

My University: A user-centric approach to digital & physical spaces & places

Dr Lee Fallin EdD SFHEA FRGS



@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

The campus

Lecture theatres

Canvas

Microsoft Teams

Labs & the field

Cafes

Social media

Support Portal

Halls of residence

The Library

Library Search

PebblePad

Younger students tend not to differentiate between digital & physical experiences

Lecture
theatres

Canvas

The
campus

Microsoft
Teams

Labs &
the field

Social
media

Cafes

Support
Portal

Halls of
residence

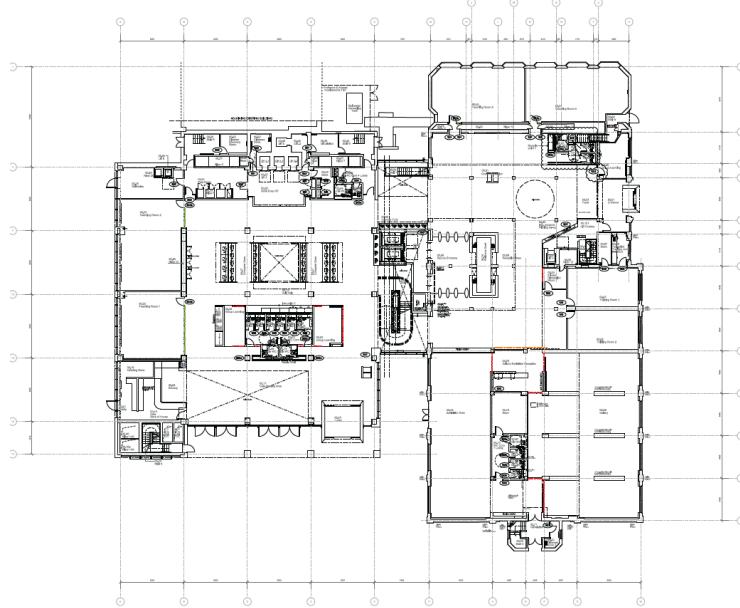
Library
Search

The
Library

PebblePad

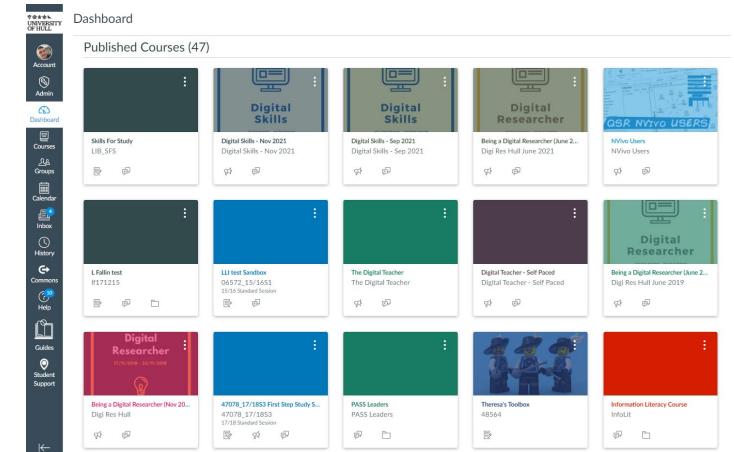
Spaces are conceived (by the powerful)

(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



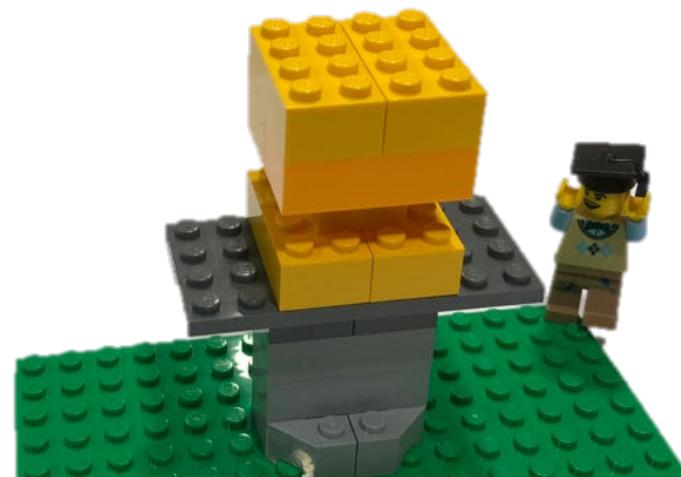
My research utilized 3 main instruments:

