

Dear Editorial Board,

Regarding “[Halfway Home: User Centered Design and Library Websites](#)” in the March 2018 issue of *Information Technology and Libraries* (ITAL), I thought there were some interesting points. I think that your assertion, however, that User Centered Design automatically eliminates anything from a website that your main user group did not expressly ask for is faulty.

When someone brings up the fact that User Centered Design is not statistically significant, I interpret that as a misunderstanding of what User Centered Design is. Our academic library websites are not research projects so why would we gather statistically significant information about them? Our academic library websites are (or should be) helpful to students and faculty and constantly changing to meet their needs. If librarians perpetuate a misunderstanding of User Centered Design, my fear is that misunderstanding could perpetuate stagnation and a refusal to change our technology/user interfaces in a rapidly changing environment and do our patrons and ourselves a disservice.

User Centered Design is a set of tools to help us gather information about users and their needs. The information gathered informs the design but does not dictate the design and needs to be part of an iterative process. The web design team at your institution demonstrated User Centered Design when they added floor maps back into the web site when a group of users pointed out that it was causing problems for the main users at your institution.

While valuable experience from librarians and other staff is critical to take into account, it is sometimes difficult to determine which pieces of the puzzle provide comfort to those who work at the library vs. which pieces assist students in their studies. I applaud your willingness to “clear the slate” and reduce the amount of information you were maintaining on your website. I’m guessing you may have removed dozens of links from your website. You only mentioned adding one category of information back into the design. I would say your User Centered Design process is working quite well.

Ann Kucera
Systems Librarian
Central Michigan University

