

**Help Us Help You**  
*Using Focus Groups for Marketing*

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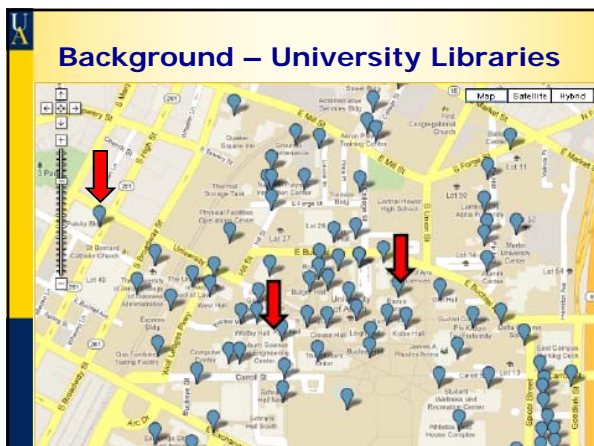
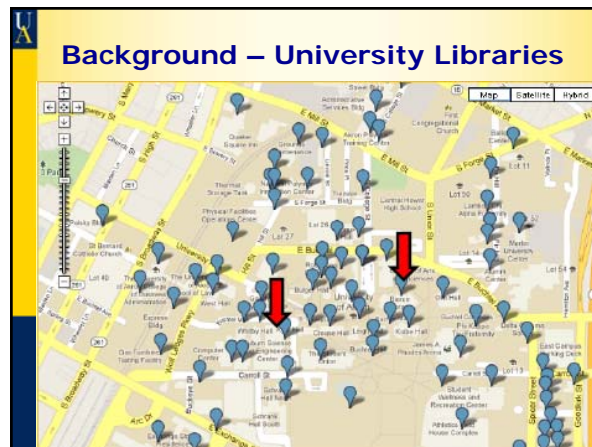
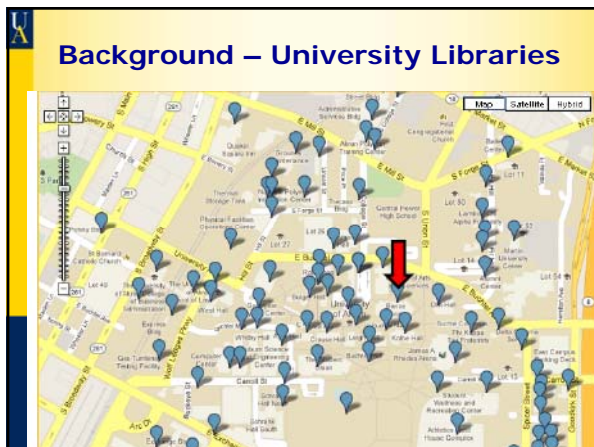
May 18, 2012

## Background – Why Marketing?

- University Libraries Strategic Plan, 2010-2014

**Marketing and Communication**      Develop a comprehensive, sustained and aggressive marketing plan that promotes the services and resources of the University Libraries, both internally and externally.

- University Libraries = Bierce Library, Science & Technology Library, Archival Services



## Marketing Task Force

*The Challenge:* Improve outreach to a diverse **undergraduate** population and begin to engage more students earlier in their academic careers

Fall 2011	
Undergraduate Students	25,190
Graduate Students	3,961
Professional Students	548
Full-time students	21,413
Part-time students	8,296
<b>Total Headcount</b>	<b>29,699</b>

## Marketing Task Force

*The Charge:* Market to undergraduate students, with the overall goal of raising awareness & increasing use:

- Improve **understanding**
- Evaluate various outreach approaches
- Identify effective messaging
- Develop an action plan

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## Carrying Out the Charge

- Review on-campus department marketing plans
- Work with a marketing course through the CBA
- Survey University Libraries department heads
- Conduct **focus groups**

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## Why Use Focus Groups?

- Group dialogue tends to generate rich information.
- Provides information directly from individuals who are invested in the issue or hold expert knowledge.
- Provides a representation of diverse opinions and ideas.
- Provides a relatively low cost and efficient way to generate a great deal of information.

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## Anatomy of a Focus Group

- A small group of 6-10 people
- Led by a facilitator
- 45-90 minutes
- Structured around a set of no more than 10 questions
- Free-flowing
- Multi-sessional: in a series of 3-4 sessions



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## ABCs of Focus Groups

There are four basic steps to conducting successful focus groups:

- A. Planning
- B. Recruiting
- C. Facilitating
- D. Analysis and Reporting

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## Planning Step by Step



- Select your team
  - Facilitator
  - Notetaker
  - Recruiters
- Identify your participants
- Decide on the time and location
- Develop your questions

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## Focus Group Costs to Plan For:

- Site
- Facilitator
- Recruitment fees
- Participant stipends and other participant costs
- Translation
- Transcription

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## A Good Facilitator Can:

- Encourage people to speak.
- Control overly dominant people or people making inappropriate comments without disrupting the group.
- Be able to ask all of the predetermined questions and follow-up on comments made by respondents that need clarification.
- Make a group of diverse participants feel comfortable and safe.

