

My University:

A user-centric approach to

digital & physical spaces & places

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@LeeFallin

Spaces ('physical' or 'digital') are the containers in which *things* happen

The
campus

Lecture
theatres

Canvas

Microsoft
Teams

Labs &
the field

Cafes

Social
media

Support
Portal

Halls of
residence

The
Library

Library
Search

PebblePad

Often, despite the desire for a cohesive student experience, there is a digital-physical disconnect

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Younger students tend not to differentiate between digital & physical experiences

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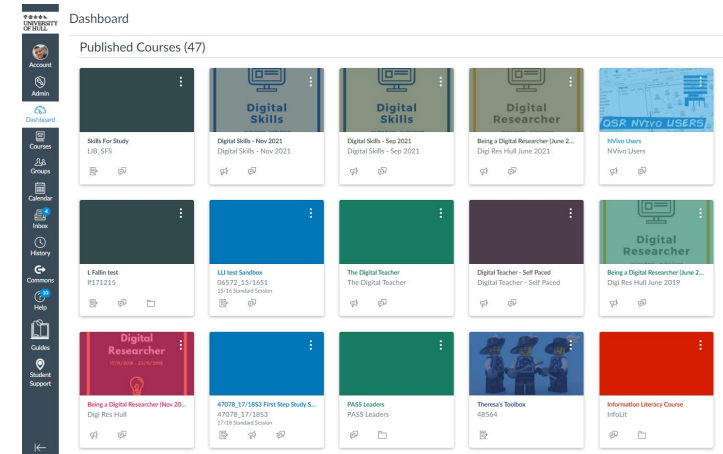
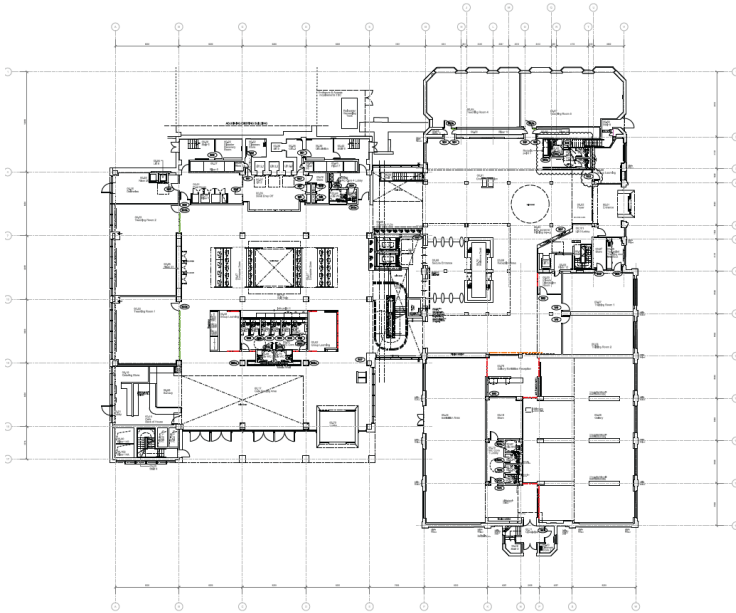
Library
Search

The
Library

PebblePad

Spaces are conceived (by the powerful)

(Lefebvre, 1991)



By architects, senior
management
& estates teams

Meaningful &
sustained user
engagement?

By EdTech companies, ICT
departments & learning
technologists

Spaces are 'real'. They are perceived by the university community

(Lefebvre, 1991)



Spaces are experienced. They are **lived**

(Lefebvre, 1991)



...and the difference with place?

Place is space with meaning



(Cresswell, 2004)

I explored space and place at the Brynmor Jones Library



My research utilized 3 main instruments:

