



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

THE USER EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITY

**researching and designing
more relevant and user-
centric library services**

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@andypriestner

20 September 2023

Sanibonani

Hallo

Molo

Dumela

Sanibona

Hello

Thobela

Avuwani

Lumela

Salibonani

Abusheni



About me...

I used to work in University libraries..

- I discovered UX (User Experience) work while running Cambridge University's business school library.
- I went on to lead a UX innovation program across all of the University's libraries.



Consulting and training in User Experience globally

I have been freelance since 2017 and have completed consultancies in the UK, Sweden, Canada, Australia, Germany and, most recently, in New Zealand.



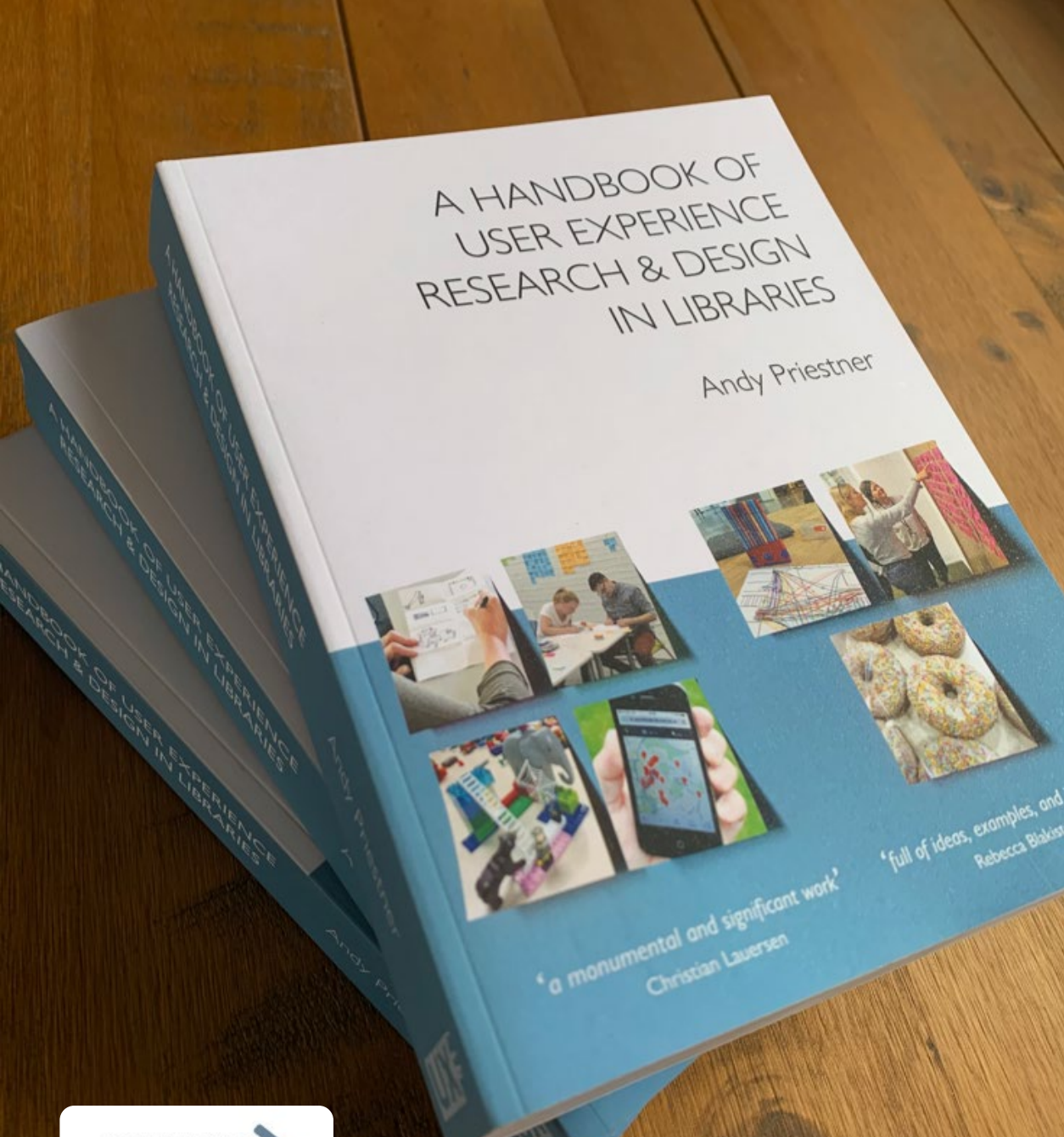


I have chaired and organised the international UX in Libraries conference since 2015.

Every year it is attended by library staff from 20+ countries all around the world intent on using User Experience techniques to improve their library services. We are already planning our 8th conference for June 2024.

In 2022, Kabelo Kgarosi was invited to speak at UX in Libraries. She wowed the audience with her enthusiasm & stories of how UX methodology was being used here in Pretoria.





A Handbook of User Experience Research & Design in Libraries

During the pandemic I wrote what I intended to be the definitive text on UX work. It outlines my process and gathers together all of the techniques I use, together with my experiences of applying these methods in libraries globally.



But what do we mean when we talk about User Experience work?



My definition

(from my UX Handbook)

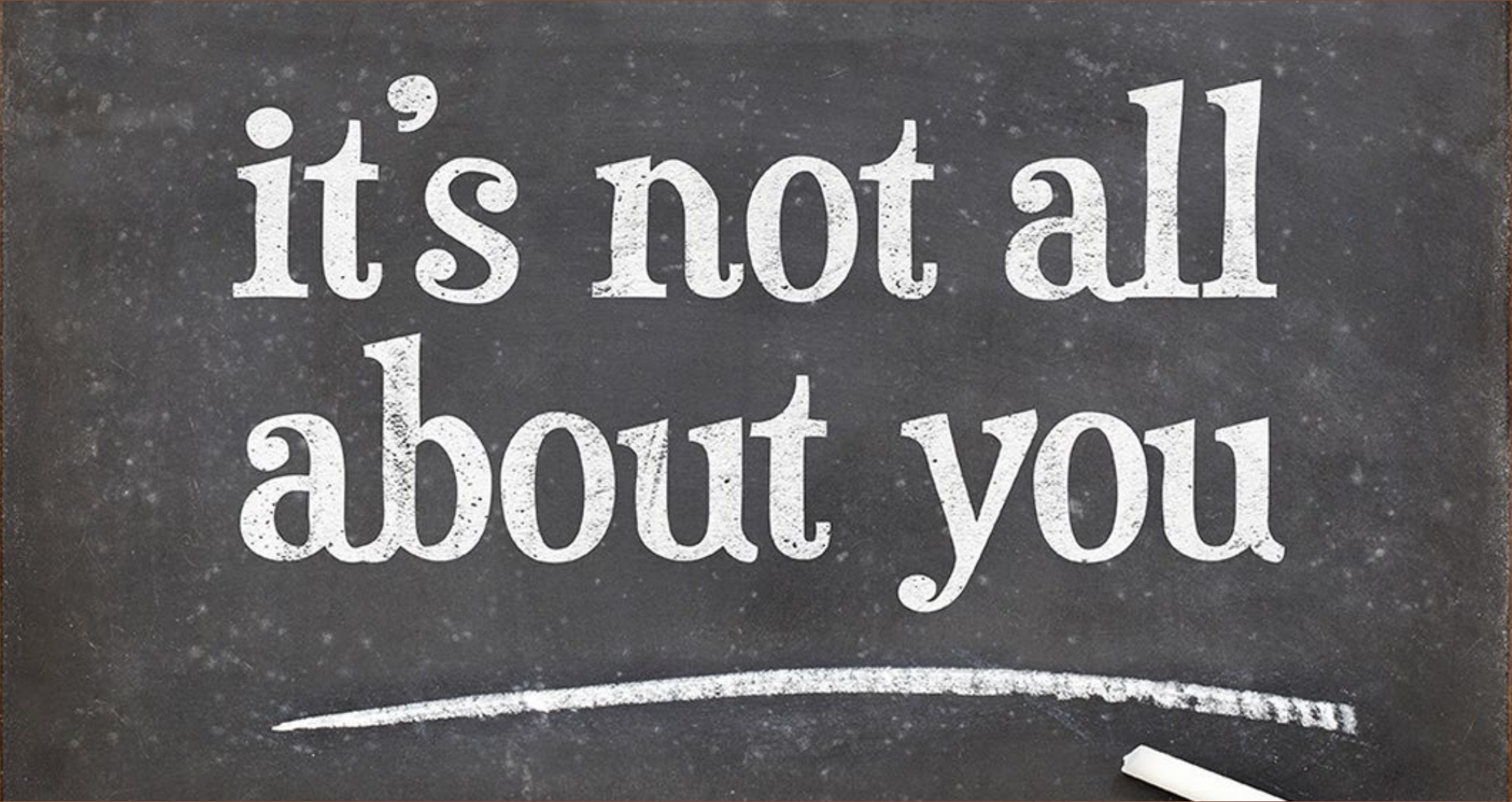
‘At their core, UX methods are all about making sure that the user is **at the centre** of what you do.

They are about accepting that services should not be built around staff agendas, convenience, assumptions or gut feelings, but instead around what your users **really need** and **really do**.

This naturally requires that you regularly **connect** with, **empathise** with, **involve**, and **understand** your users.’



it's not all
about you





But that does not mean UX is about providing **everything** our users ask for.

Instead it is about researching more deeply what your users (and non-users) think and feel about your services and how they are currently using them.

And... testing that users will actually use stuff they say they need through the prototyping of new services.





UX is about researching attitudes and behaviours: what people say AND what people actually do

*“What people **say**,
what people **do**,
and what people **say they do**,
are entirely different things”*

Margaret Mead (anthropologist)





Do you currently spend enough time actively researching the needs and behaviours of your users?

Do you research who is not using your services and why?

Do you think all of your services work well for your users?

If the answer to any of the above questions is no, then you need to engage with UX methods...



The UX Process



RESEARCH

We are familiar with the idea of research but until recently did not go much beyond surveys.



DATA ANALYSIS

We are familiar with gathering data but not good at sorting or analysing it.



IDEATION

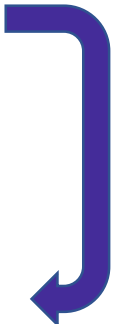
We don't spend enough time generating ideas. We also don't do it very well.



PROTOTYPING

We rarely take the time to test new service ideas on users to see where they fail.

This is not just true in libraries – it's a global problem when it comes to new services and products which is why we experience so many UX fails in our everyday lives.



Most services (digital and physical) we interact with on a daily basis have never been tested on the people that will actually use them.

Here are some examples..



Three yellow pencils are arranged vertically on a white background. Each pencil has a different message written on its side in black, uppercase letters. The top pencil is the longest and has the message 'TOO COOL TO DO DRUGS'. The middle pencil is shorter and has the message 'COOL TO DO DRUGS'. The bottom pencil is the shortest and has the message 'DO DRUGS'. All pencils have a sharpened lead tip on the left, a gold-colored metal ferrule with a red eraser on the right, and a red band at the very end.

TOO COOL TO DO DRUGS

COOL TO DO DRUGS

DO DRUGS





End & Accept



Decline



Hold & Accept



402



...And then of course there are libraries. SO MANY libraries that fail their users in so many ways.