A 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

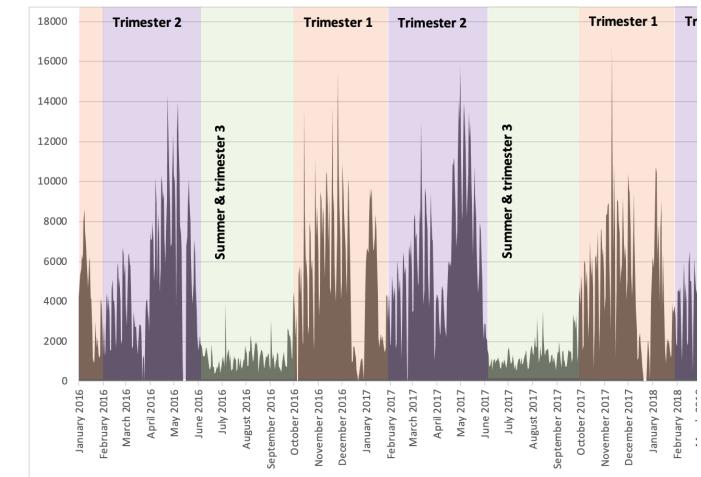
Elements, Features & Special Notes

of Design / Bruce Haering haering@emu.edu / 02/2017



Observations
(57 x 30 mins)

Focus Groups
(40 participants)



Secondary data
(Fallin, 2020)

(Fallin, 2020)

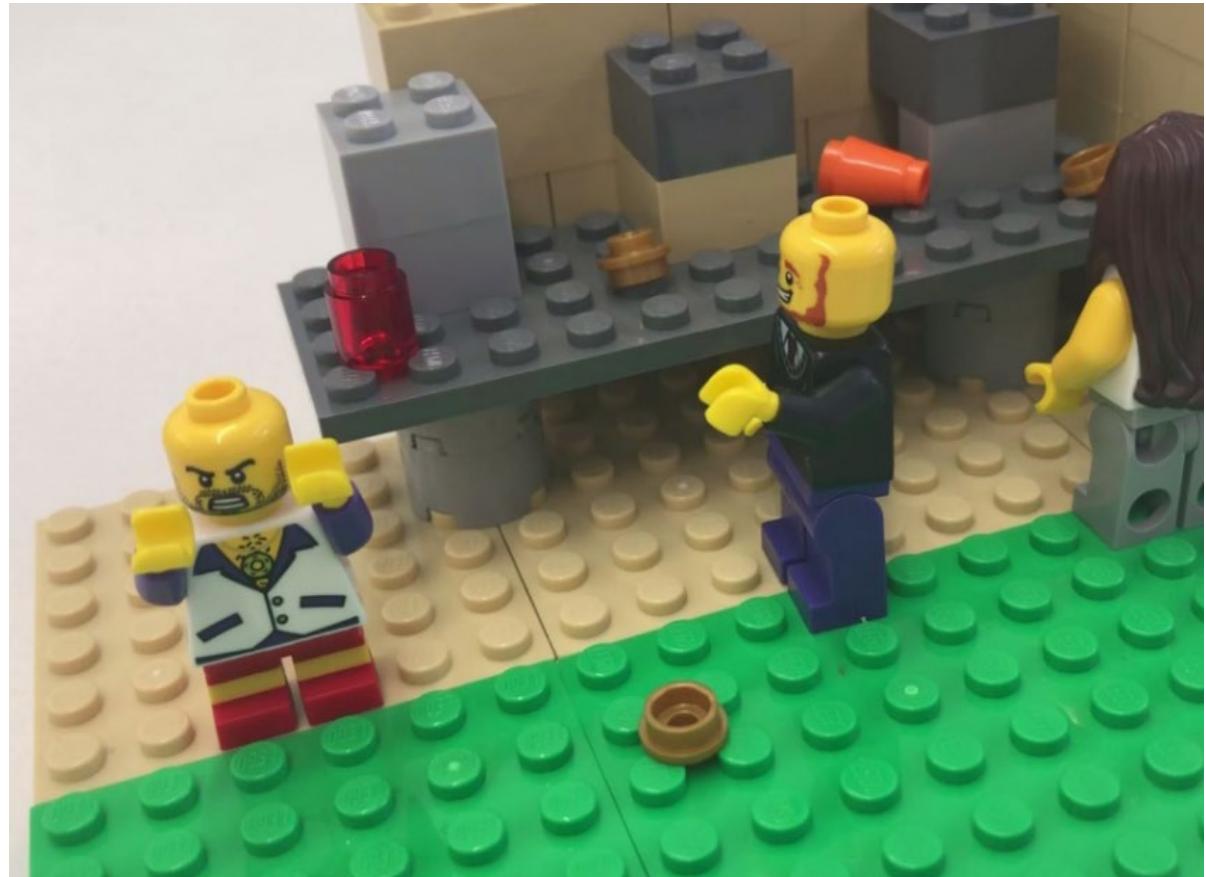
When looking at
Library space,
users referred to
space in many
ways:



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)



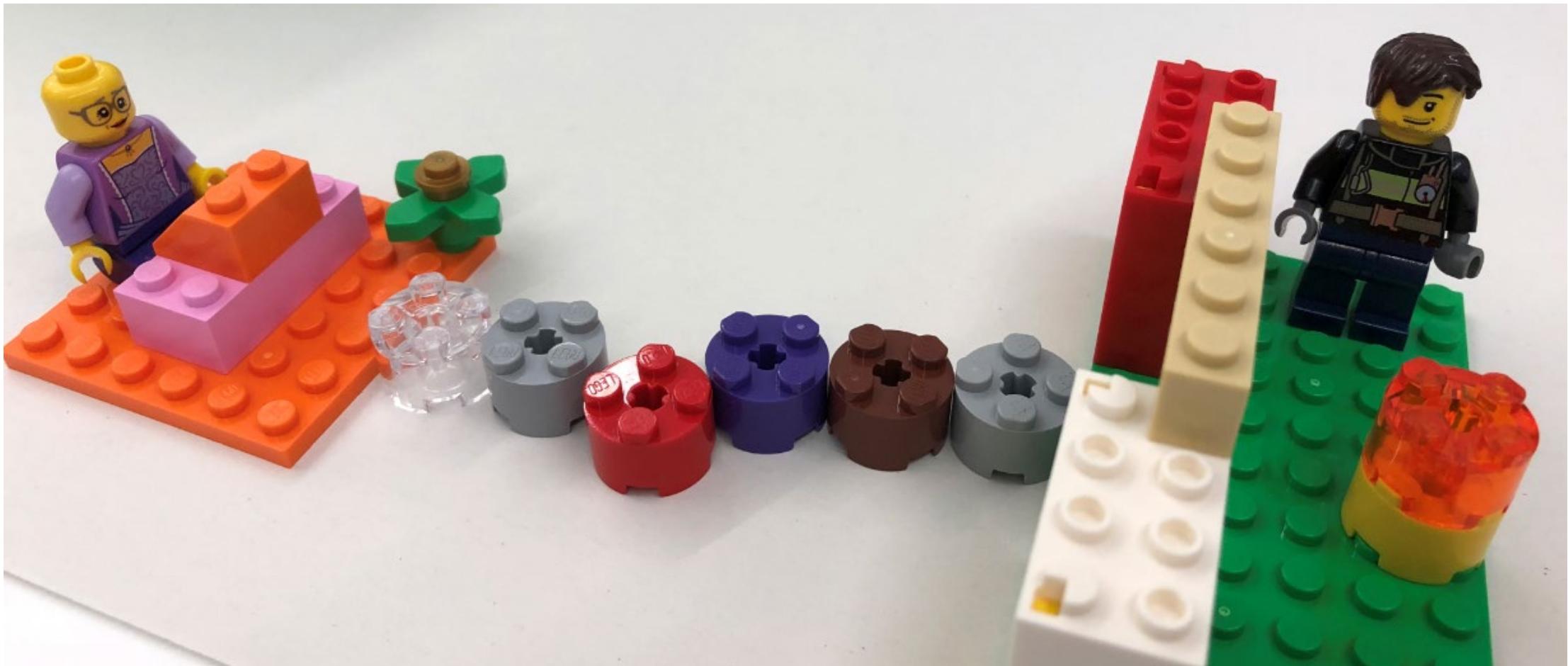
Technology is often unseen, unless it isn't there – or it is broken