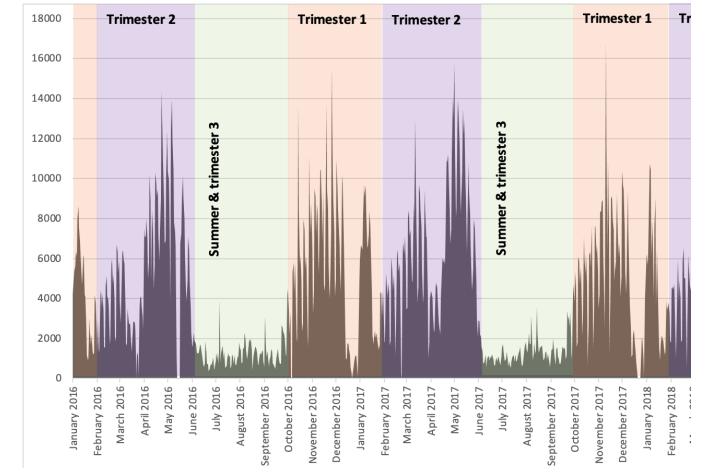
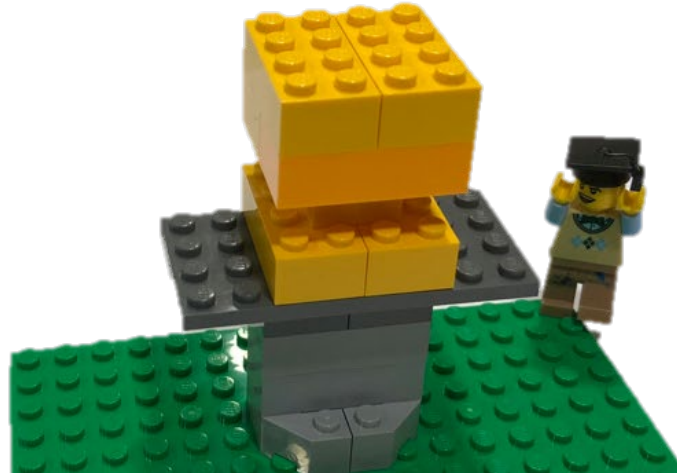
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Activities are goal-directed sets of actions. What are the pathways that people take toward the things they want to accomplish, including specific actions and processes? How long do they spend doing something? Who are they doing it with?

General Impressions/Observations

Elements, Features & Special Notes

of Design / Renee Harrington Harrington@umuc.edu / ©2021



Observations

(57 x 30 mins)

Focus Groups

(40 participants)

Secondary data

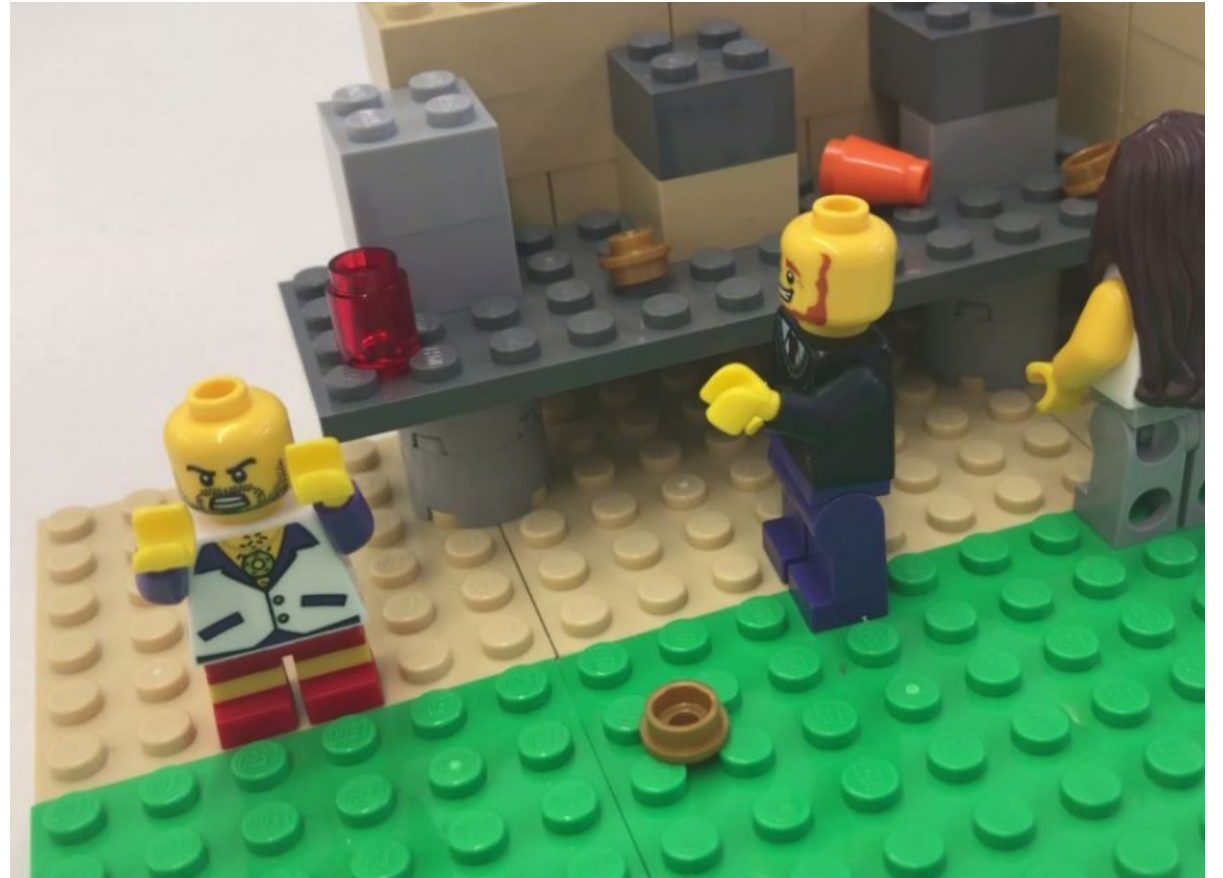
When looking at Library space, users referred to space in many ways:



