engagement project in September 2017. At first, we organised a brainstorming session with students, Library staff, and other colleagues. Out of over 100 ideas that came up, the project team selected 10 activities to undertake in the 6 months of the project.

Figure 1   Pop-up Library.

The project objective was to show our students that the Library is more than a place to study, to stimulate academic curiosity and to provide a coherent program of activities related to the Library services for, by and with students. We also wanted to improve the overall user experience of the Library for our students.

Through the activities, we also carried out interviews with our students, and we gave them the opportunity to get information about our library services, and to provide feedback with a whiteboard and through mini usability tests. These activities made the library more approachable for students, and improved our engagement with our students.

We decided to share our experiences with other libraries and we made a poster for UXLabs (<edepot.wur.nl/452511>). This poster shows a list of our activities and their results, together with our overall conclusions of the project. It was great talking to the UXLibsIV participants in Sheffield about our project. They had questions about our Pop-up Library, the 'Study & Relax' activities and the iBeacons library tour. The participants at UXLibs had organised similar activities in their libraries for students to de-stress during exam weeks, and they asked about our experiences. Others were curious about the free massages at our library and how we organised this activity, or asked if we had to pay our students for their cooperation (answer: no). The UXLibs delegates from Dutch university libraries will meet again

Figure 2   Study&Relax @WURLibrary with a free Shiatsu massage.

Figure 3 Pilot with a new WUR Library app with an iBeacons library tour in the Play store.

this autumn and have planned to organise joint UX activities in their libraries.

Our main conclusion of the project was: keep it simple, just start organising UX activities and evaluate what is successful and what isn't. Like the theme on a slide by Matt Borg at UXLibsIV: Don't don't do it, just do do do it!

I hope we inspired colleagues during UXLabs. Our pasta machine is in a second-hand store. But I'm happy that student engagement is very much alive in our Library after the project has finished. Our front office team has already planned new student engagement activities for the study year 2018-2019, which we can report about at UXLibsV!