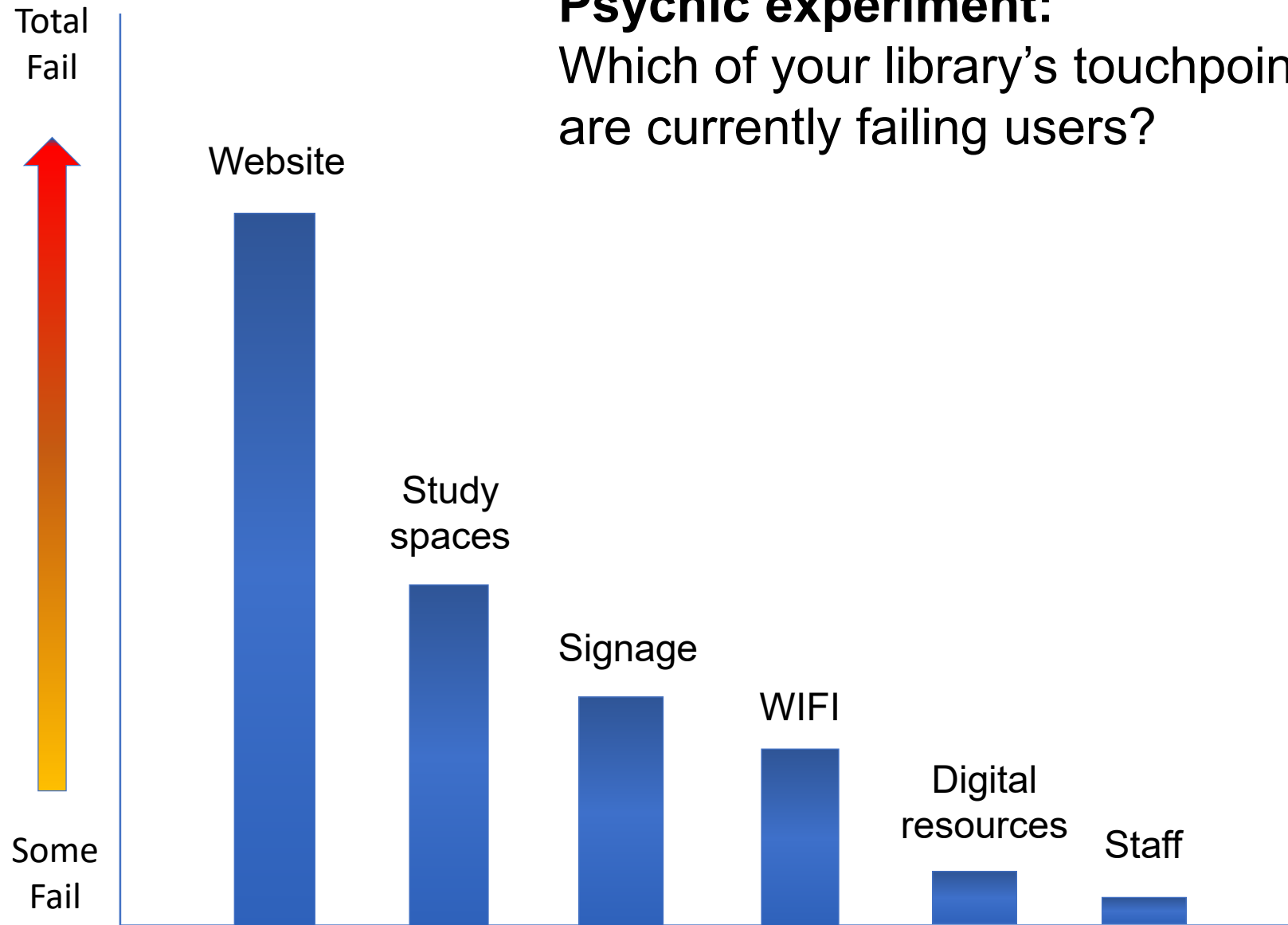
Practically, user experience work is about ensuring that every library touchpoint between your users and your service is successful and the best that it can be.

Whether it is your study spaces, signage, website, staff, WIFI, or your digital resources.

Which service touchpoints are failing at your library?



Psychic experiment: Which of your library's touchpoints are currently failing users?

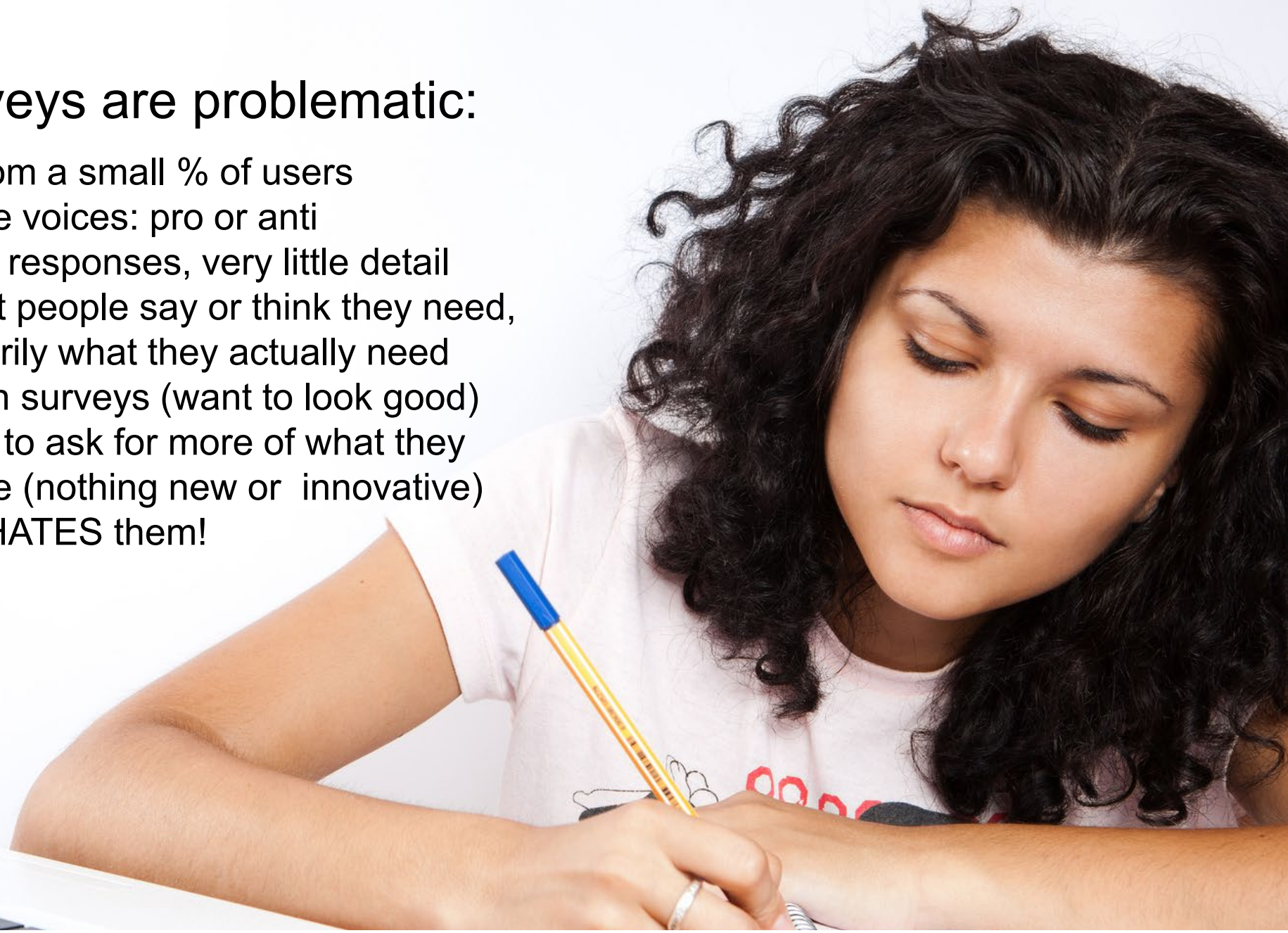


But can't we just use surveys and the statistics we already gather?



Library surveys are problematic:

1. only hear from a small % of users
2. only extreme voices: pro or anti
3. basic binary responses, very little detail
4. tell you what people say or think they need, not necessarily what they actually need
5. people lie on surveys (want to look good)
6. people tend to ask for more of what they already have (nothing new or innovative)
7. everybody HATES them!





There's some value in library statistics, but counts of visits to the physical library, or to our electronic resources, don't tell us how good or bad their experience was...



We need to use UX methods to go deeper and find out what people are really doing and really feeling.

On the following slides I will detail what is different and distinctive about UX methods...