Reflections from my research & observations

While my research focused on one specific place, there are broader learning points...

What people say does not (always) align with what they do



Spaces need to function for everyone (or as many people as possible)



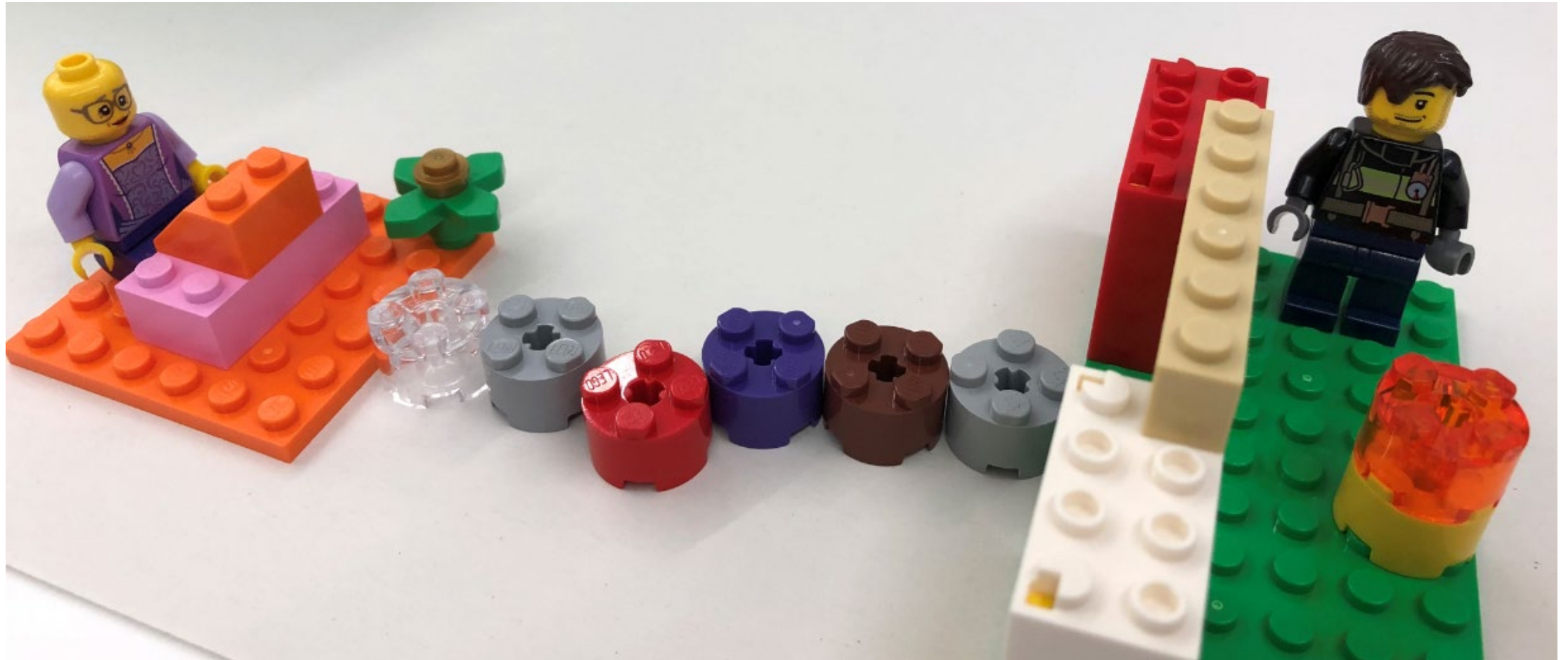
Technology is often unseen, unless it isn't there – or it is broken



