Ladies that UX
Leadership and Organization Report
May 2017

Liza Potts, Laura Gonzales, Heather Turner, and Lauren Brentnell

with Ladies that UX Founders Georgie Bottomley and Lizzie Dyson

W I D E
Writing | Information | Digital | Experience

The Project/Background

Ladies that UX (LTUX) is an international organization focused on mentoring women in the software industry. In order to explore both the mission and the focus of the international organization and smaller, localized chapters of LTUX, we conducted a series of surveys and interviews. These surveys focused on how local groups of LTUX were formed and structured, what leaders see as the goals and needs of their chapters, and how members interact with both each other and with the broader international organization. Our research goal was to gain some insight into means of formation, communication, and structure of these local chapters and to understand and anticipate what chapter needs are, in order to better grow LTUX as an organization.

Project Team

WIDE at Michigan State University

Liza Potts, *Director of WIDE Research Center*

Liza Potts is the Director of WIDE and an Associate Professor in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University. Her research interests include user experience, memory, knowledge sharing, and crisis communication. Liza is a founding member of the steering committee for Women in Technical Communication. She is the past chair of the Association for Computer Machinery's Special Interest Group on Design of Communication (ACM: SIGDOC). She has worked for Microsoft, consultancies, and start-ups as a director, information architect, and program manager. Liza earned her Ph.D. in Communication and Rhetoric from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the nation's oldest technological research institute.

Laura Gonzales, *former graduate student researcher, now Assistant Professor at UTEP*

Laura Gonzales is an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas, El Paso, where she directs Sites of Translation UX Research Center. Her work focuses on the intersections of translation, technical communication, and community activism. She is an affiliate researcher at the Writing, Information, and Digital Experience Research Center at Michigan State University.

Heather Turner, *graduate student researcher*

Heather Noel Turner is a PhD candidate in the Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures department at Michigan State University, where she teaches in the Professional Writing Program, and works as a UX consultant and project manager for the Writing, Information, and Digital Experience (WIDE) Research Center. Inside the university, her research focuses on research design, methods, and social justice in technical communication. Outside the university, she advocates for users by designing documents for nonprofit organizations.

Lauren Brentnell, *graduate student researcher*

Lauren Brentnell is a doctoral student in the department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University. Her research focuses on trauma studies and the ways that we can study trauma at the intersections of cultural and digital rhetorics. Specifically, her research examines how trauma survivors use nonlinear, multimodal, and digital forms of composing during the recovery process. Lauren was a research assistant for Writing in Digital Environments (WIDE) at MSU from 2016-2017. She currently works as a research assistant for the Corpus and Repository of Writing (CROW) and is a Digital Rhetoric Collaborative fellow.

Ladies that UX

Georgie Bottomley, *co-founder of Ladies that UX*

When Lizzie and I got talking that fateful night in 2013 I realised that I have always loved meeting people, and bringing people together. Ladies that UX has become such a passion to me, not just because I get to meet fantastic women in our industry, but also because I know there are ladies out there that have met due to what Lizzie and I have created. I know personally how important it is to have a strong community around you that support you, and encourage you. By being a part

of Ladies that UX I have achieved more than I ever would have on my own. I hope that every woman has the chance to achieve more through knowing she is not the only one out there, and by finding support in our community.

Lizzie Dyson, *co-founder of Ladies that UX*

Since Ladies that UX has started we have had the most amazing feedback and encouragement. Women from all around the globe have attended our meet ups or started their own, supporting our mission to encourage and support women in ways that we could only of dreamed of when we started. We wanted to create a collaborative community for women that could come along and feel relaxed after a long day at work. It's about learning more about UX and creating friendships within the community whilst also being comfortable enough to ask for advice. Ladies that UX has allowed me to introduce people to each other and create connections around the world, knowing that Ladies that UX has had a fundamental part in makes me feel so proud.

Project Findings

We organized the data from our surveys and follow-up interviews into a few categories of analysis for local organizations based on issues we saw repeated across data collection: (1) goals; (2) self-identity and formation; and (3) communication methods. Each of these categories revealed consistent patterns for local organizations discussed below, as well as provided suggestions for current and future needs of LTUX groups.