**They find out what its really like in
the shoes of our users**

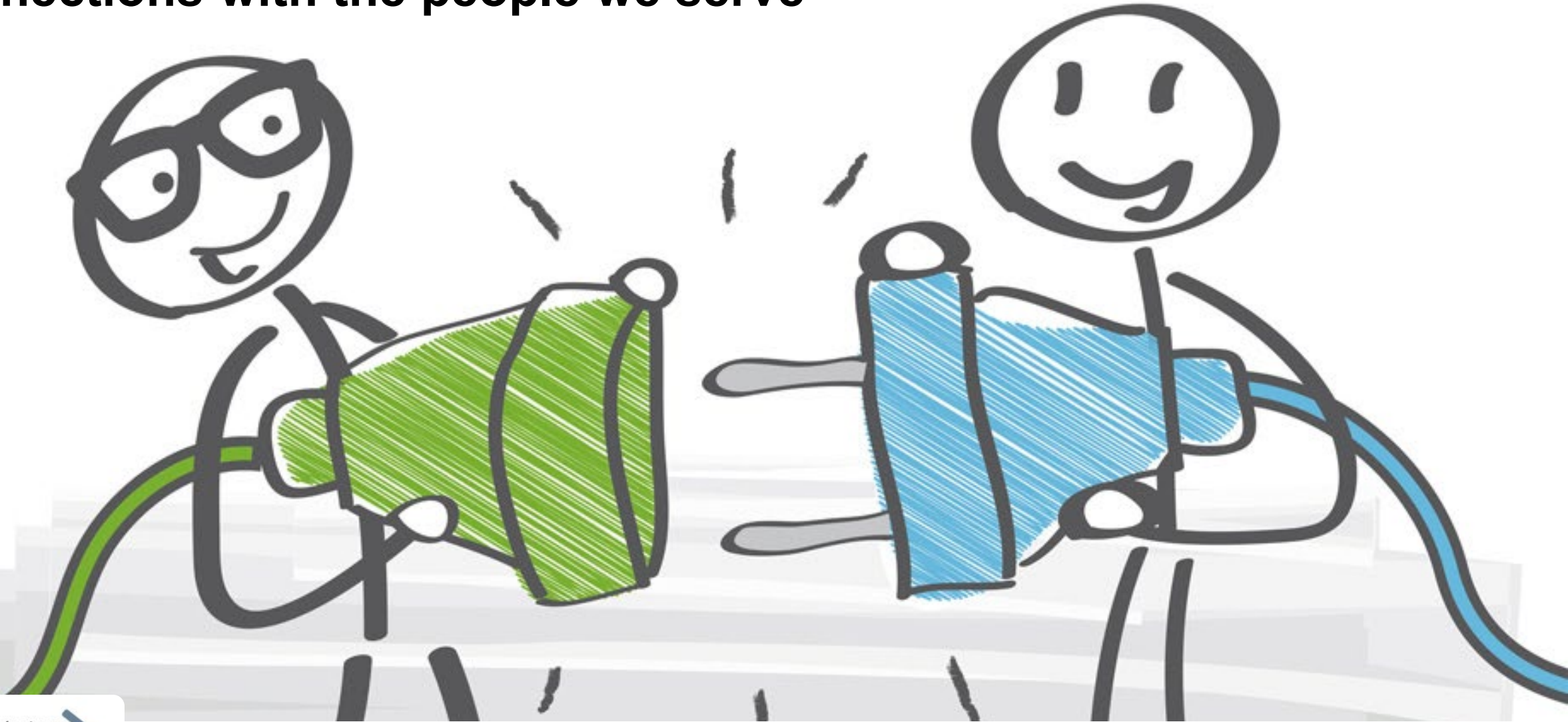
UX is about empathy



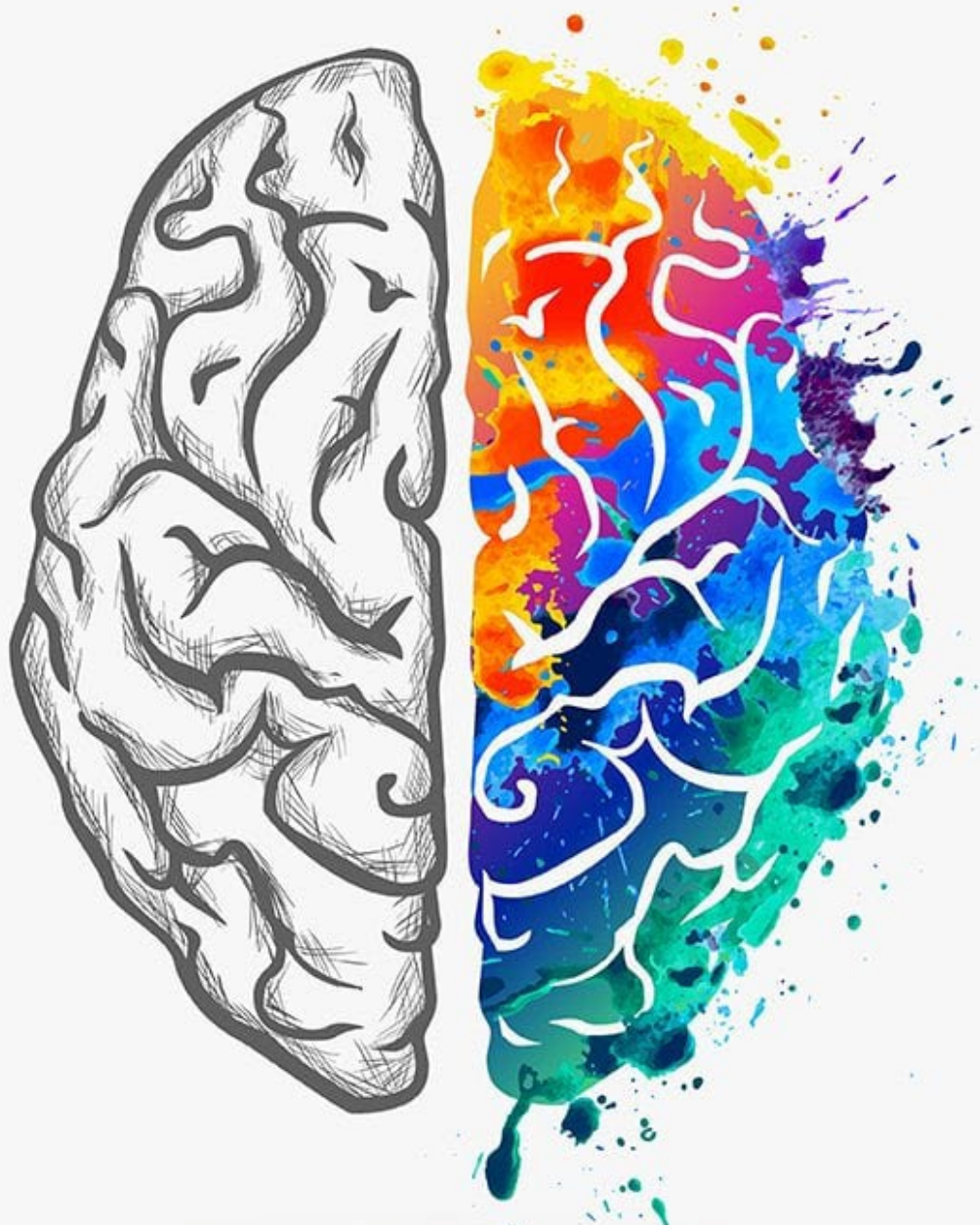
**They are simple to conduct and
require little or no planning**



They help us to make richer, more authentic connections with the people we serve



**They activate the
right side of
people's brains,
thereby gathering
more spontaneous
and creative
insights**



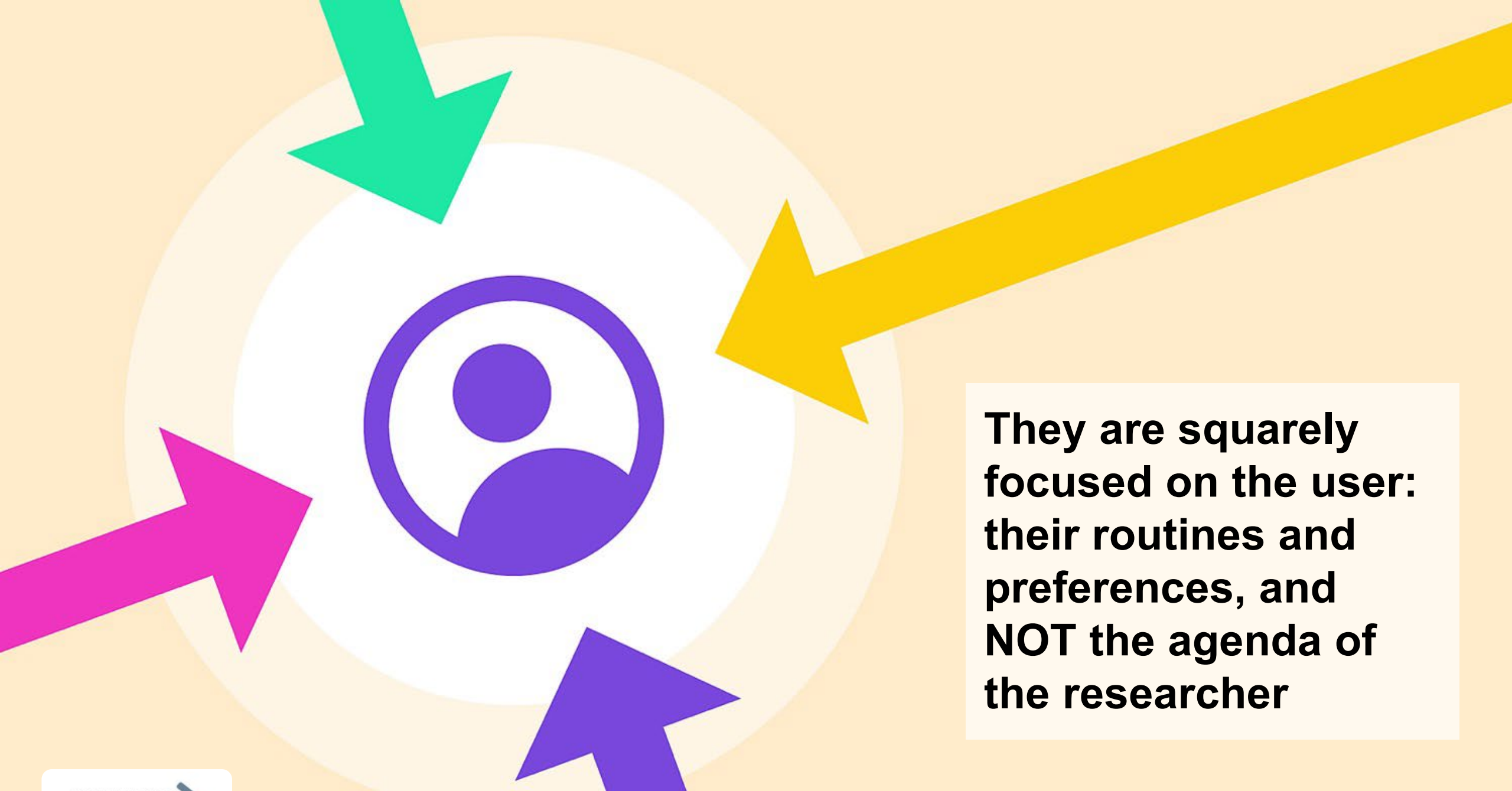


**A lot of UX methods
are more visual so
are more engaging
for users**



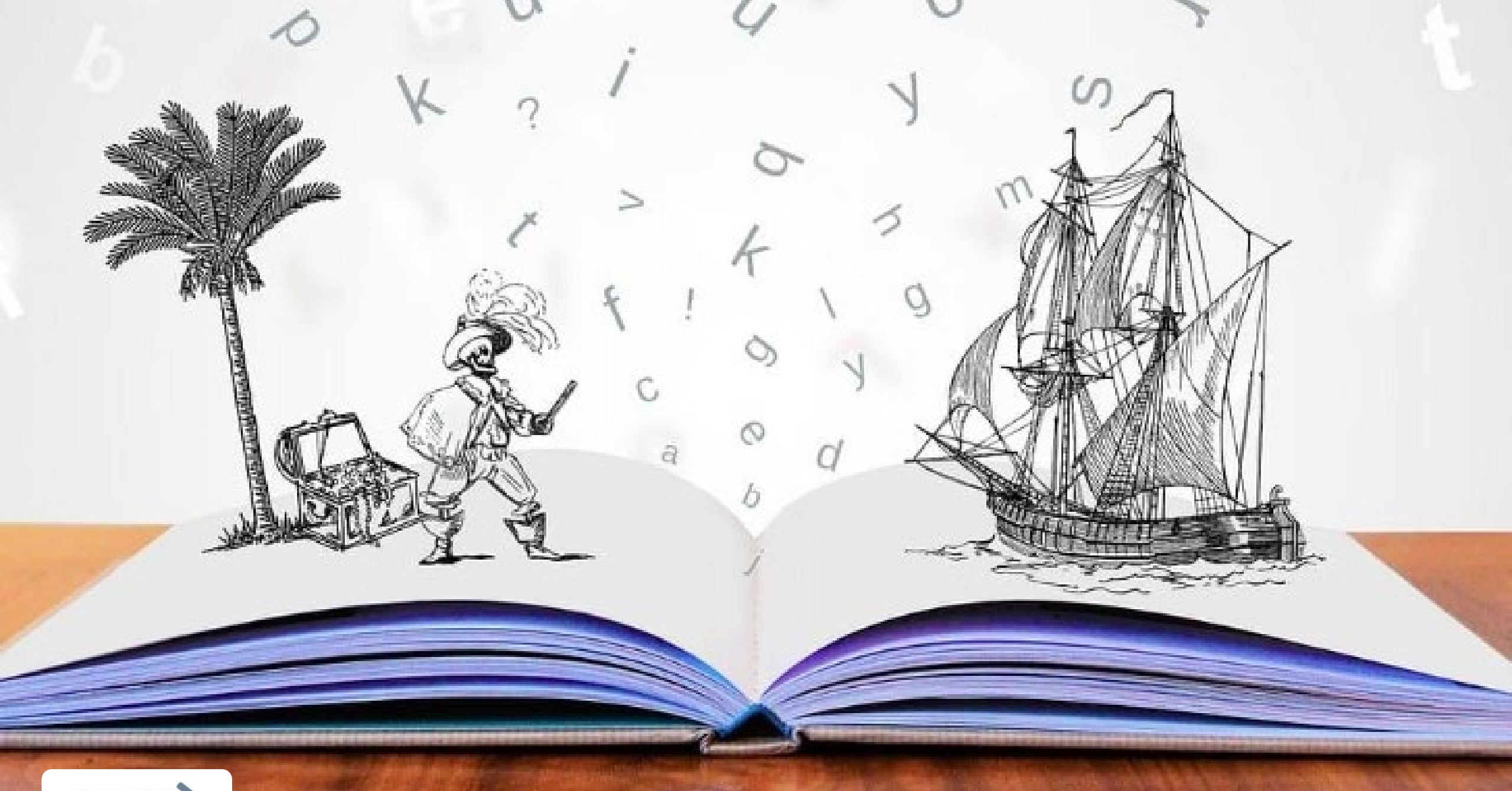
They are just more fun and therefore more enjoyable to conduct and complete than other research approaches



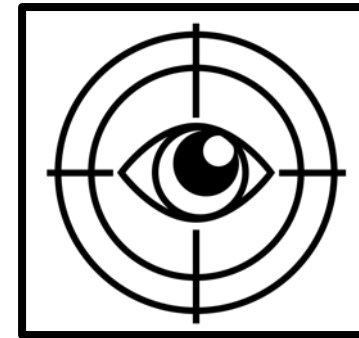
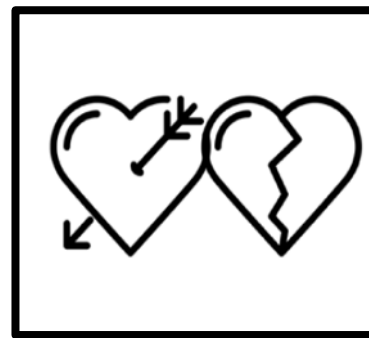
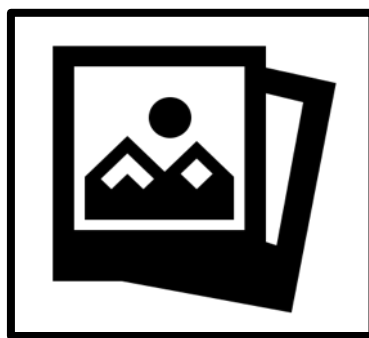
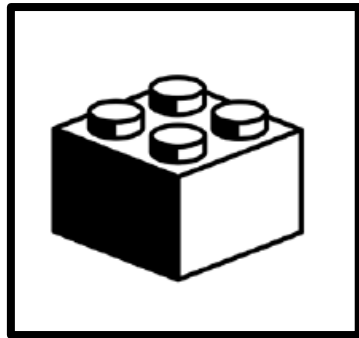
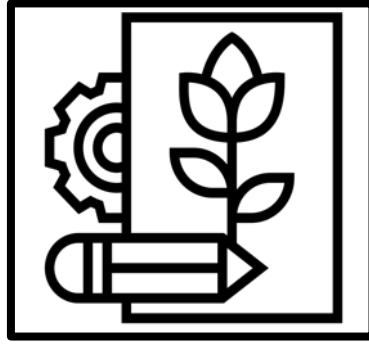


They are squarely focused on the user: their routines and preferences, and NOT the agenda of the researcher