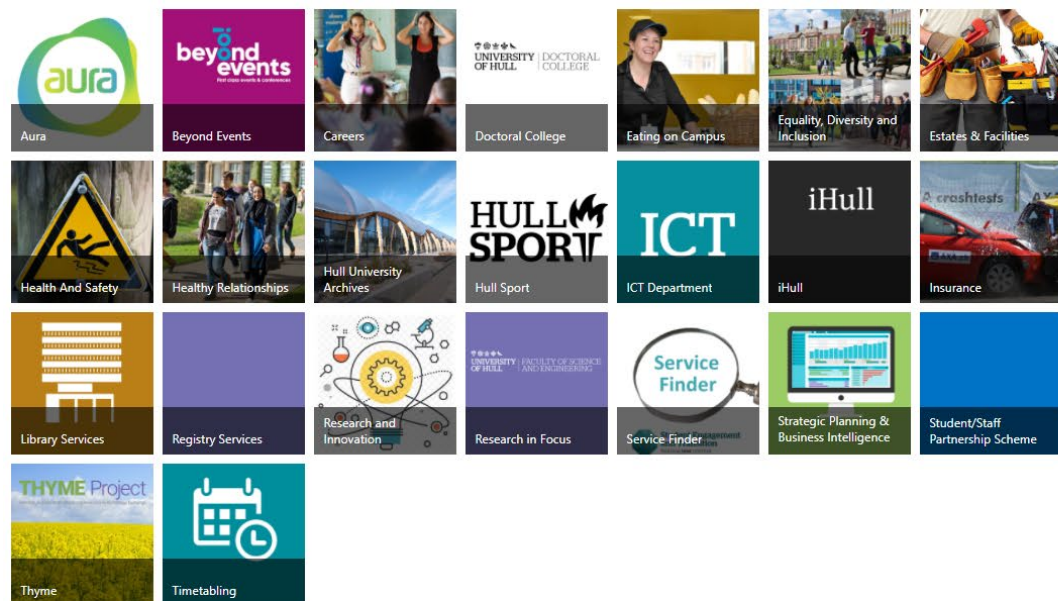
There is no such thing as an intuitive space or building



