



# Getting to Know Library Users' Needs

Experimental ways to user-centered library innovation through the project "A Journey of Discovery in Danish Library User Land"

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# Meeting the User

Who are we?

- Danish Electronic Research Library (DEFF)
- Co-funded by three Danish ministries
- Programme committees
  1. Meeting the User
  2. Architecture & Middleware
  3. Information Provision
  4. New Institutions



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# Innovation of libraries

A main objective of “Meeting the User” is

**To facilitate an innovative culture within research and educational libraries focusing on users’ needs!**

- Be aware of the users’ demands for service.
- What is traditionally meaningful for the library is not necessarily meaningful for the library user.
- The users’ needs might change imperceptibly over time.



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# The concept of user logic

Does it seem logic and natural for the user?

Or

Does it only seem logic and natural for the library?

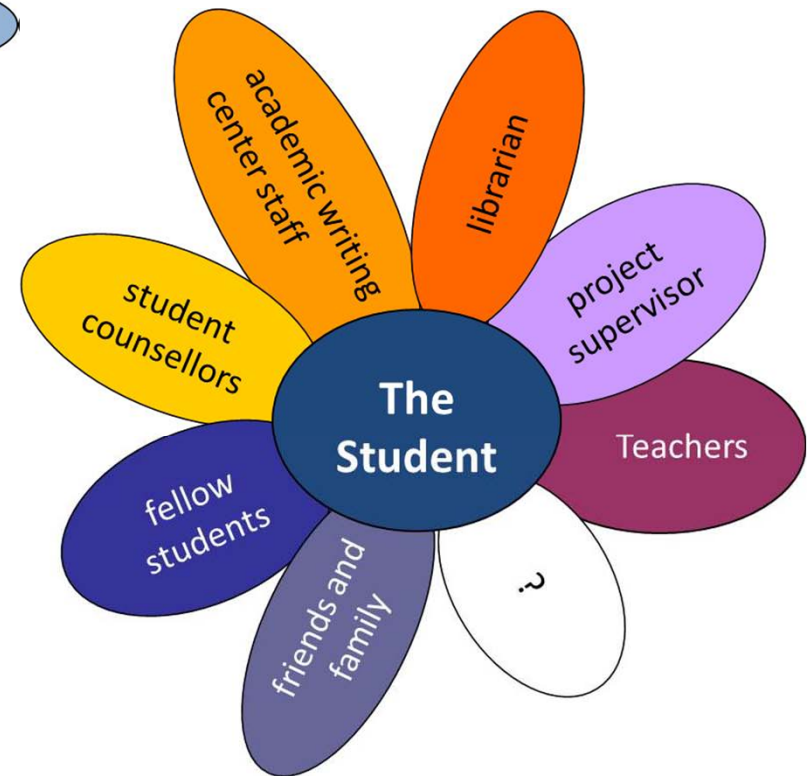
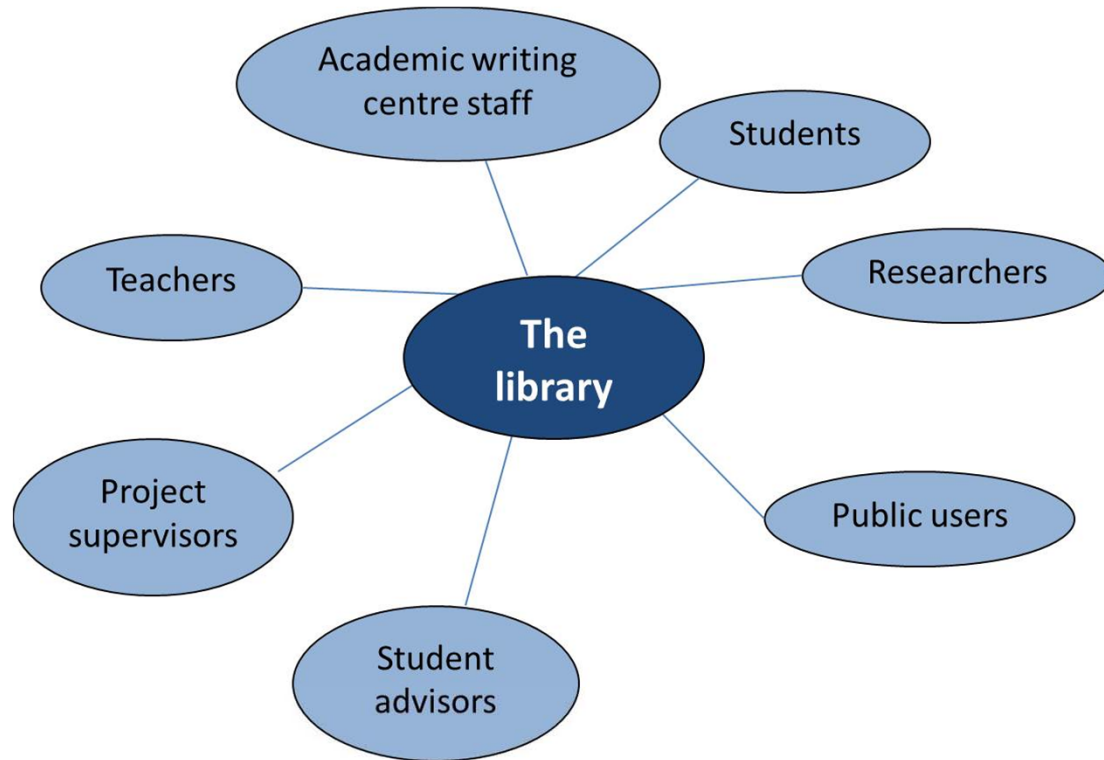
Either - both - neither?