8 user experience research methods – what they are and why you would choose to use them



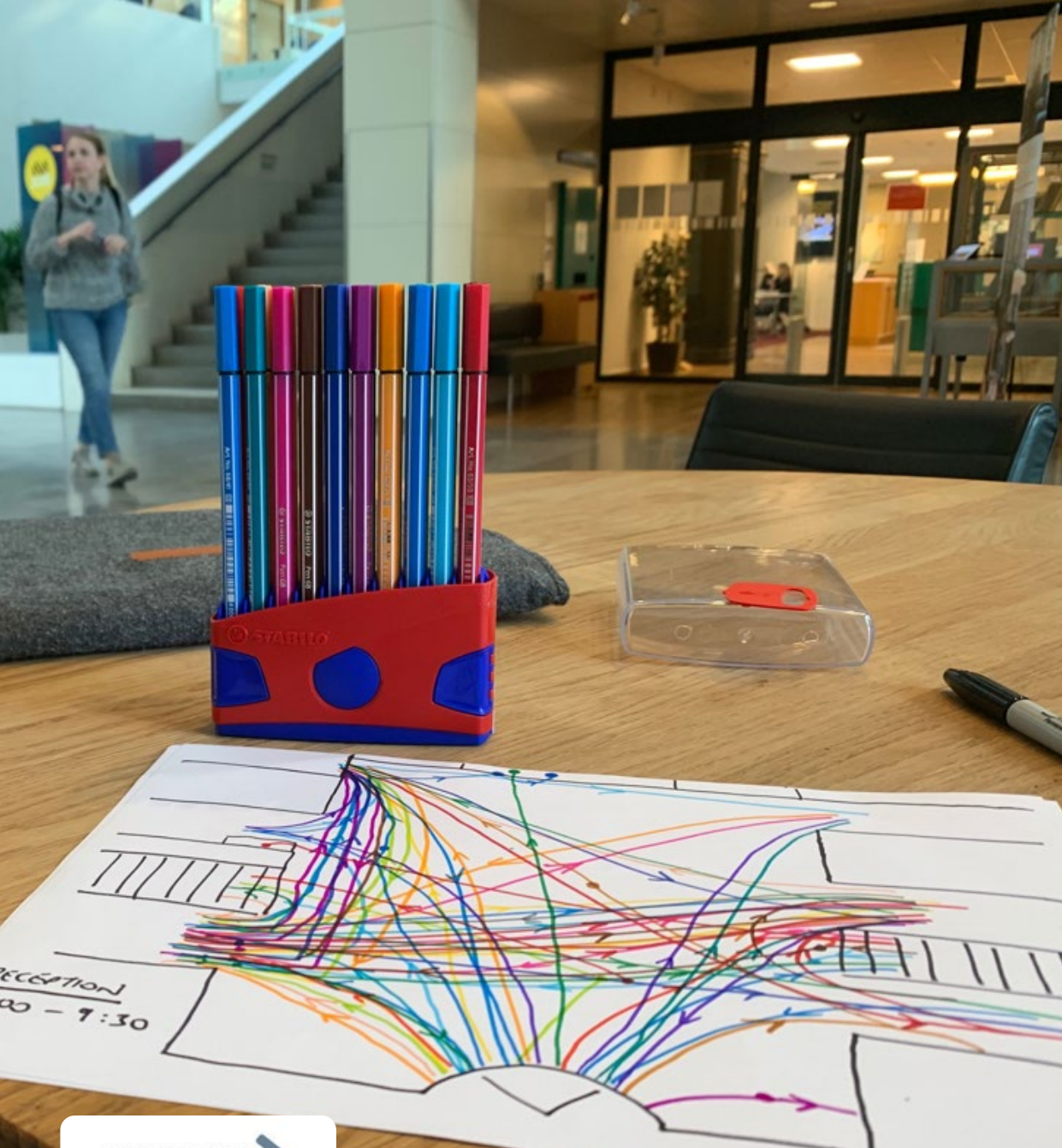


And examples of prototypes services built and tested on library users (and non-users) as a result of gathering data with these methods.

Because UX is not about committee meetings, endless speculation and writing reports.

UX is about **ACTION.**





1. behavioural mapping

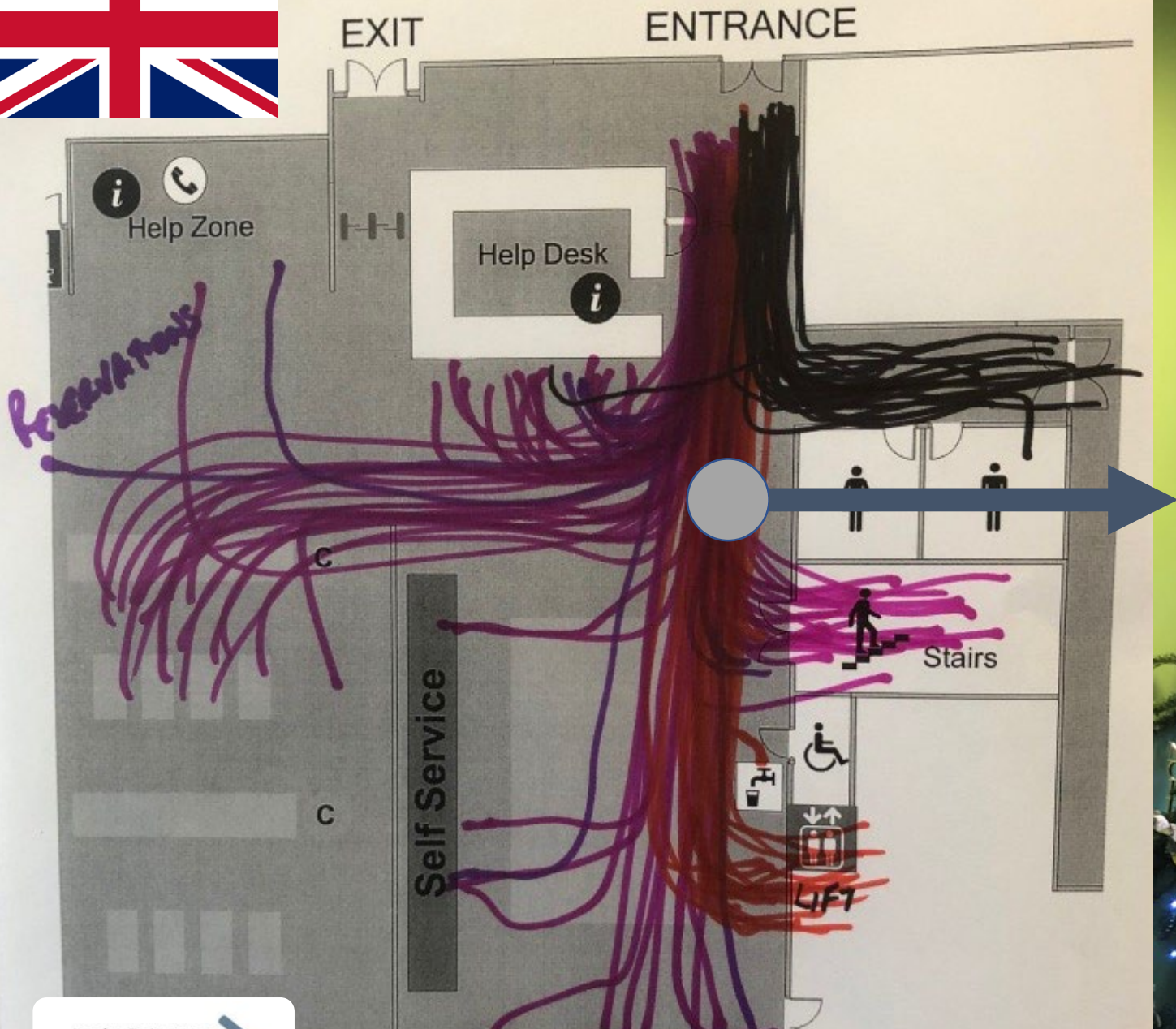


What is it?

Recording movements of users in a physical space through a series of concentrated observation sessions.

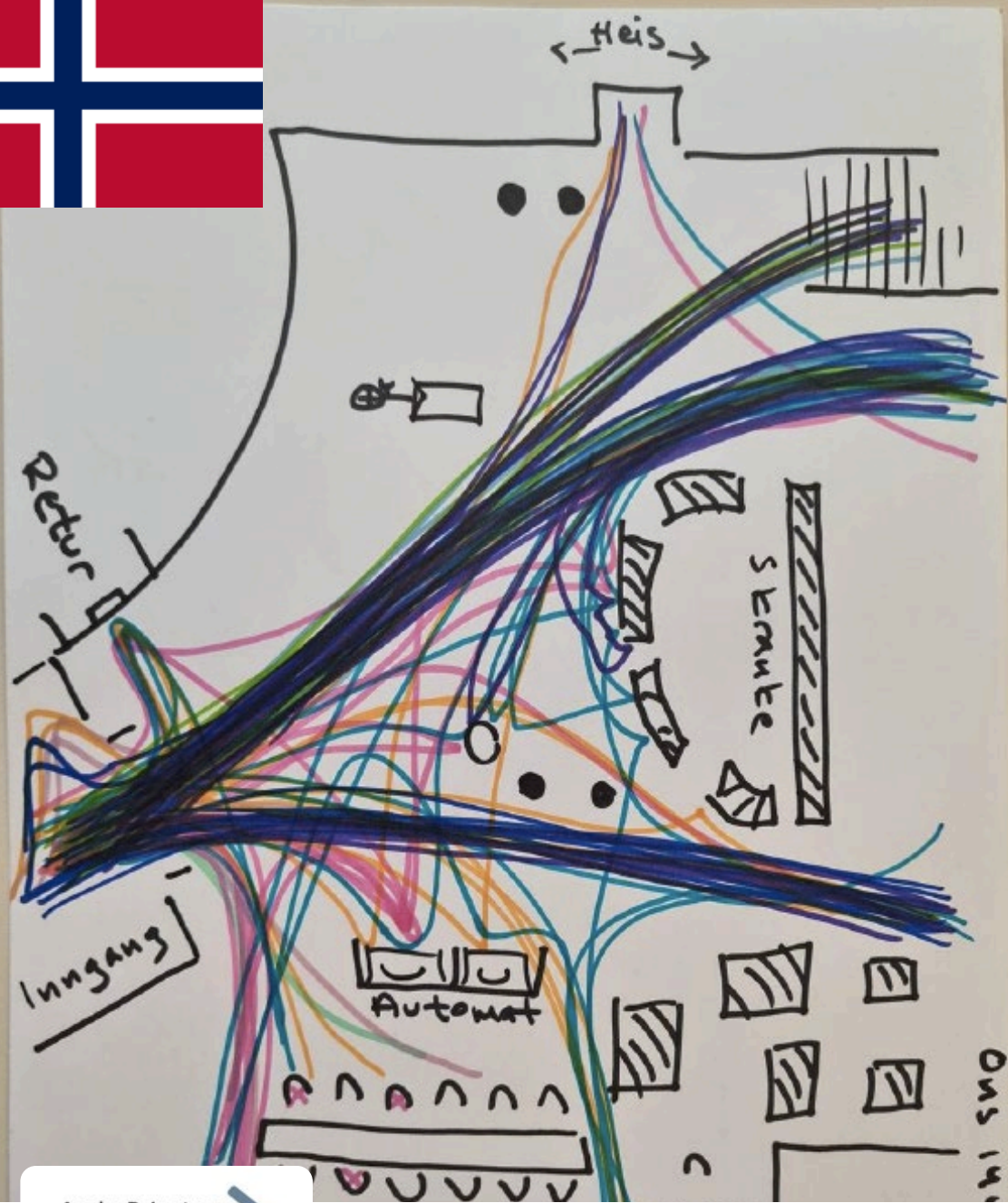
Why is it used?

To identify invisible key routes through your space (desire lines) as well as the efficacy of layout, furniture and other equipment.



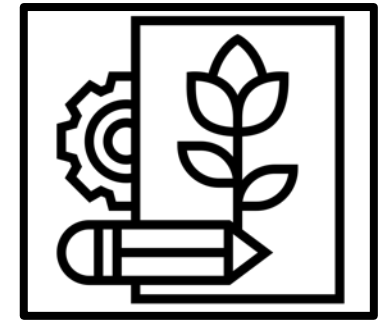








2. cognitive mapping



What is it?

Asking users to draw their experience of using the library.

Why is it used?