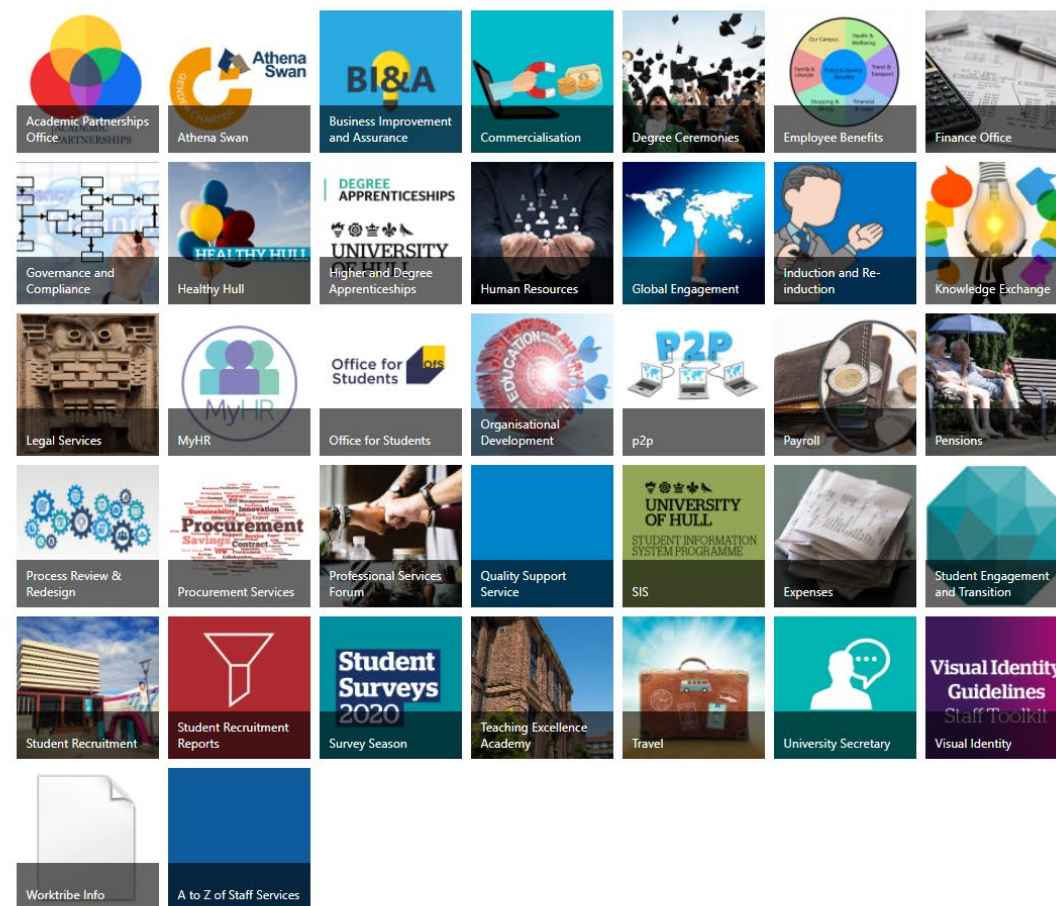
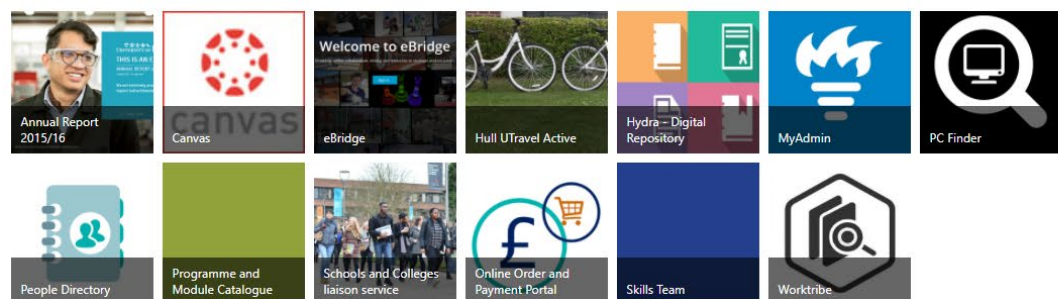
There are, at times, giant chasms
between our online and physical spaces



Too. Many. Things.