Goals

1. LTUX Leaders see the mission of their organization as having social justice objectives for women and other groups.

> When asked about the mission or purpose of their chapters, leaders offered a variety of suggestions, from solving community problems to advocating for more diverse hiring practices to using design to create a social impact. Many responses revolved around achieving social justice and feminist objectives, and LTUX leaders clearly saw themselves as social advocates and organizers. In addition, LTUX leaders drew attention to the necessity of creating space for conversations around social justice issues so that, in the future, things will be different. As one respondent said, "Hopefully in the next 20 years we don't need Ladies that UX. Hopefully we are just People that UX."

Many leaders discussed LTUX as both an international and local organization as facilitating community for women where they may not always have it otherwise. The focus on community, friendship, and conversation came up across several interviews, particularly in relation to a lack of resources for these conversations elsewhere. "It's very male-dominated here," said one respondent, while another suggested that conversations were necessary in an environment where microaggressions and sexism were common. Part of the goal of these organizations for many leaders is to create a safe space where women are not only able to have these conversations, but able to consider how to promote other women into "positions of influence and power in UX."

2. LTUX leaders are interested in connecting with each other.

In addition to making connections within local communities, LTUX leaders also saw broader national and global conversations as a valuable goal of their organizations, although one that was not always being met. Leaders indicated that social media has been an important tool for making both local and national connections. For example, many leaders used Twitter to establish their local organizations, while also drawing on the platform to connect to national conversations and see similarities across organizations.

What kind of events do you attend?
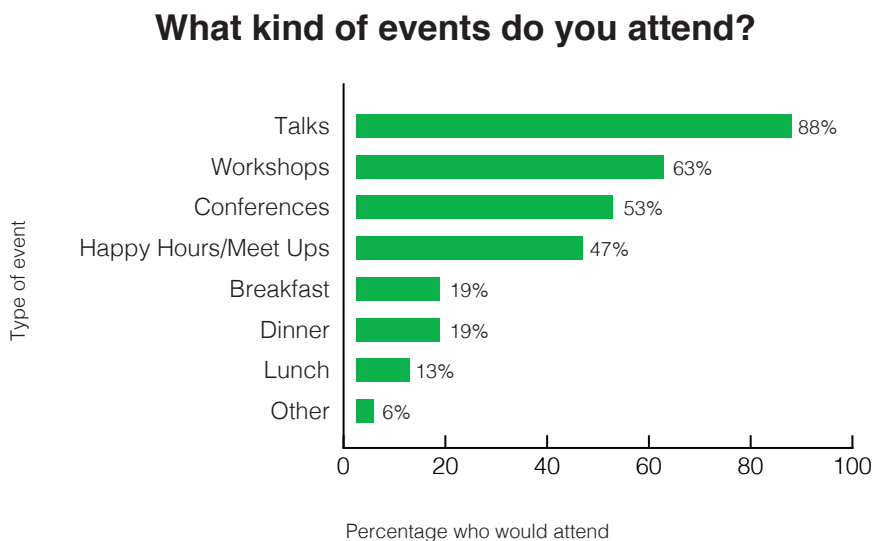
Figure 1. Indicates the types of events that LTUX members said they would attend. Most participants indicated they would attend talks with over 80% saying they would attend. Talks were followed by workshops, conferences, and happy hours, with various meals (breakfast, dinner, lunch) at the bottom and less than 20% of participants saying they would attend.

On the other hand, other leaders suggested that while connecting to other LTUX organizations nationally was certainly a goal, it was not currently happening to the extent that they would like. Because national conversation is dependent on members from so many different regions being in touch and taking this participation seriously, sometimes the conversations fell short of what leaders were looking or hoping for. In addition, in local organizations, leaders cautioned against seeing LTUX organizations as merely social events; although they acknowledged the benefits of going to a bar for conversation, some worried that without professional events supporting these social outings, the organization might lose track of its broader mission. Survey data indicated that while many members attended more social meetups, most members attended professional events like talks, workshops, and conferences, and they also tended to rate professional events as more successful overall (see Fig. 1).