To understand user views on library strengths, weaknesses and problems in a more visual way – when people draw they process their thoughts in a completely different way and reveal more information.

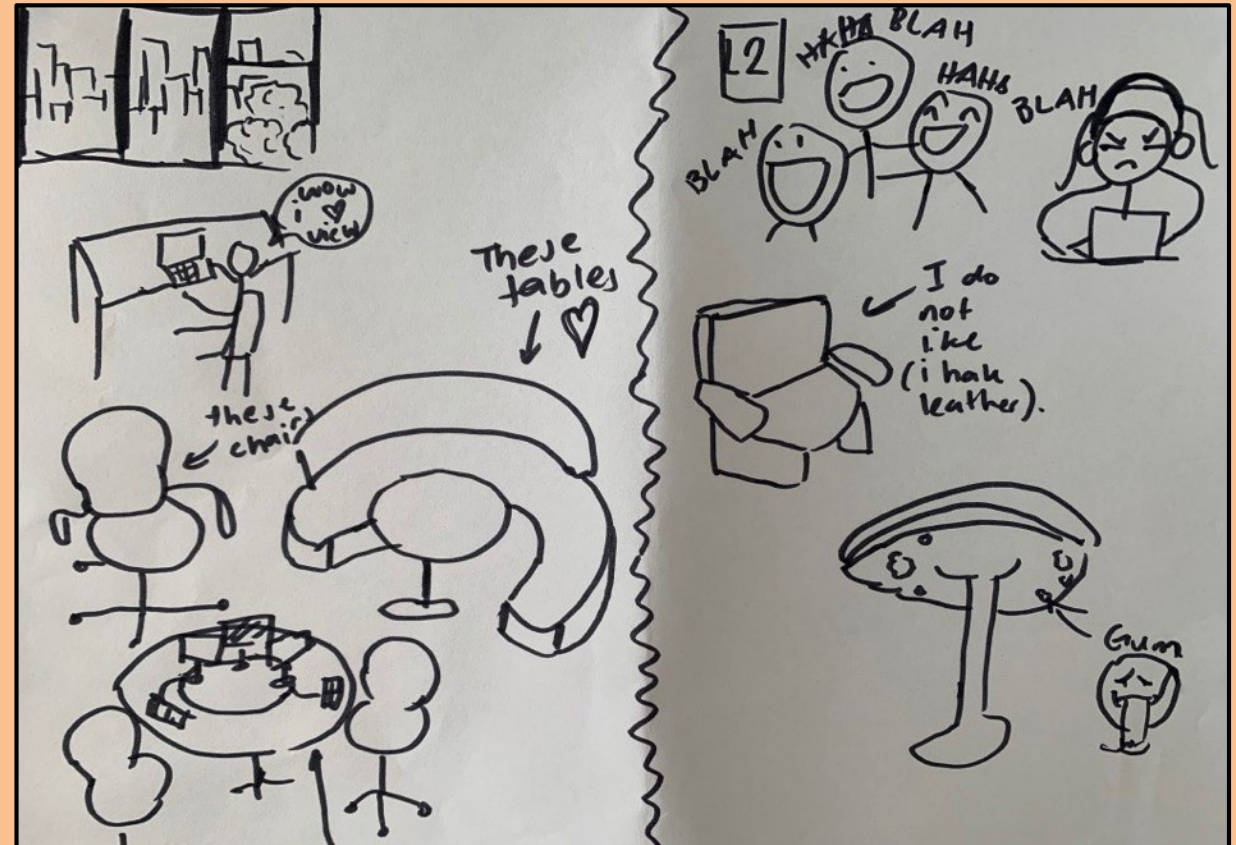




The student who drew this map at Victoria University, Wellington New Zealand gave us so much obvious and important data:

- wanting a seat with a good view when studying
- the specific study tables and chairs they liked to use
- their favourite area: the Level 1 PC area
- getting annoyed by other people talking in the Level 2 quiet area
- not liking the leather armchairs cos they were sticky and hot in summer
- and also the gross chewing gum stuck under tables.

This student loved to express themselves through drawing, others can be less confident but their maps are just as valuable...





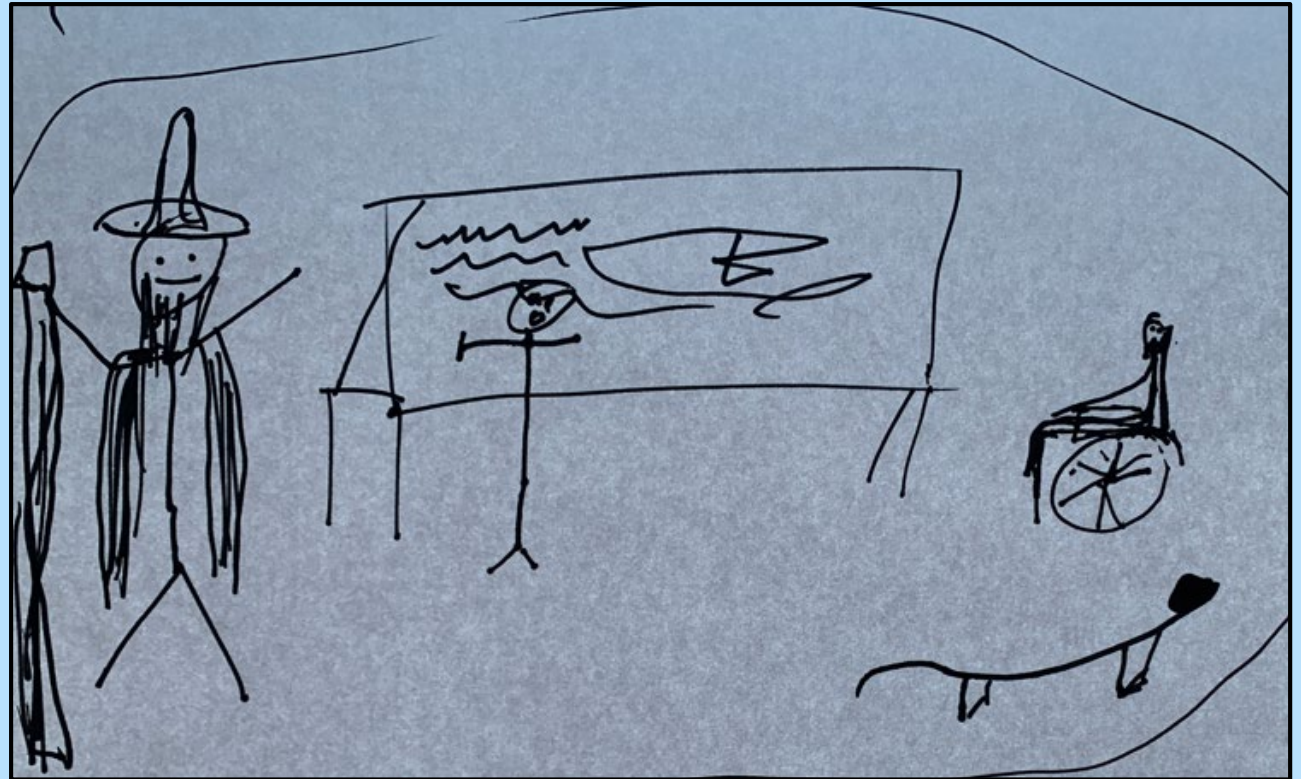
The wizard represents a world in which the library can be the place of his dreams.

And his one biggest dream was for someone to realise that people who use wheelchairs like himself can't reach the sort of whiteboards that have been installed in the library.

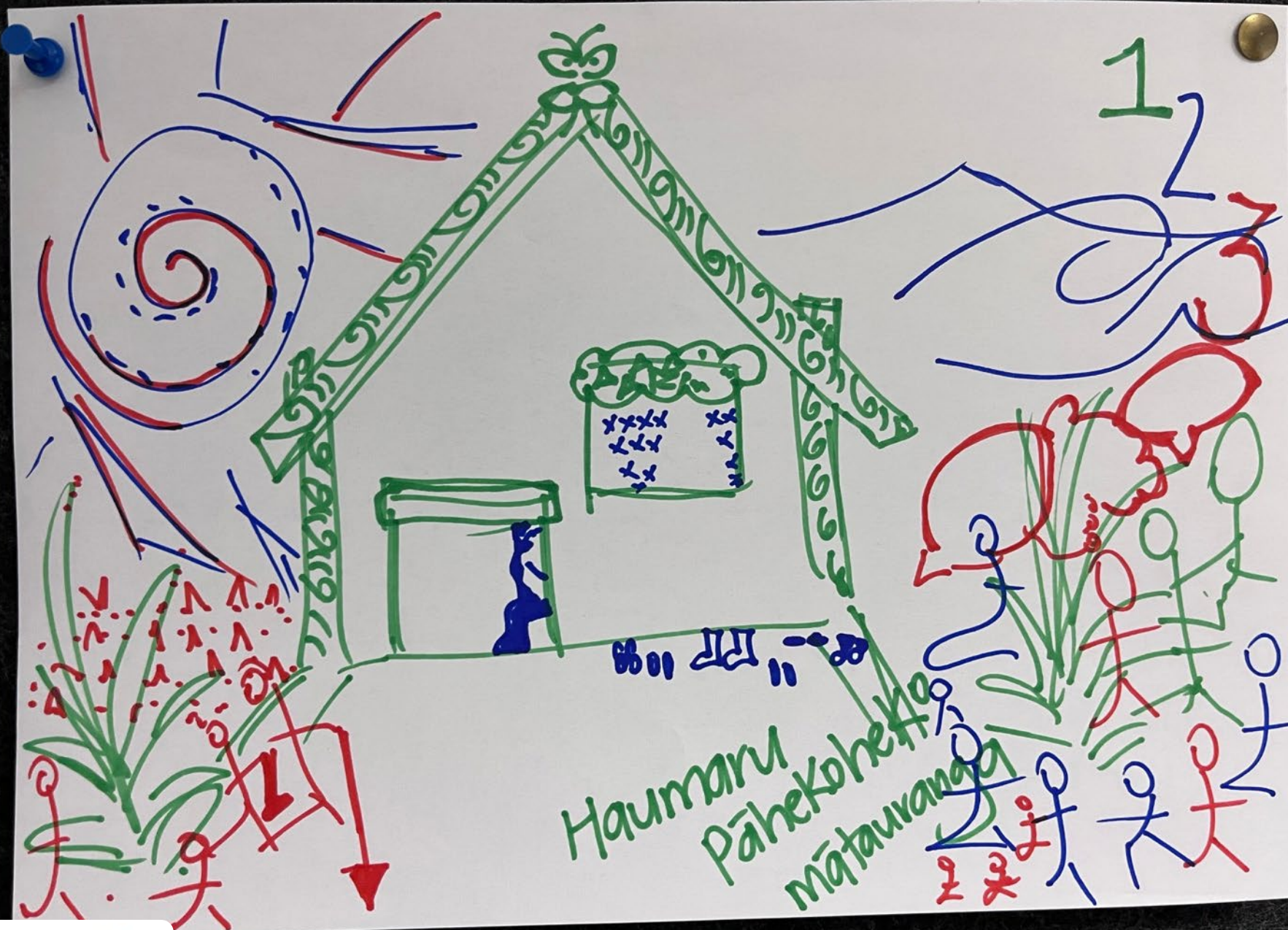
He also wished for a longer torso so that might help him reach the whiteboard too.

How easy would it be to install whiteboards which go lower?

This guy had never told anyone about this struggle until he drew this picture! This is why we must get over ourselves and approach people and do this research.