External Services



There are disparate experiences online and in-person



There are disparate experiences online and in-person

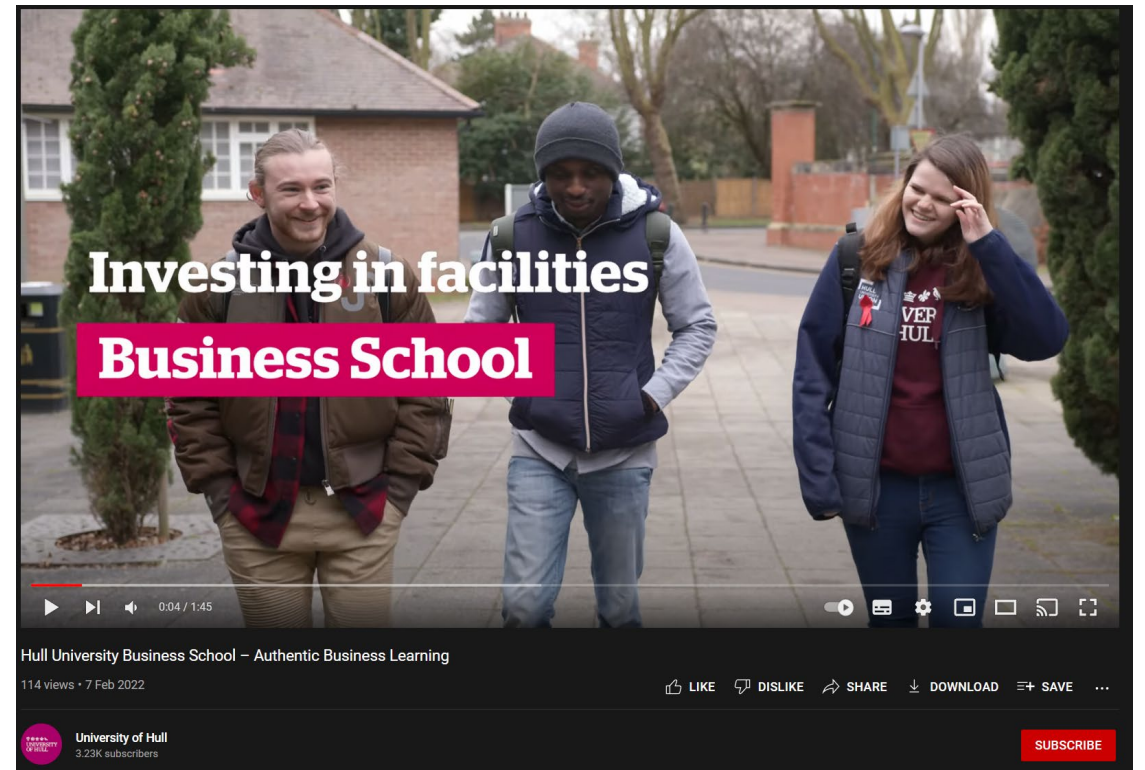


*“That’s it.
We need an
app called
corridor”*

The sense of belonging and connection can be more important than quality.