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# The concept of user logic



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# The concept of user logic



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# Symbols of library logic

Classification system

The catalogue

Instruction in databases

**Library logic**

Reference interview

Opening hours

The library room



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# A Journey of Discovery in Danish Library User Land

An experimental development project in year 2010

In Danish: “Brugerkaravanen”

4 local workshops

Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense, Aalborg

110 library employees

Research and educational libraries

Divided among 16 mini-buses

Visited 32 user-locations

A Book: A Field Trip to Library User Land

National workshop day





# A Journey of Discovery in Danish Library User Land

## The 4 local workshops

1. Picked up in smaller groups
2. Mini-buses to a “base camp”
3. Introduced to qualitative methods
4. Given a set of user-centered tools
5. In mini-buses out to visit users
6. Back to base camp to workshop





*“First we were introduced to the thoughts of **human centered innovation** and presented to a set of **qualitative methods and techniques** – various kinds of interviews and observations – all of which were inspired by the scientific field of **ethnography and anthropology.**” (Participant Aarhus)*



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# User-centered tools

## Observations

- Photo diary created by the user
- Observation in work context with notes and photos
- User think-aloud observations

## Interviews

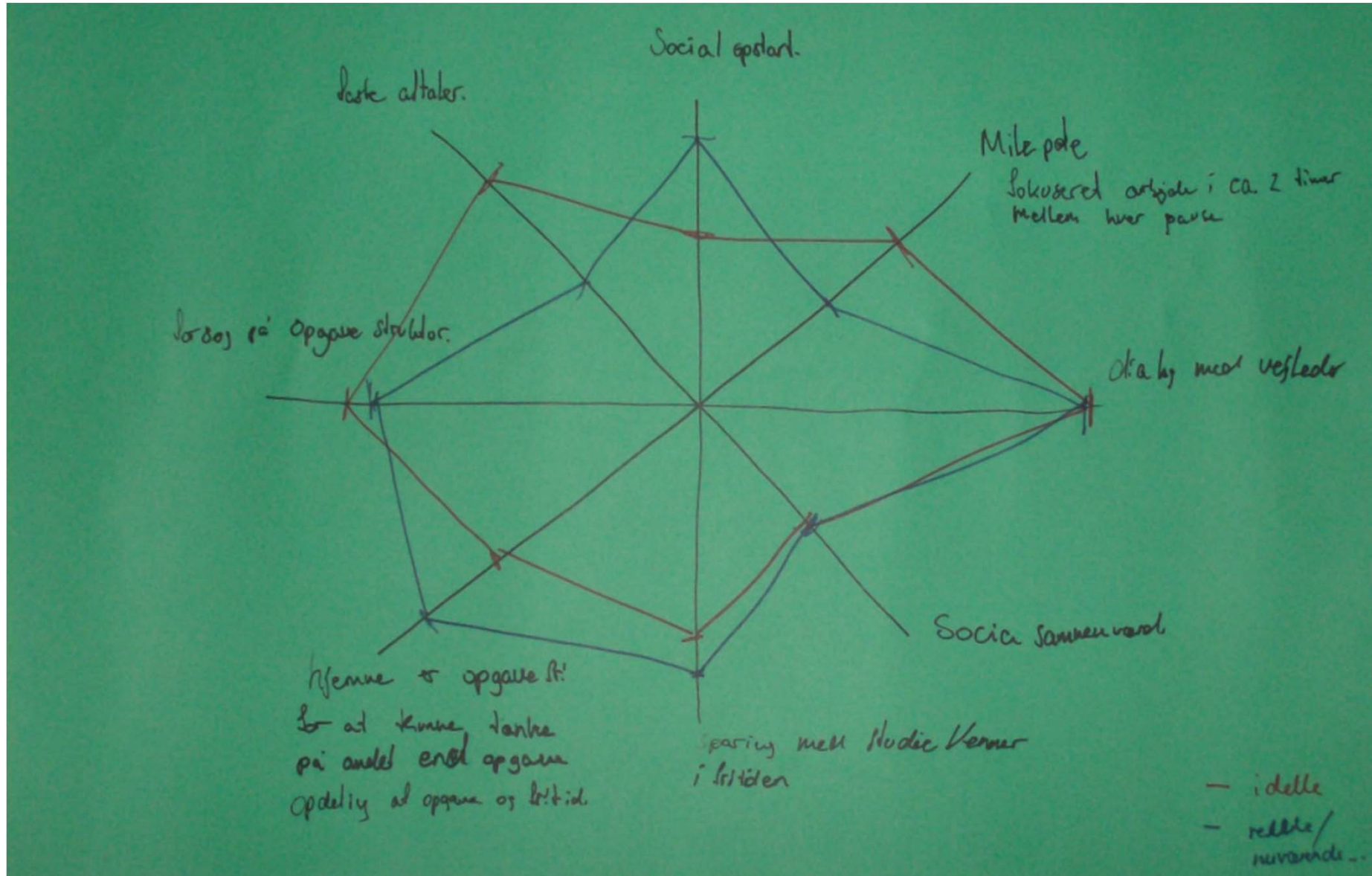
- Value wheel (representing values of the user)
- At a location that means something to the user:
  - users are met on their home ground
- Small spontaneous interviews with users without any agreement