Self-Identity and Formation

1. LTUX leaders see diversity as a major goal in their organizations.

Within our interviews and surveys, we found that LTUX leaders identified diversity as a major goal within their organizations, even if they hadn't fully realized that goal yet. Indeed, many leaders suggested that a move towards diversity was a reason for the creation of their LTUX branch, calling for their organizations to be a "voice for representation" for women and other often underrepresented groups. As one leader said, "We are so aware of women's roles in tech industries but also diversity in general. We don't wanna be diverse for the sake of being diverse, but diverse teams build better products, better companies. It's not just for the sake of being diverse, it's for the sake of being better."

However, even as leaders indicated diversity as a goal, they also recognized where their organizations may not be achieving that goal to the extent that they desire in the future: "To a good degree, [our meetups are] a bunch of white women talking to a bunch of other white women. This is a problem." Although leaders were optimistic about their groups' desire for diversity, many saw a lack of diversity as an issue within their organizations now and are seeking ways to further diversify for the future.

### 2. LTUX leaders describe themselves as "organizers" without drawing a hierarchy in leadership.

When asked what their official titles within their organizations were, many LTUX leaders indicated a lack of an official or formal title for their position, instead suggesting that while they may organize, plan, or create for their groups, they viewed themselves as, at most, first among equals rather than as a boss

or organizational president. Indeed, several responses explicitly eschewed hierarchical roles within the group: "I call myself an organizer. Giving any other kind of title impose a kind of hierarchy and I don't wanna do that. Maybe if I were more invested or going above and beyond, maybe I would use another title." Other respondents replied similarly: "I don't wanna put myself in a sort of superior role. I'm just like, organizing this, and it's gonna be what it's gonna be. I don't wanna be like I'm imposing my vision on people."

When asked to describe their position, many LTUX leaders drew attention to the idea of organizing, planning, or advocating. Through these kinds of titles, leaders captured the day-to-day work of the groups, from social media to event planning to coordinating among several parties. Rather than suggesting that they were hierarchical with formal titles, most leaders preferred to refer to both themselves and members by terms such as "event planner," "advocate," "social evangelist," and "organizer," which they saw as capturing the work of the group while also acknowledging all members' contributions.

Communication Methods

1. Most LTUX leaders and members prefer social media platforms as a means of communication among both local and international groups.

What are your primary methods of communication?
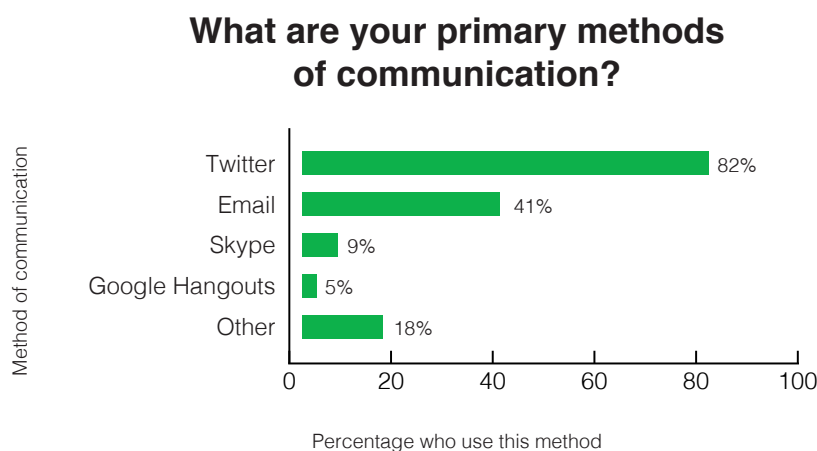
Figure 2. Indicates the primary methods of communication among LTUX leaders and members. At the top is Twitter, with over 80% of participants using the platform, followed by email, Skype, and Google Hangouts.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of survey participants indicated that they both learned about LTUX and tend to interact with chapter members through social media and other online platforms (see Fig. 2). Twitter was the most popular way that members learned about LTUX, with almost half of participants first learning about LTUX through it; also popular was MeetUp.com. Conversely, most advertisement of LTUX chapters occurred through Twitter, with 91% of groups using the platform to discuss their group. Chapters reported that most LTUX communication for local organizations occurred through either Twitter, MeetUp, or Slack; a few used other digital ways of communicating (such as email), but these were less popular.

On the other hand, many LTUX members reported that they did not interact with LTUX members from other chapters, although most indicated a desire for more interchapter communication and events. In addition, one of the most common suggestions for future LTUX needs was for more collaboration across chapters and for more events like international conferences that could bring members together.