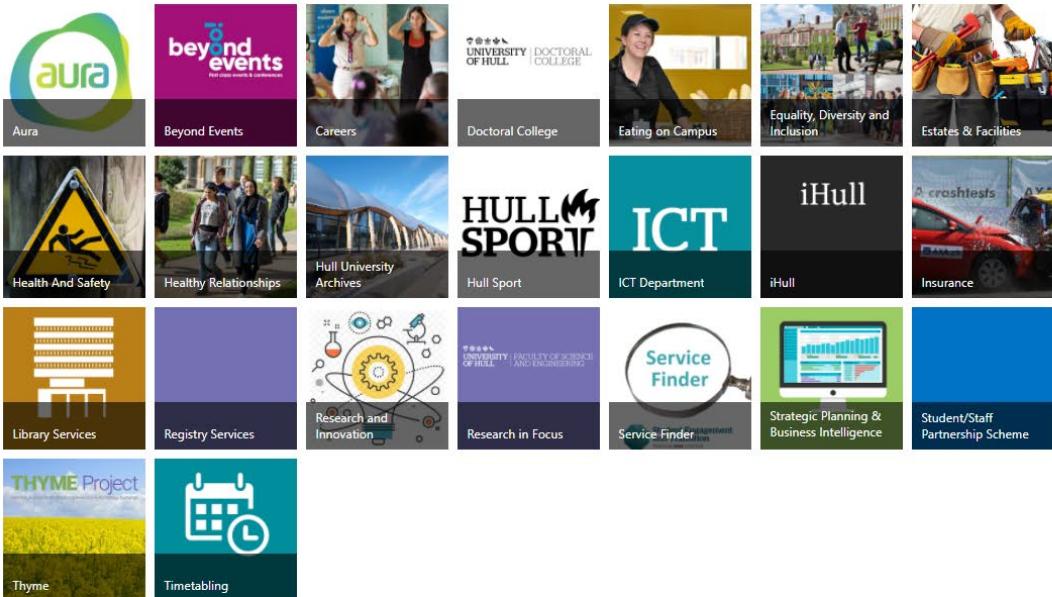
There is no such thing as an intuitive space or building