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# Value wheel (values of the user)







*“Back at the base-camp we all had to **categorize** the collected data during observations and interviews, printed photos, video clips, observation notes, interview notes, collected thoughts, by categorizing each segment under broader headlines. This phase was very crucial, we learned, as it is the careful preparation of data that lead to the final part of the process: the **analysis**.” (Participant Aarhus)*

# 7 principles for human-centered innovation

1. Users run nothing
2. Remove the blinkers
3. Focus on the question
4. Meet ordinary people
5. Focus on context
6. Improve people's lives
7. Don't go to the zoo, go to the jungle



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1. Observation of user behaviour using a web application. The point was that saying is one thing, doing is another!
2. A small exploration of the university students understanding of the words “community” and “motivation” in relation to the question “how does a good day of study look like”? Especially focus on using the “value wheel”.
3. Small investigation of the reason why some library users hesitate to ask the librarian/information counselor for help or, alternatively, started the conversation with “I am sorry to disturb you”. 7 small interviews were made.
4. A library team exploring the concept of service by observing staff and customer interactions and by interviewing people using vox pop at 1) a combined swimming bath and library, 2) a shopping mall, 3) outside a tea- and coffee shop, 4) a department store, 5) a MacDonal and 6) Ikea. What should their library service look like?
5. Observations of library users combined with questionnaires sent to 180 students asking them whether the library should keep the collection of reference books or replace it with magazines about art, literature and music.

# Conclusions and further perspectives

The project revealed completely new ways for us, library employees, to meet library users.

The challenge is to start a human-centered innovation culture among the librarians and spread the word that it can be done in many different forms and sizes.

The project gave us a workshop-concept, a how-to-do-manual containing concrete tools, a website to share experiences and discussions.



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# Conclusions and further perspectives

**Now it is up to us to do it!**

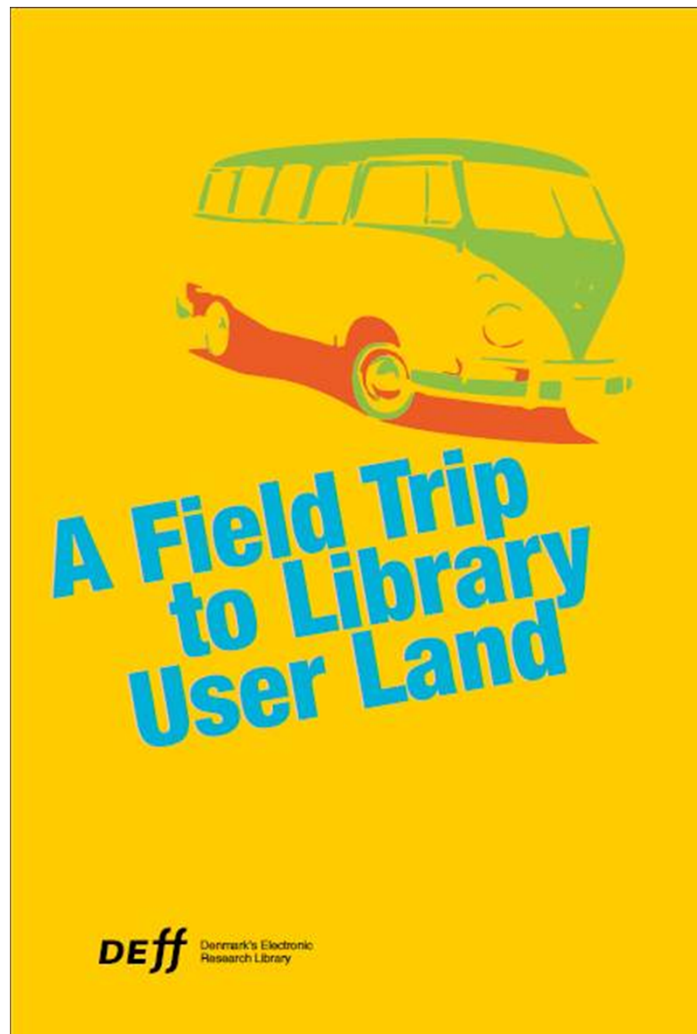


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**Read article in Liber Quarterly**

Getting to Know Library Users' Needs

**Find inspiration and advice in the book**

"A Field Trip to Library User Land"

**Ask questions to**

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