Next Steps

After analyzing the data from interviews and surveys, we have also compiled a list of common needs and future goals for LTUX, both locally and internationally.
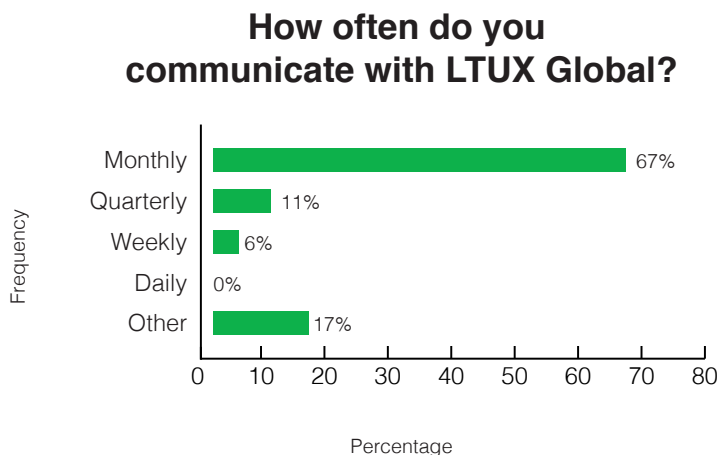
1. LTUX leaders recognize the need for more financial support.

One of the most common observations was that to continue local chapters, LTUX needed to find more financial support. Many local leaders reported funding parts or all of some events and items out of their own pocket, which is unsustainable in the long-term. There were also several suggestions for how to begin increasing financial support, particularly regarding sponsorship and membership fees.

Most leaders called for global sponsors, recognizing that their own ability to self-sustain local chapters would be difficult or impossible without outside help. A few leaders suggested membership fees, although they also recognized the difficulties in requiring members to pay, particularly in chapters that may be more informal: "Individual membership would be the hardest sell. Our meetup is a lot more informal. 'What do I get in exchange for this? I get to hang out in a bar with women? Yeah, no thanks.'" In addition, some chapters discussed their own attempts at membership fees, and found that they ran into problems with who would manage money and what that money would go towards. Therefore, while the opinion on membership fees remains divided, most groups agree that the best solution would be to attain sponsors to help alleviate the costs of the group and to begin to create new initiatives.

2. LTUX leaders call for more conversation across chapters.

How often do you communicate with LTUX Global?

Frequency	Percentage
Monthly	67%
Quarterly	11%
Weekly	6%
Daily	0%
Other	17%

Figure 3. Indicates how often LTUX leaders communicate with LTUX Global. Most say they communicated monthly (almost 70%), with lower percentages saying both more frequently (weekly, less than 10%) and less frequently (quarterly, over 10%).

By far the most common suggestion was for more collaboration across LTUX chapters and with LTUX Global. Currently, many people reported communicating with LTUX Global at least once a month (see Fig, 3), but the calls for more collaboration still stood. Because many local LTUX chapters began with the goal of creating community among members and facilitating conversations, most LTUX leaders recognize the need to expand this sense of community and conversation outside of their local settings and into the international group. Specifically, LTUX leaders called for more opportunities for face-to-face contact with other chapters, including conferences (which was the most popular suggestion). Although some suggestions for digital conversation arose, members saw the value of in-person meetups to create social and professional connections across chapters.

Appendices

Surveys were conducted online by using the Typeform tool.

Appendix 1

Survey for LTUX Participants

1. How did you learn about LTUX? (Choose as many as you like)

a. Twitter
b. Facebook
c. Colleague
d. Work
e. MeetUp.com
f. LinkedIn
g. Other

2. Is this kind of communication channel working for you? How would you improve it?

3. What kinds of events do you attend? (Choose as many as you like)
a. Happy Hours/Bar Meetups
b. Conferences
c. Talks
d. Workshops
e. Breakfasts
f. Dinners
g. Lunches
h. Other

4. Which of these events are the most successful to you? (choose as many as you like)
a. Happy Hours/Bar Meetups
b. Conferences
c. Talks
d. Workshops
e. Breakfasts
f. Dinners
g. Lunches
h. Other