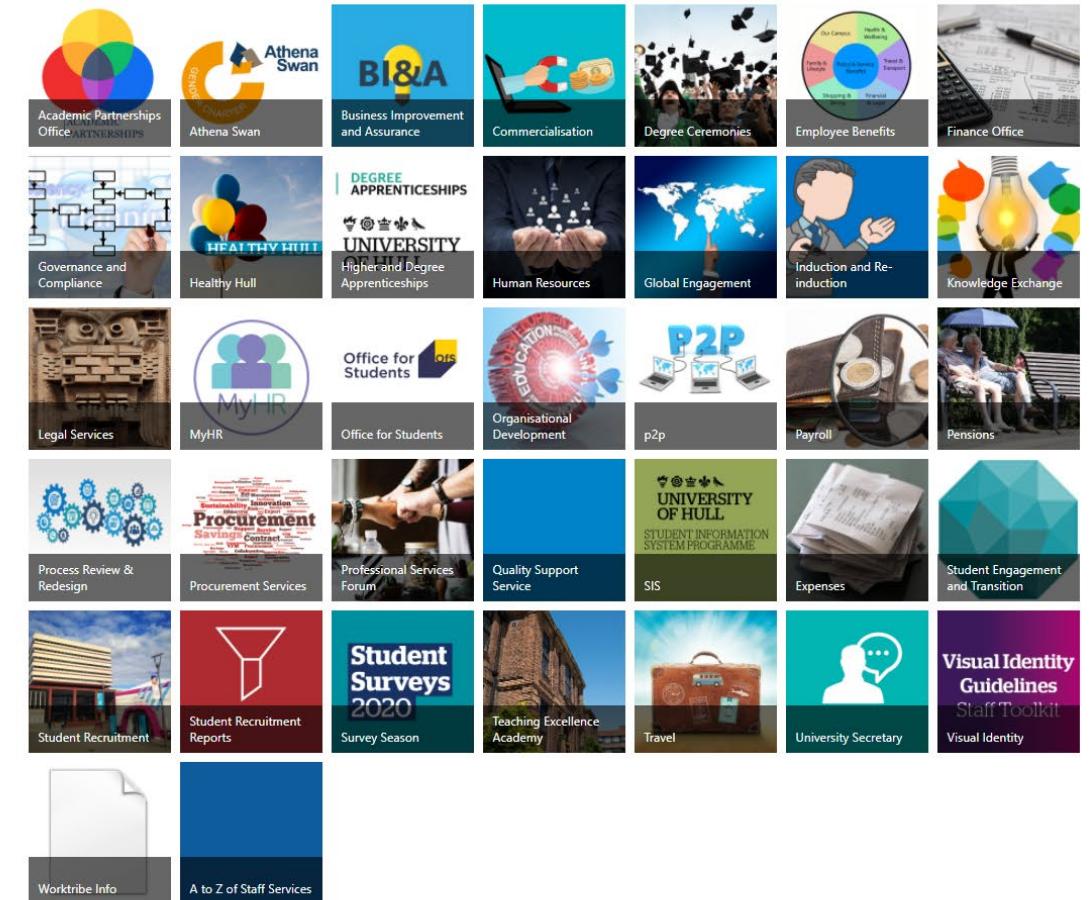
There are, at times, giant chasms
between our online and physical spaces