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## Developing the Questions

Twelve is the maximum number of questions for any one group. Ten is better, and eight is ideal.

### Keep it simple

- Avoid jargon
- Short and to the point
- Focused on one dimension each
- Open-ended or sentence completion types
- Non-threatening or embarrassing

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## Developing the Questions

**Engagement questions:** introduce participants to and make them comfortable with the topic of discussion.

**Exploration questions:** get to the meat of the discussion.

**Exit question:** check to see if anything was missed in the discussion.

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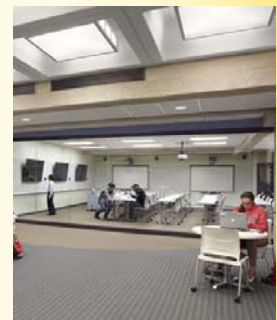
## Recruiting Participants

- Develop screening criteria
- Be visible
- Over-invite
- Offer incentives
- Reduce barriers
- Follow-up
- Hit the streets

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## Types of Recruitment

- Nomination
- Random Selection
- All members of the same group
- Same role/job title
- Volunteers



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## Tips for Conducting Focus Groups

- Obtain verbal and written consent
- Establish rapport
- Follow your plan
- Revise questions
- Encourage participation
- Record the discussion

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## Getting Consent

At a minimum, all participants should complete a consent form.

If the focus group study involves a university partner or is part of a larger research study you may also be required to secure approval from a Human Subjects Committee or Internal Review Board.

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## What Did They Say?

- How are students using the library?
  - time in between classes
  - studying /getting work done
  - computer access
  - tutoring / help
  - collections / resources
- "In general I usually come here in between classes. It's definitely the best place on campus to work on different papers and its quiet and just the atmosphere makes it easy to get your work done. I've also used the tutoring downstairs like the writing lab. Other than that it's a good place to get on the computers and stuff. And some reports I've done I've had to check out books and stuff and this is definitely the easiest place to go to do that."

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## What Else Did They Say?

- Top Services
  - Tutoring
  - Computers
  - Study rooms / spaces
  - Research / research support
  - Technical support
- Best Ways to Reach Students
  - E-mail
  - Word of mouth (primarily from other students and secondarily from professors)

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## Branding University Libraries

- What did they think of when they thought of the libraries?
  - "Books. I usually think of books."
  - "But I don't like reading so that makes me not want to go to the library."
  - "Doing homework after class"
  - "Work in progress that grows with students. Added technology and features as it advances or as students need it."
  - "Unlimited access to information."
  - "Anything that would have to do with study. That would include the unlimited access, the tutoring, everything."
  - "Staff is very genuine and friendly. They are patient and professional."
  - "Studying"
  - "Computers"

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## Meeting Expectations

- "This is what I expected and more. I didn't expect being able to be able to get everything I could here. It looked nice and was bigger than I expected. "
- "My expectation is that I can get what I want as far as resources. I think it is perfect. Everyone is really helpful."
- "Before I came to Akron my experience with libraries was mostly public libraries and they are really basic. There is so much more here."
- "I think you have done a great job. Everything meets my expectations."

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## Social Media & University Libraries

- Facebook & Twitter were the social media of choice. The responses among the social media users regarding interacting with the library were mixed.
  - "Facebook. If you would get a facebook page, I probably wouldn't jump to follow you but I think for people interested in what's going on in the library it's a good marketing strategy."
  - "I'm on facebook all the time so I would definitely friend you guys on facebook."
  - "I don't really see myself friending the library on facebook. I think it would clutter my news feed more than it already is."
  - "I have facebook to keep up with family and friends from out of state. I would not follow friending the library because I don't use it to keep up with propaganda or news."
  - "I have facebook and twitter and I already follow several student organizations so I would probably follow/friend the library on both. I think besides word of mouth social media is the main reason people hear of events."

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## What Do They Want to Hear from Us?

- What news or updates would you want to hear from University Libraries?
  - events
  - services
  - hours
  - student jobs
  - meetings and classes in UL facilities
- "Spotlighting employees (faculty, staff, students) with their specialties so students know who to go to for certain things."
- "Events and services. New services being offered. Photos from events after they occur to draw interest for the next event."

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## What We Learned

- The Good
  - Libraries have much to market and positive messages to build on
  - Undergraduate students seem to prefer low-cost communication options (e-mail, posters)
  - University Libraries is meeting most expectations
- The Bad
  - Struggled to recruit participants, so getting the word out for library events and marketing may be difficult
  - It was difficult to talk with non-users and students who use Archives and the Science & Technology Library
  - Diversity of uses and associations with University Libraries make a single branding option difficult to develop

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## Questions?

The University of Akron