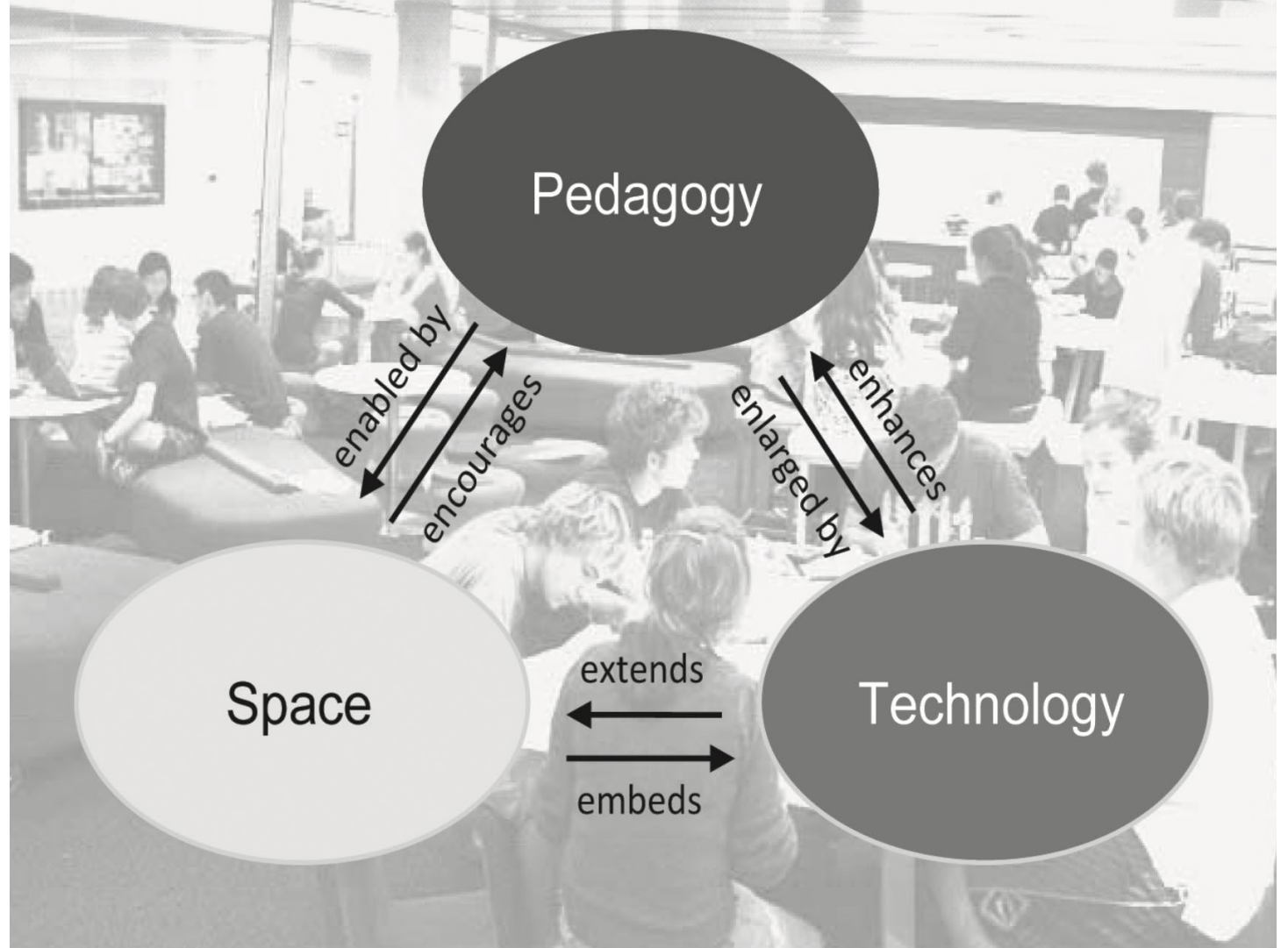


Much more work is needed to make our spaces places



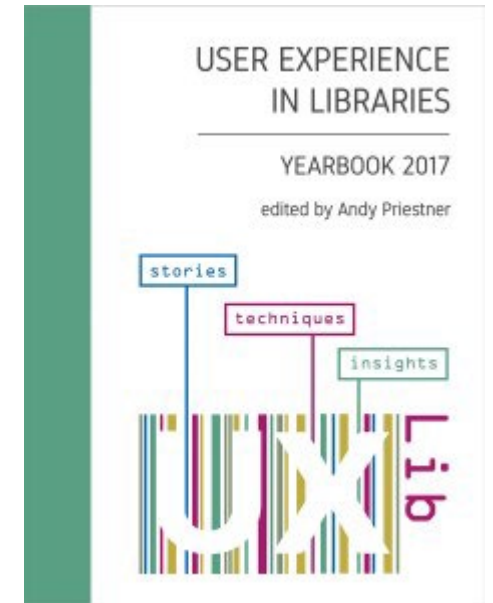
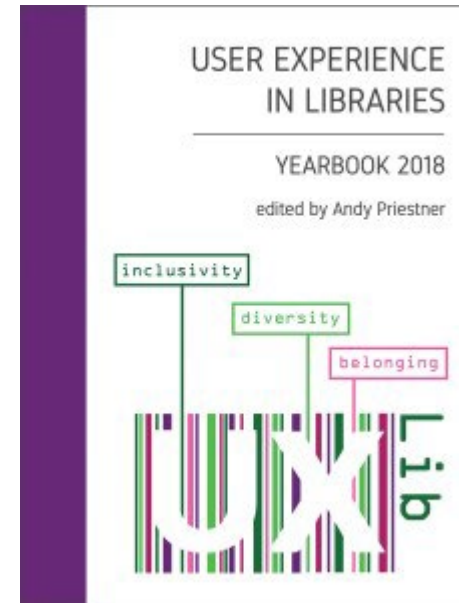
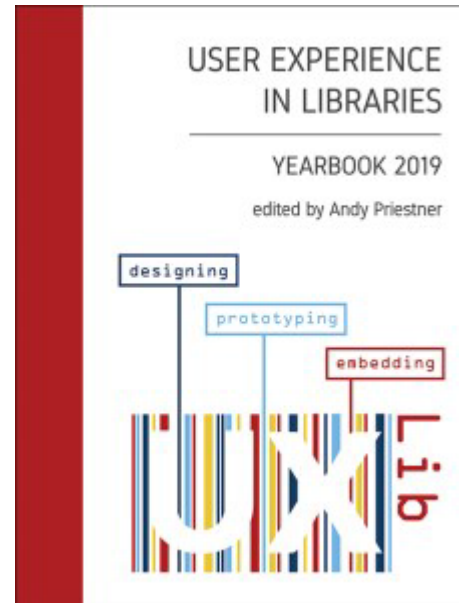
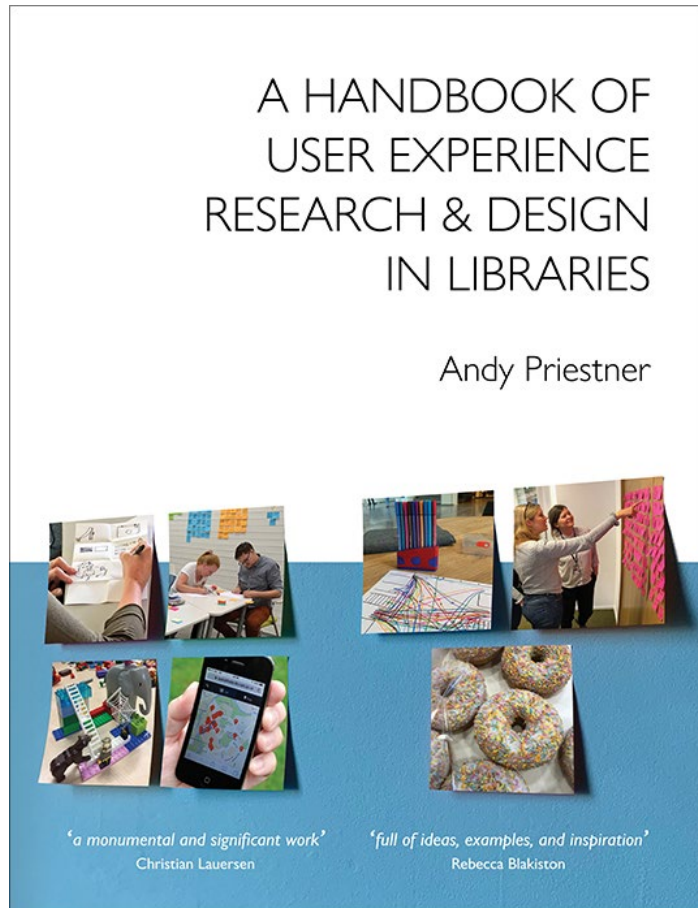
Beyond Hull