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



Hull University Business School – Authentic Business Learning

114 views • 7 Feb 2022



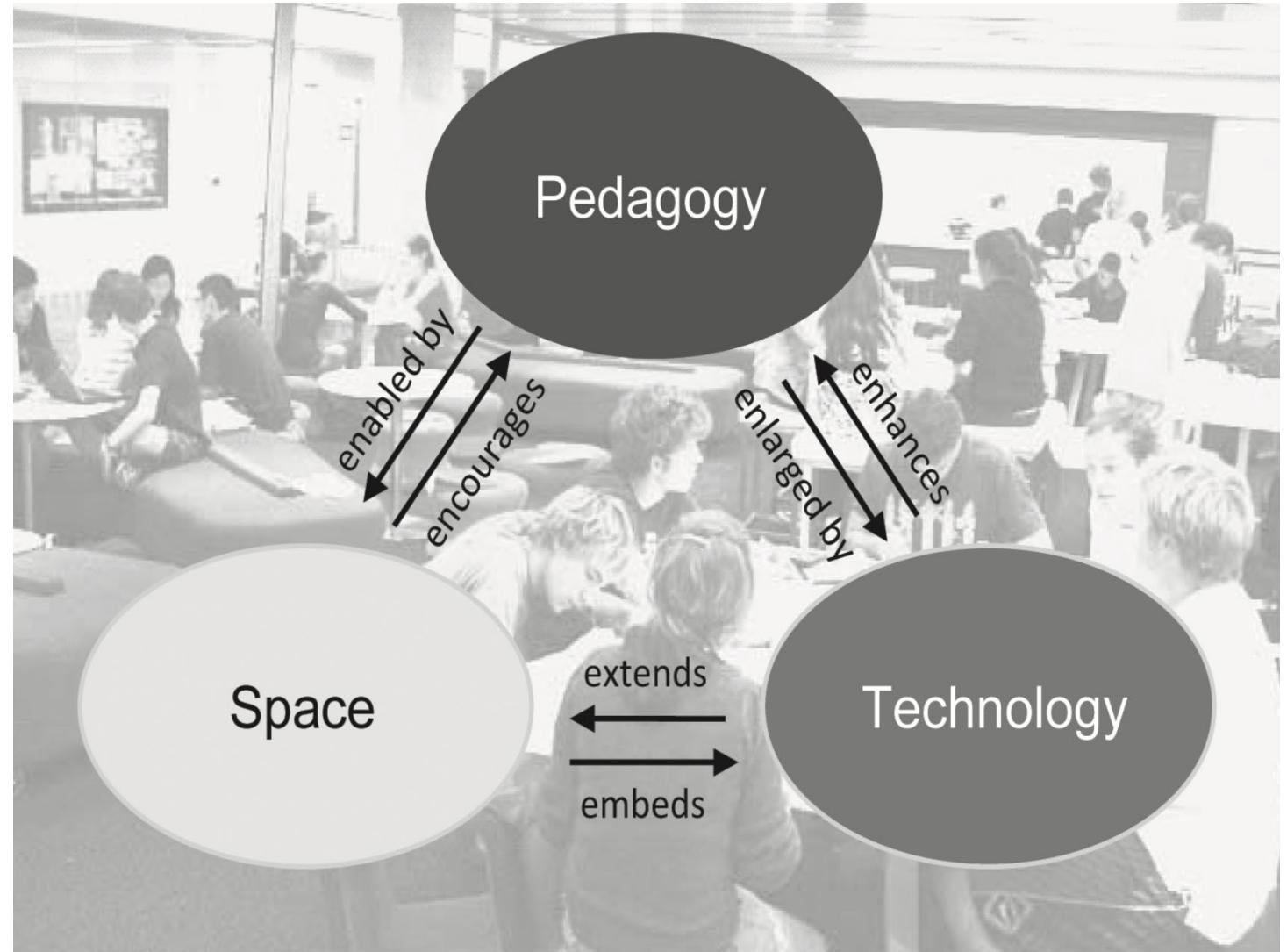
University of Hull
3.23K subscribers

LIKE DISLIKE SHARE DOWNLOAD SAVE ...