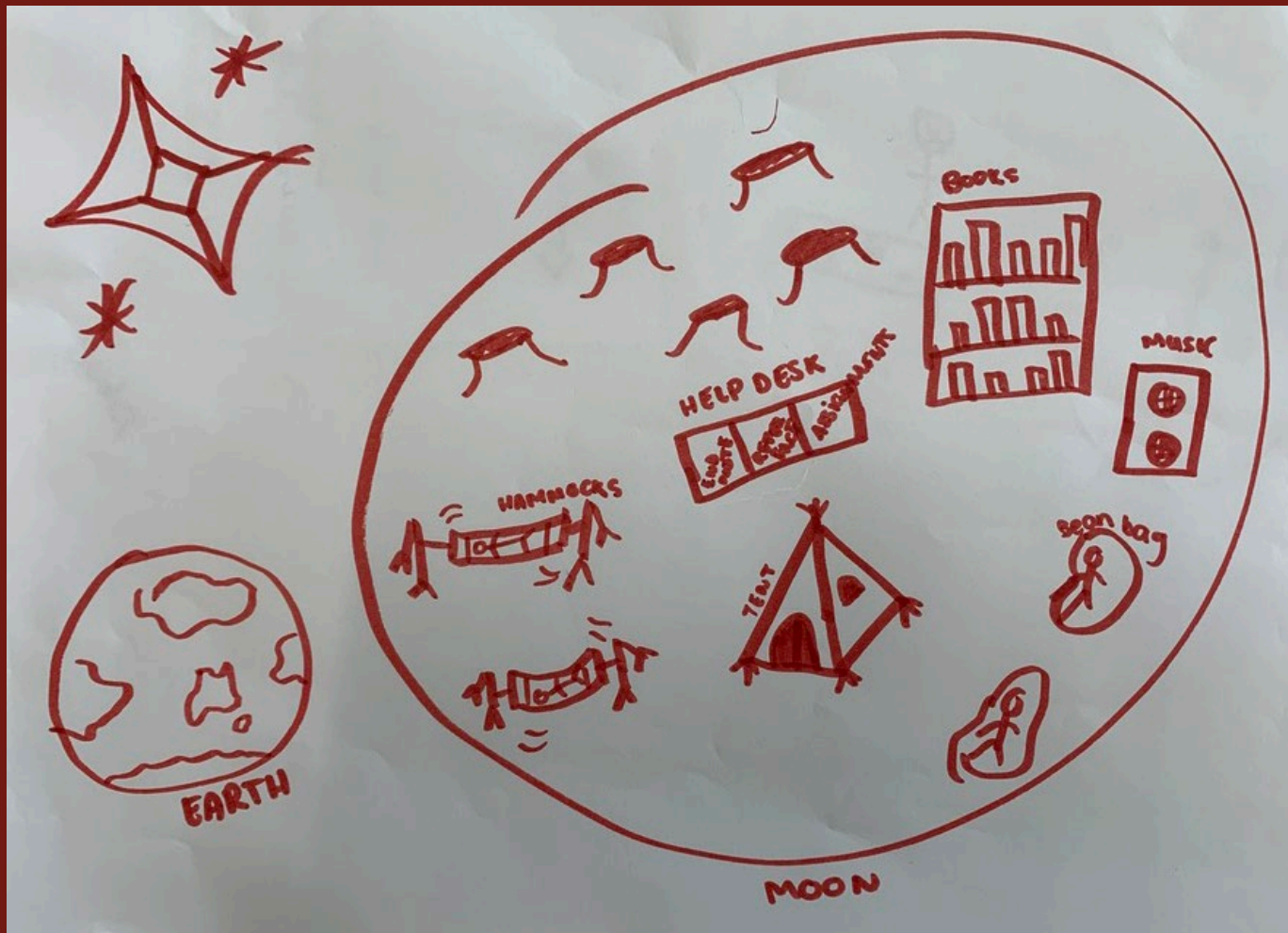


Maori students felt that the library was too 'European' and didn't reflect either their culture or their lifestyle.

They wanted to see more of the outside world inside. They wanted a place for kai (the eating and sharing of food).

And they wanted to see more Maori art and architecture.





In Perth, Australia we learned a lot from students who were asked for drawings of their dream library.

In this one, as well as a helpdesk at which they could receive 24/7 assistance with Endnote and their assignments, they drew:

- hammocks
- beanbags
- a tent for cosy study
- music
- oh, and books

Apart from their decision to house their dream library on the moon (!) all these things could be prototyped to see if other students had a similar dream.





3. guerrilla interviews



What is it?

Interviewing users *ad hoc* to understand their experiences of using physical or digital library services

Why is it used?

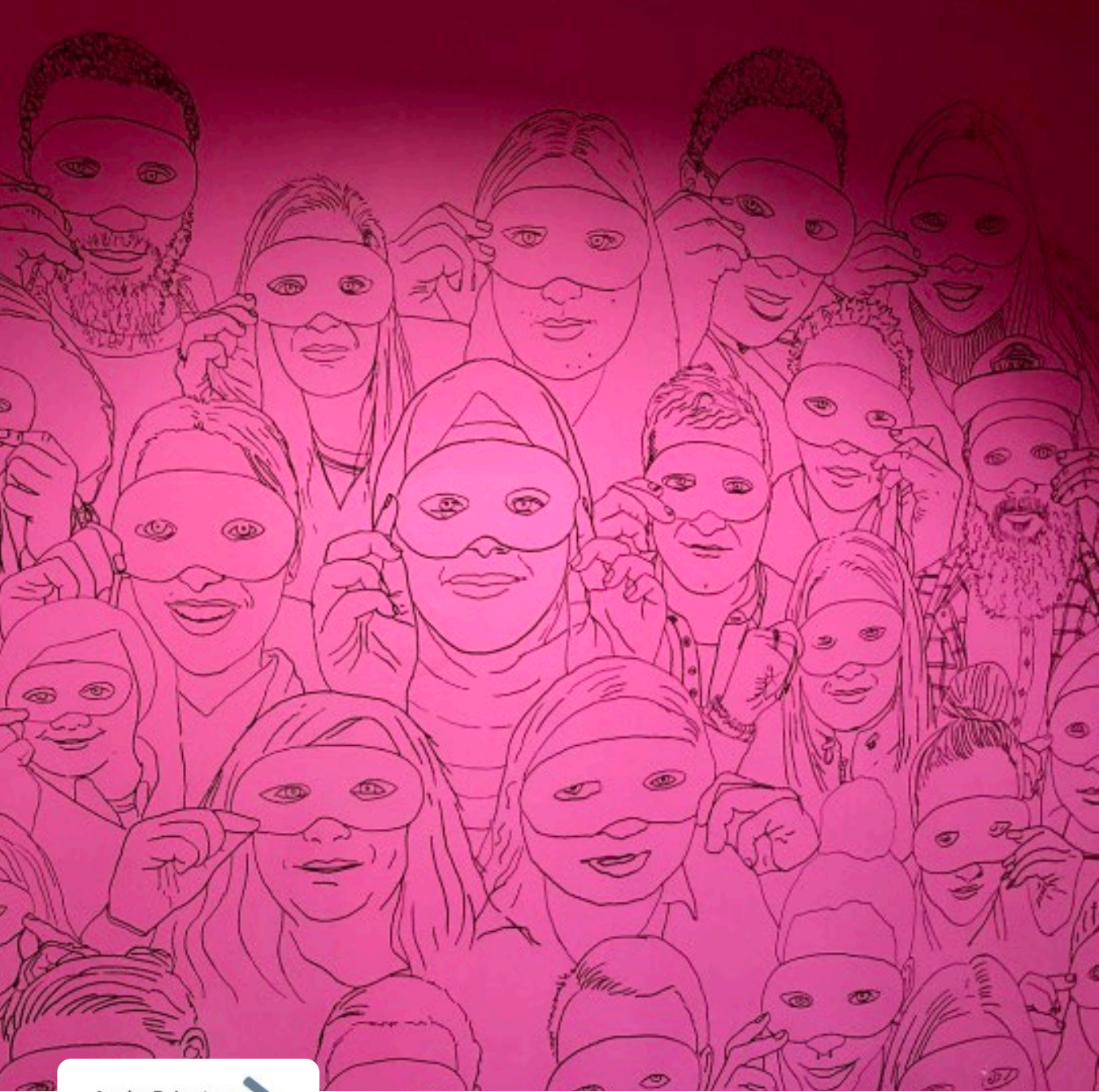
To quickly get a feel for how users feel about the library through verbal interactions.











But what
about
people not
currently
using the
library?

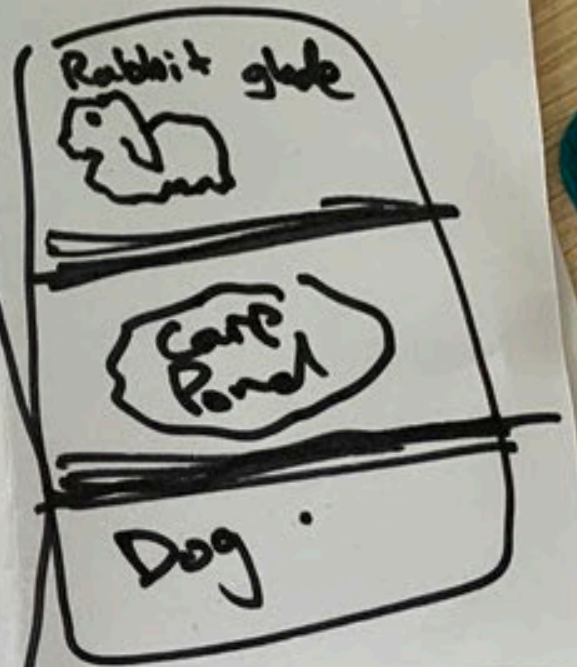





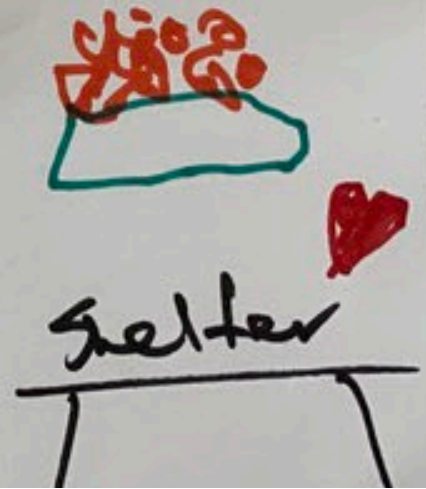
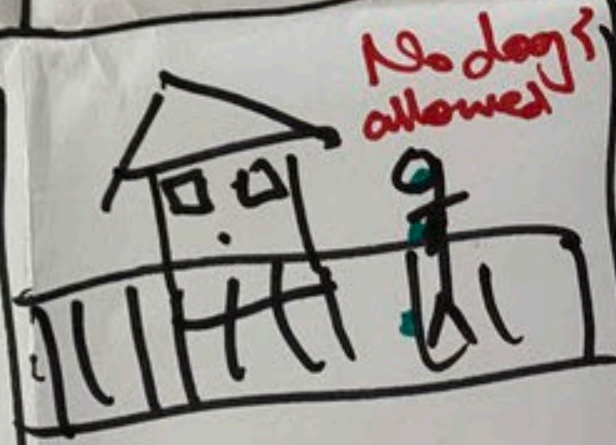
The University of Waikato
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato



#bladder
#work
#life



Mascots
for
Student
clubs









ART

Too many
paintings of
old white
dead men!



HONORARY DOCTORS AT SLU

SLU
SLME



On this wall are portraits of a selection of honorary doctors at SLU.
They are all women.
Times change.





4. usability testing



What is it?

Observing and recording how a user completes a set of common tasks on a website or other digital platform. Do they understand the language and the layout? Do they fulfil tasks?

Why is it used?

To uncover problems that need resolving around digital navigation, layout, and accessibility. These tests show what users actually do rather than what they tell you they do.







"Love the immediate help"

help "

"Plain and simple"

"Excited that it goes straight to zoom"

Universitetsbiblioteket

Hjelp og veiledning

Få umiddelbar hjelp eller forhåndsbestill en veiledningstime. Vi kan svare på spørsmål om biblioteket eller tjenestene vi tilbyr, alt fra å finne personallitertekst. Gi kildereferanser og litteratursøk.

Umiddelbar hjelp

Velg hjelpemiddel

Velg Zoom

Bestill veiledningstime

Velg dato

Kontakt bibliotekene

Spørsmål om Oria



"I like the buttons"



"Consistent design"

"09 - 15"

Universitetsbiblioteket

Finn bøker, artikler, tidsskrifter m.m.

Velg søk

→ Hjelp og veiledning

"Love the green"

Drop-in veiledning over Zoom

Trenger du hjelp til å finne kilder, henvisninger eller noe annet biblioteket kan hjelpe til med?

Snakk med oss i Zoom

Åpningstider



Åpningstidene er kl. 09-15 hverdager.

Hjelp og veiledning

Få umiddelbar hjelp i **vår digitale skranke** eller forhåndsbestill **også** en veiledningstime med en av våre bibliotekarer. Kontakt oss for å få hjelp, veiledning eller få svar på spørsmål om biblioteket eller tjenestene vi tilbyr.

Umiddelbar hjelp

Vi er tilgjengelige på Zoom hverdager 9-15

Gå til Zoom



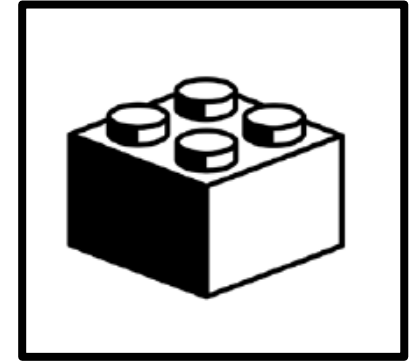
Bestill veiledningstime

Du kan bestille tid og få hjelp med literatursøk, kildebruk, skrivehjelp, veiledning innen forskningsdata mm.