Understanding
the user
experience of
our physical
and digital
spaces is vital



(Reushle, 2012)

There has been significant work in this area for libraries thanks to UX Libs



Sometimes (active)
experimentation is
needed to get it right

... or new buildings
need flexibility &
funding to adapt
once open

Futurelib  UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Imagining the future of library services at University of Cambridge.



The Protolib Project
researching and reimagining library environments
at the University of Cambridge

Andy Priestner, David Marshall and Modern Human – April 2016

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast”

Culture

Attitude, habits, values, beliefs
and behaviours

Vs.

Strategy

Vision, plans & budgets

There is an
acknowledgement
we need more
research to
understand space
and place in HE.

Especially how it
impacts students.

Campus spaces and places: Impact on student outcomes

Review of evidence

Prepared for HEDQF, Willmott Dixon and AUDE
Prepared by Professor Sonja Oliveira, Dr Mina Tahsiri and Dr Glyn Everett



With what little we do know, it is fair to argue:

Space and place have an impact on student quality of life, engagement, satisfaction, attainment and retention.

The AUDE report acknowledged several limitations of current space/place research:

There is little
research in the
UK

Research is
often
quantitative

Research is not
inclusive

Research does
not involve
staff or PGs

Too much focus
on post-build
evaluation

My key takeaways from the AUDE report.

The sector needs:

A variety
& diversity of
spatial types

Better integration
between physical
& virtual space

Spaces that are
accessible &
inclusive to all

Spaces where
students feel like
they belong

Spaces where
students feel safe

?????
More research

Questions the AUDE report raises:

How does living & transport arrangement impact experience.

Where do students mingle is the classroom is virtual?

Where can students access “virtual learning” if they do not have facilities?

Are we in an arms race to develop attractive spaces – or do we care about make space impactful, meaningful and effective?

'Place' is also part of the 2030 strategy