SUBSCRIBE

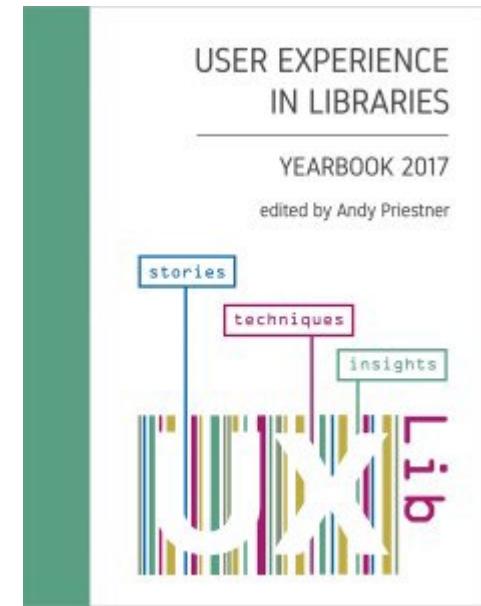
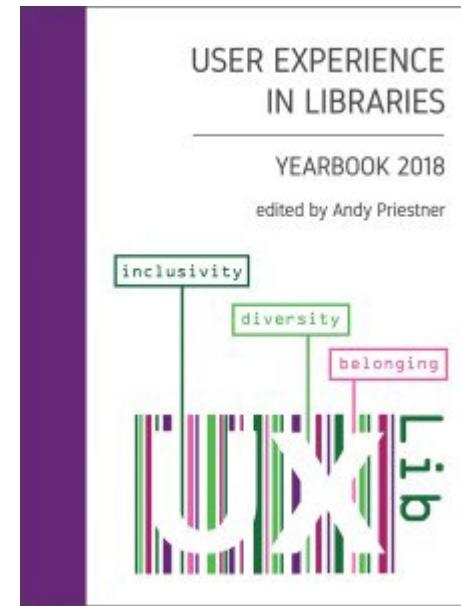
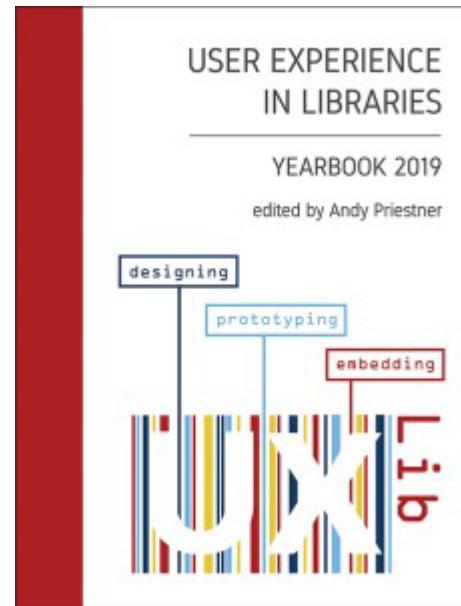
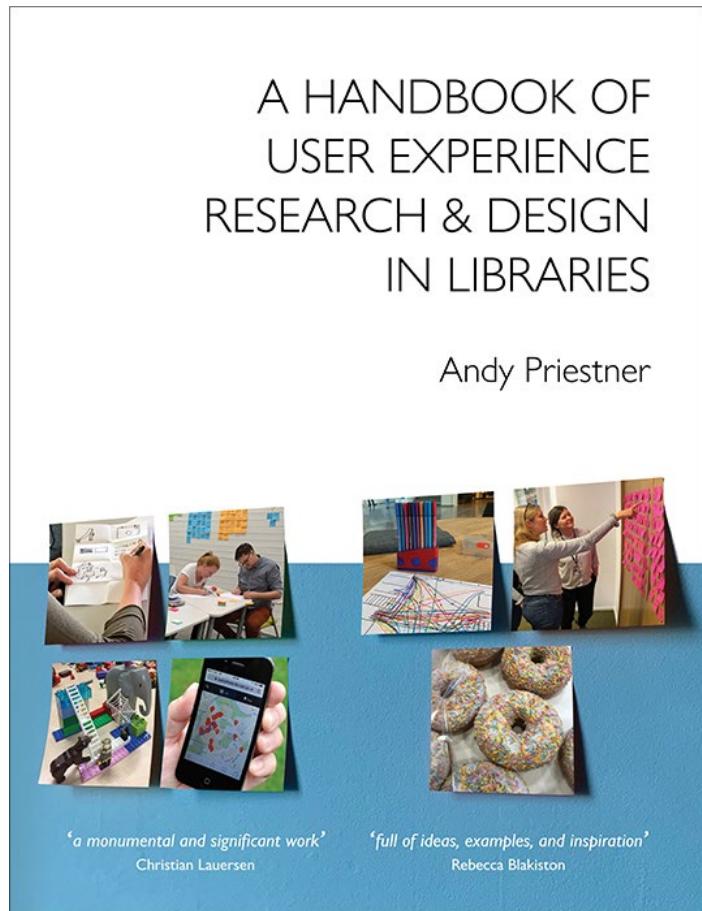
Beyond Hull

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.

AUDE

Together, for excellent university estates & facilities

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY
DIRECTORS OF ESTATES

HEDQF

Higher Education Design Quality Forum



WILLMOTT DIXON
SINCE 1852

UWE
Bristol

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