M	T	O	T	F
		✓		



5. generative play



What is it?

Users create models that represent their library experiences with LEGO, modelling clay or other materials.

Why is it used?

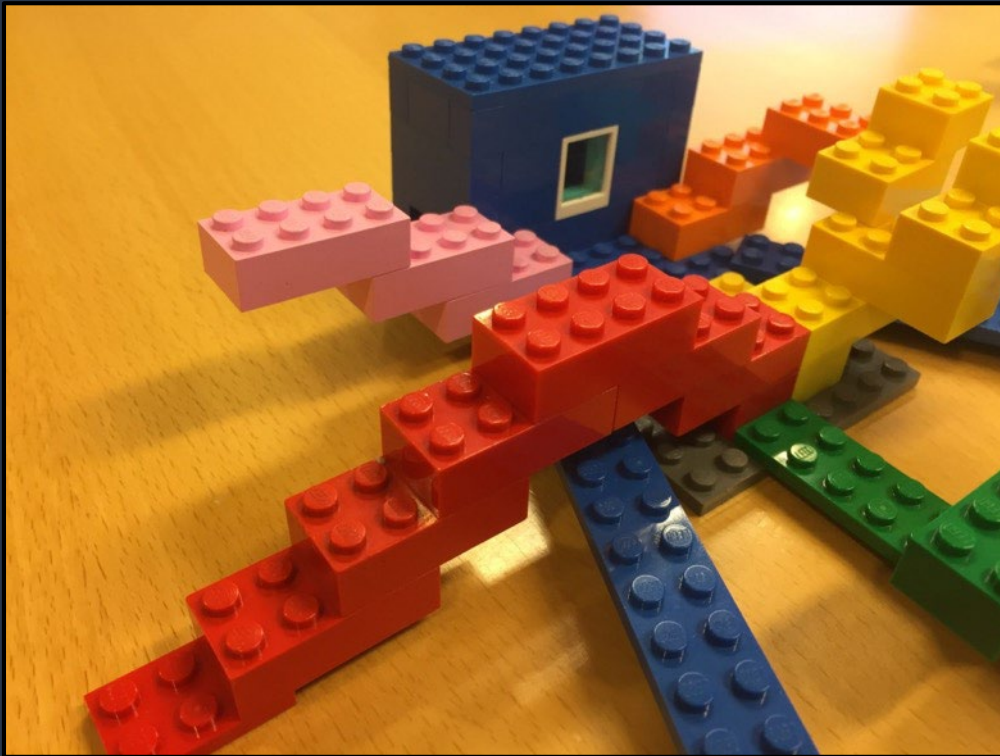
To explore user feelings and ideas regarding services via a more creative and free medium. As with drawing pictures, when people build models of their experience they share more openly and often reveal surprising things.



This LEGO model depicted the joy and wonder of libraries – the library raising the user up on a solid foundation and expanding their knowledge and capacity for retaining and gathering information.

The skeletons represented those people who don't get the value of libraries, out in the void, without any support or indeed knowledge.





This LEGO model, built by a neuro-divergent user, conversely represented how anxious the library made them feel.

The model shows too many different choices and paths when looking for a seat, and indeed for books and data, and an overwhelming colour palette which just read as noise to them.

This led into a fascinating interview about what a calm and welcoming space might look like.





6. photo interviews



What is it?

Showing users photos of different library spaces and pieces of equipment and asking for their views and experiences.

Why is it used?

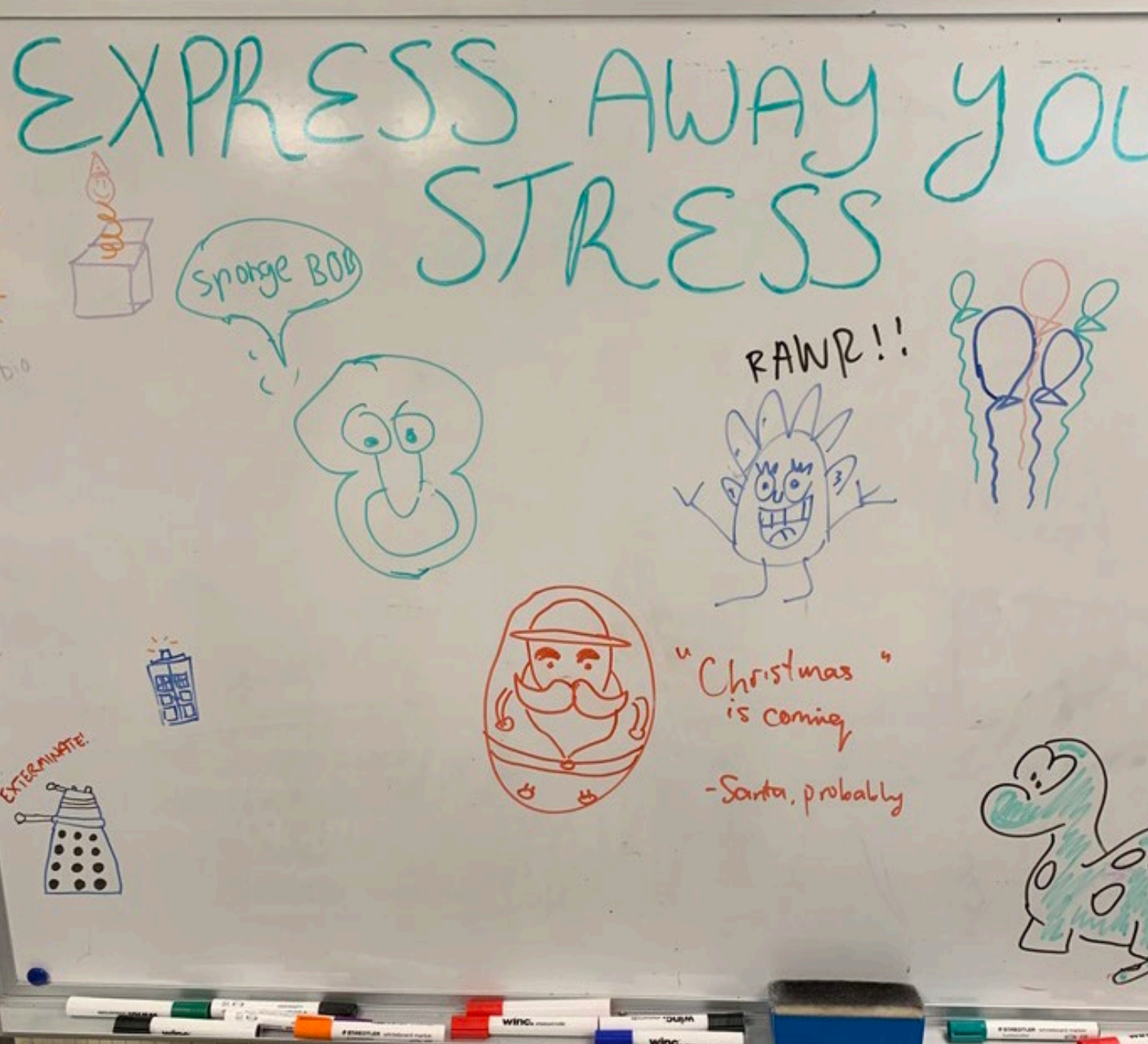
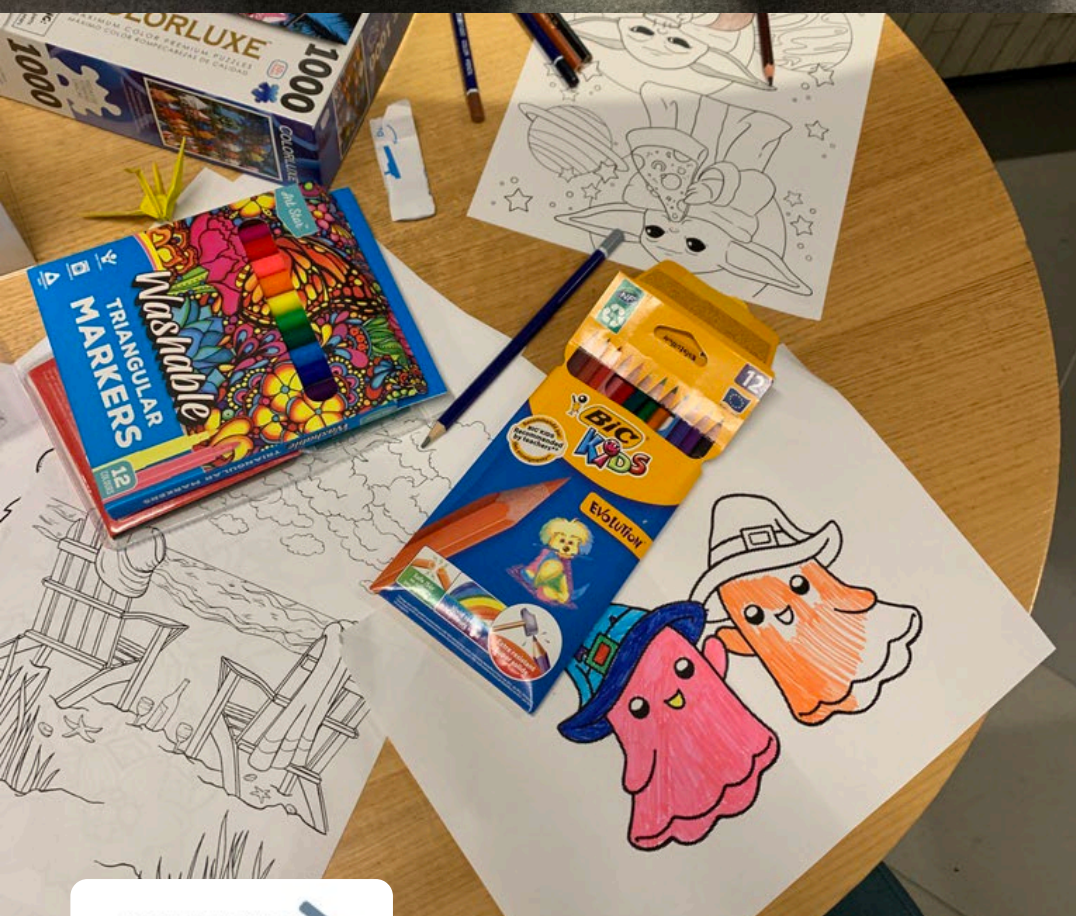
Because the visual medium reveals different responses, often leading to the sharing of more emotional and deeply felt views.