5. Why are these events successful?

6. How do you interact with other members of Ladies that UX in your own chapter(s)? (Choose as many as you like)
a. Email
b. Meetup forum
c. Phone
d. Skype/Google Hangout
e. Slack
f. Text message
g. Twitter
h. Other

7. How do you interact with other members of Ladies that UX in other

chapters? (Choose as many as you like)
a.   Email
b.   Meetup forum
c.   Phone
d.   Skype/Google Hangout
e.   Slack
f.   Text message
g.   Twitter
h.   I do not interact with members outside of my chapter
i.   Other

8.   Any other comments on communicating across the group?

9.   How long have you been a member of Ladies that UX?
a.   0-3 months
b.   3-6 months
c.   6 months-1 year
d.   1-2 years
e.   2 years or more

10.   What other kinds of services should we be offering to you as an organization locally?

11.   What other kinds of services should we be offering to you as an organization on a global scale?

12.   Do you find Ladies that UX to be a diverse space? How so?

13.   What more could we be doing to help make Ladies that UX a welcoming space and communicate better with our members?

14.   What kinds of work do you do as a UX professional (Choose as many as you like)
a.   Content strategy
b.   Content writing
c.   Executive management
d.   Information architecture
e.   Interaction design
f.   Outreach/pro bono
g.   Project management
h.   Software architecture
i.   Software development
j.   Software testing
k.   Team management
l.   Technical editing
m.   Technical writing
n.   User experience architecture

      o.   User experience design

      p.   User research

      q.   Visual design

15. Since joining Ladies that UX, have you been promoted, taken on more challenges, or made some other positive change in your professional life?

16. What you you think are the problems and challenges of being a woman in UX?

17. What is your job title?

18. Where are you located?
    a. Country?
    b. State/Province?
    c. City?

19. What is your gender?
    a. Female
    b. Trans male/trans man
    c. Trans female/trans woman
    d. Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming
    e. Prefer not to disclose
    f. Other

20. What is your race/ethnicity? (Choose as many as you like)
    a. Non-Hispanic White
    b. Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
    c. Latino or Hispanic American
    d. East Asian or Asian American
    e. South Asian or Indian American
    f. Middle Eastern or Arab American
    g. Native American or Alaskan Native
    h. Other

21. Do you have any general comments for us about Ladies that UX?

22. Interview follow-up
    a. We would like to follow-up with you in a separate conversation to talk about your experiences with LTUX, would you be willing for us to contact you?
       i. Yes
       ii. No
    b. What is your email address?

Appendix 2

Survey for LTUX Leaders

1. How did you hear about LTUX? (Choose as many as you like)
   a. Twitter
   b. Facebook
   c. Colleague
   d. Work
   e. MeetUp.com
   f. LinkedIn
   g. Other

2. When did you form your LTUX group?
   a. Month
   b. Year

3. Where does your LTUX group typically meet? (Choose as many as you like)
   a. Cafe
   b. Pub/bar
   c. Space provided by a sponsor e.g. digital agency
   d. Meeting room
   e. Other

4. How many members does your LTUX group have? (These can include followers on Twitter, members of your Facebook group, meeting attendees, or any other method you use to count your membership.)
   a. 1-10
   b. 11-20
   c. 21-50
   d. 50-100
   e. 100+

5. How many meetups did your LTUX group have from January 2014 - January 2015?

6. How do you advertise your group? (Choose as many as you like)
   a. Meet-up
   b. Eventbrite
   c. Twitter
   d. LinkedIn
   e. Facebook
   f. Email
   g. Other

7. What are your primary methods of communication? (Choose as many as

you like)
a.   Email
b.   Twitter
c.   Facebook
d.   Skype
e.   Google Hangouts
f.   Other

8.   Are you aware of other LTUX groups?
     a.   Yes
     b.   No

9.   Do you ever work with other LTUX groups?
     a.   Yes
     b.   No

10.   Are you aware of LTUX Global?
     a.   Yes
     b.   No

11.   What is the name of your LTUX group?

12.   Do you have any general comments for us about Ladies that UX?

13.   Interview follow-up
     a.   We would like to follow-up with you in a separate conversation to talk about your experiences with LTUX, would you be willing for us to contact you?
          i.   Yes
          ii.   No
     b.   What is your email address?