K R E A 7 9 0 9 7 2
K O R N E R



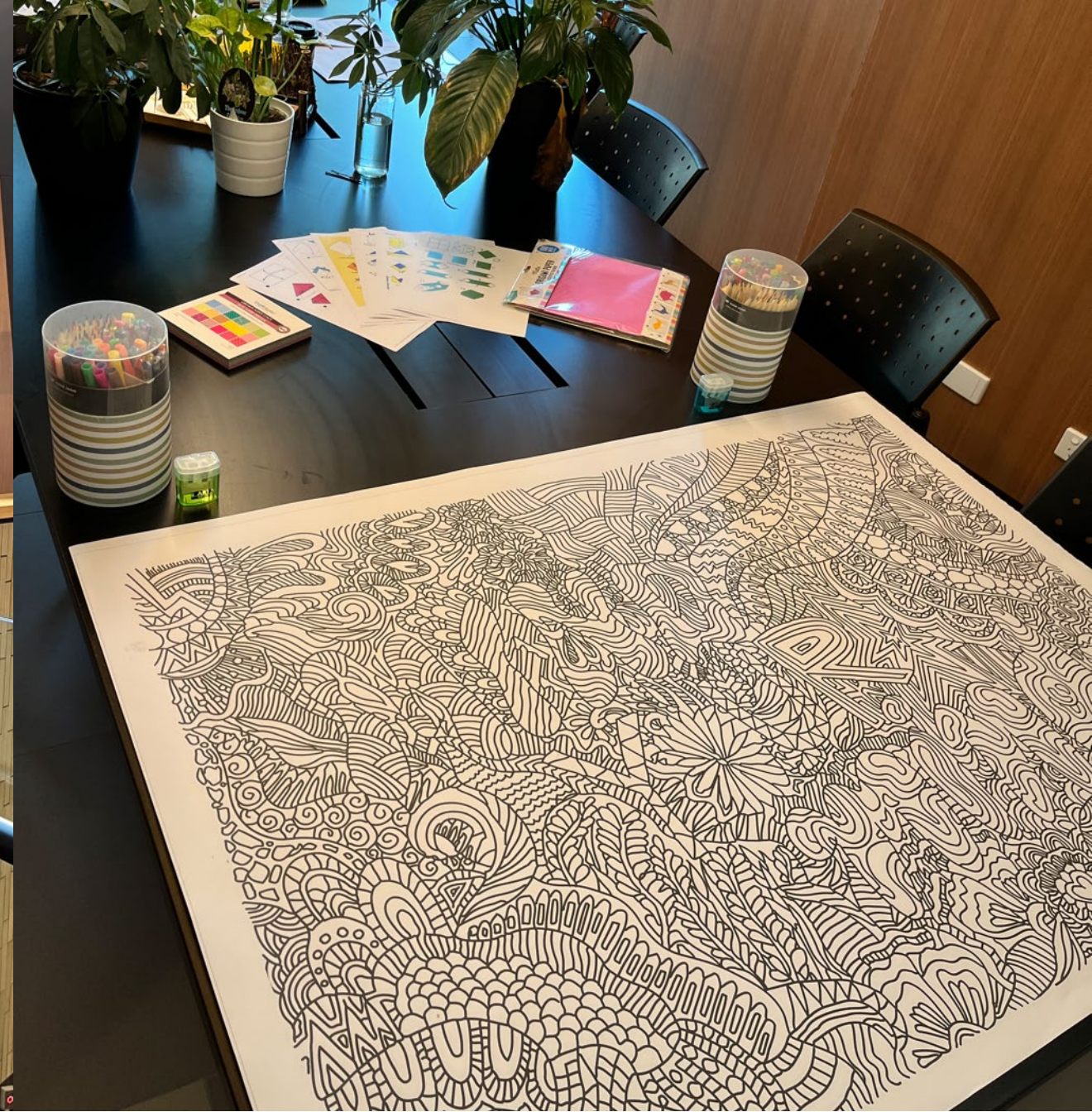


MINDFUL in MAY

Try out our Wellbeing Zone to
relax your mind and improve focus

-  Colouring
-  Origami
-  Mini zen garden

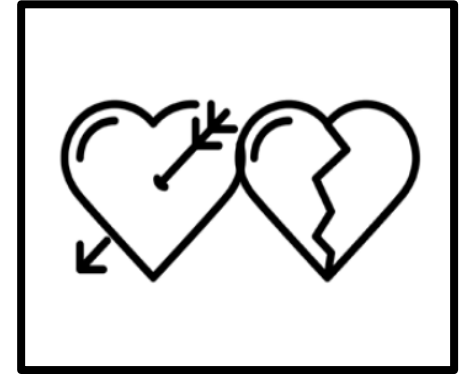
#LoveYourLibrary







7. love and break-up letters



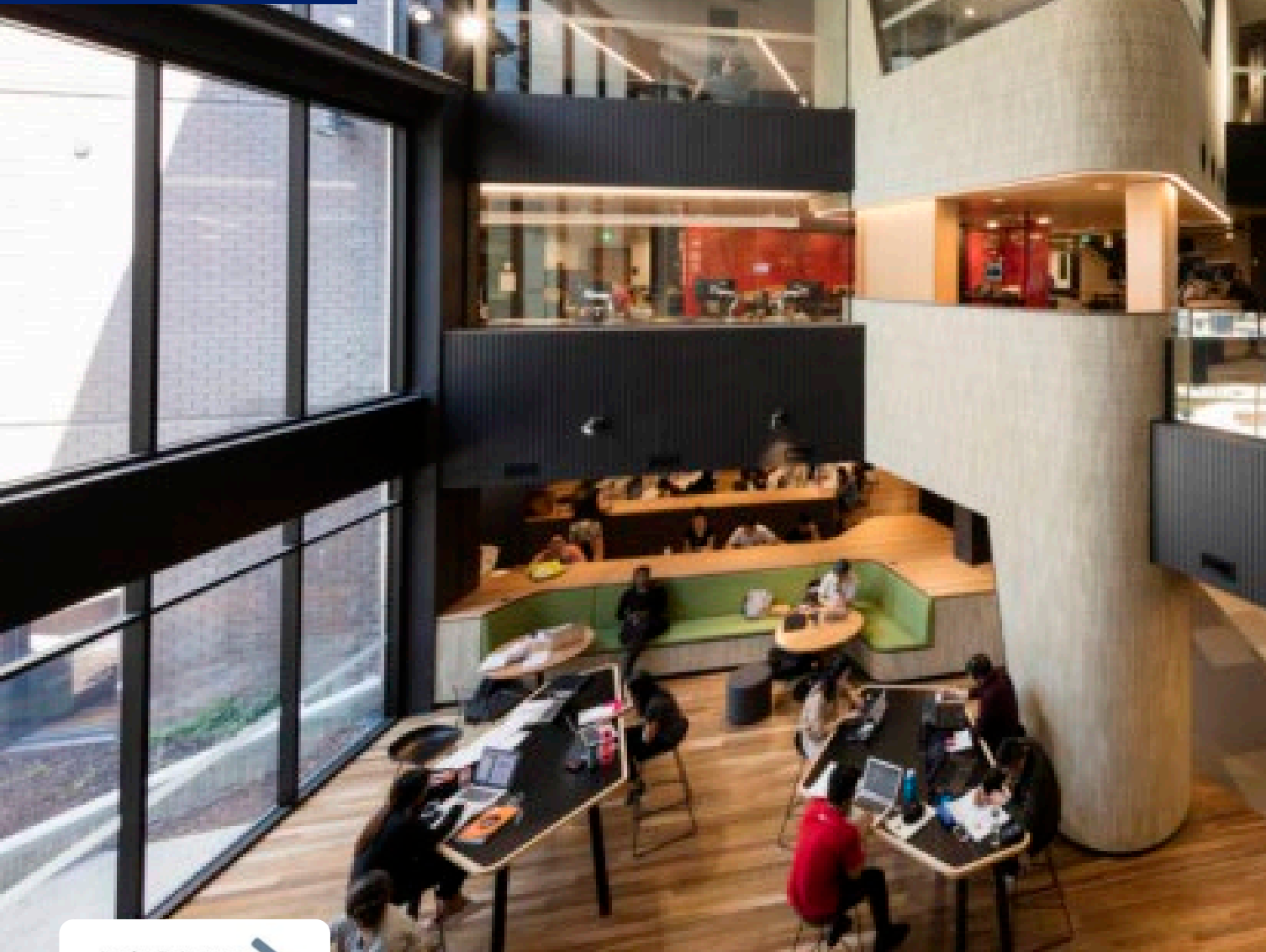
What is it?

Asking users to write either a love or break-up letter to the library, or a particular library service as if it is a girlfriend or boyfriend they are breaking up with.

Why is it used?

By asking users to anthropomorphise services you can understand how they really feel. As with other methods users reveal more via this approach.





Dear Library, ✓

You always make me walk around aimlessly to find a seat. I end up sometimes finding a spot that is messy and ~~unpleasant~~ ^{lifeless}. When I really want a more open space to work + read.

P.S. Your toilets are always dirty and I'm getting back together with Caulfield

P.S.S. Your printing is also overpriced you are a bit of a gold digger





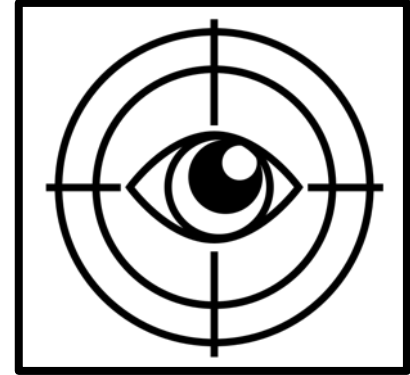
tidsskrifter

Dear Library, It's been a good year for you and me. You have provided me with a space in which I can read, concentrate and get away from the people I know. We have had a lot of good days where I get a lot done, but others when you have made me so mad that I have left. You have cost me a lot of reading time and caused a lot of pain. I struggle a lot with my arm, shoulder and neck, and I wish you could help me with this by having 'cookbook' stands to place my books in and high tables so I can sometimes stand when I work. Every time I go to the bathroom or get water I am afraid of people stealing my seat so often I just leave when I'm thirsty or hungry. If you offered these within the library this could be different. I would also appreciate if you could be a bit quieter when I really need to focus, and also that you could have a comfortable couch to relax on when I need a break.





8. eyetracking



What is it?

Using eyetracking glasses to see where people look when using either the physical or digital library.

Why is it used?

Because people will tell you that they do certain things, but until you actually see exactly where they are looking you cannot fully understand what they do or where they are going wrong.







Eyetracking findings:

- reluctance to use library catalogue
- aimlessly browsing seemed preferable
- most signs were ignored
- Arts: on average 8 mins per book
- Sciences: on average 20 mins per book
- Most common phrases:
 - ‘I’m sure I’m doing this wrong’
 - ‘If you weren’t here I would have given up by now’
 - ‘I’m no good at libraries’



Prototyping:

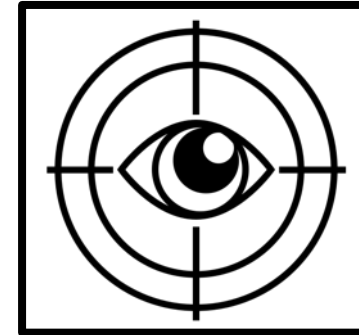
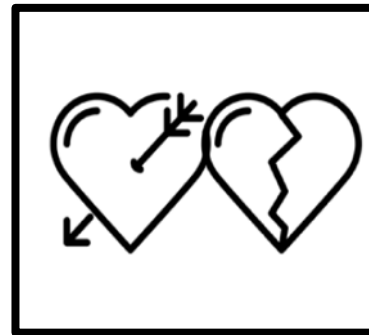
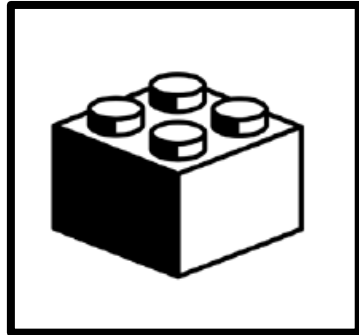
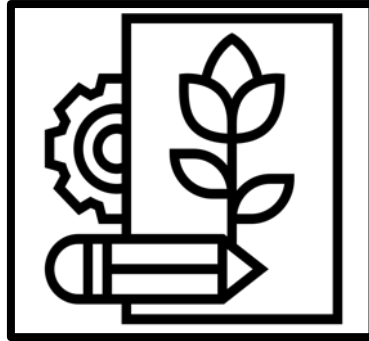
1. removing signs and adding better ones
2. creating new collection layout maps
3. colour-coding the collections

The first 2 prototypes failed, only the colour-coding worked and we just about halved book-finding time (Arts: 5 minutes, Sciences: 8 minutes)



Screenshots from one of the eyetracking videos showing how the users eye (the red circle) settled on the colour on our prototype signs in order to successfully navigate the library shelves...







RESEARCH



DATA ANALYSIS



IDEATION



PROTOTYPING

Why UX Methods are so important and relevant: they...

- focus on user needs AND behaviours
- uncover richer and more detailed and complex data than traditional methods
- forge an authentic connection with service users and non-users
- are more enjoyable and engaging for people to take part in
- involve prototyping and testing until you succeed
- make library services more valuable, desirable and relevant to your users



STOP

- Speculating
- Holding endless meetings
- Furthering private and personal agendas
- Devising services in isolation from users

START

- Communicating with users
- Researching with users
- Collaborating with users
- Co-creating with users



Why UX now?

Because of COVID the world has changed forever and we need to respond to that.

- How have user needs and behaviours altered?
- How do you deliver services differently?
- Which services should be delivered remotely and which in person?
- What are the user priorities now in a physical library space?
- What are user priorities online?
- How can the library fit into new user routines?

Libraries need to know about current user needs and behaviours and respond to that – this is why User Experience (UX) work is essential now.





ROLL A 01 | SCENE 1 | TAKE 9

FPS 23.98 | 18.21.34.21 | CAM

PRD Roadside

DIR Jakob & Ryan

CAM Thomas Taugher



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

THE USER EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITY

researching and designing
more relevant and user-
centric library services

Andy Priestner
[@andypriestner](#)

20 September 2023

