



My first few months at Kingston

a qualitative study of new first year students and how they
navigate academic and library support

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User Experience in Libraries

- Traditional surveys have inherent flaws
- Largely completed by pro-library users telling us what they think we want to hear
- High gate counts \neq High user success
- UX in Libraries utilises ethnographic techniques to understand emotion behind students' use of the library

(Priestner and Borg, 2016)



Cultural Probe - background

- Package of maps, postcards and other materials designed to provoke inspirational responses, “A way for us to get to know you better, and for you to get to know us” (Gaver, Dunne, and Pacenti, 1999)
- Royal Holloway – joint project between Library and Student Life to gain insight in students in their first two weeks at university (Phillips and Brzozowska-Szczecina, 2019) [Adaptation of Snapshot project in Cambridge in 2016]



Cultural Probe at Kingston

- Librarian from Royal Holloway now at Kingston
- Get unique insight into what students felt about Kingston and support they had used
- Discussed with Access, Participation and Inclusion team
- Timed for period around first assignment hand-ins
- Look at how students had navigated support systems since starting





What we did

- Used cultural probe method of research
- First year UG students recruited
- 150 volunteered
- 20 were chosen and given project kits
- 18 completed the tasks
- Funded by Network of Equality Champions
- After enrichment week in November

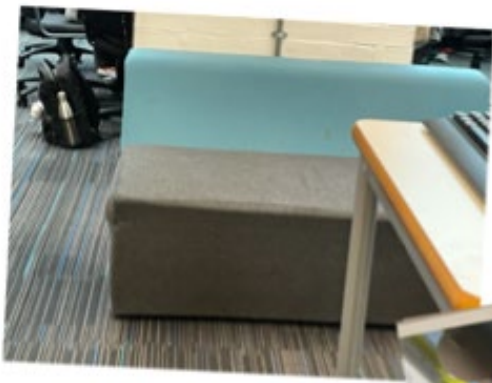




What the students did

- Daily tasks for a fortnight
- Participants wrote responses in a diary which they could keep
- Variety of tasks including taking photos, sticking emojis to a map, etc.
- Optional task at the end

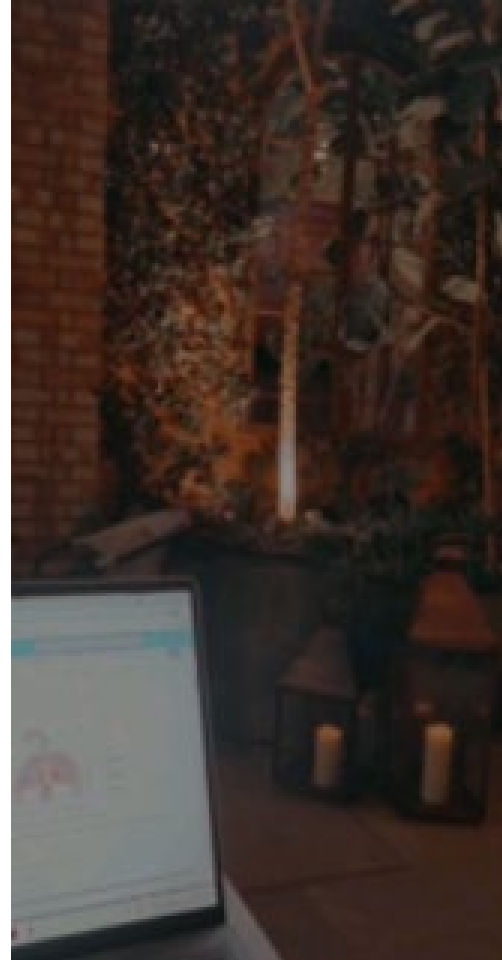




Comfortable
Quite (weekends especially)
Easy to find books (reference)



Free to work
Close to sunshine

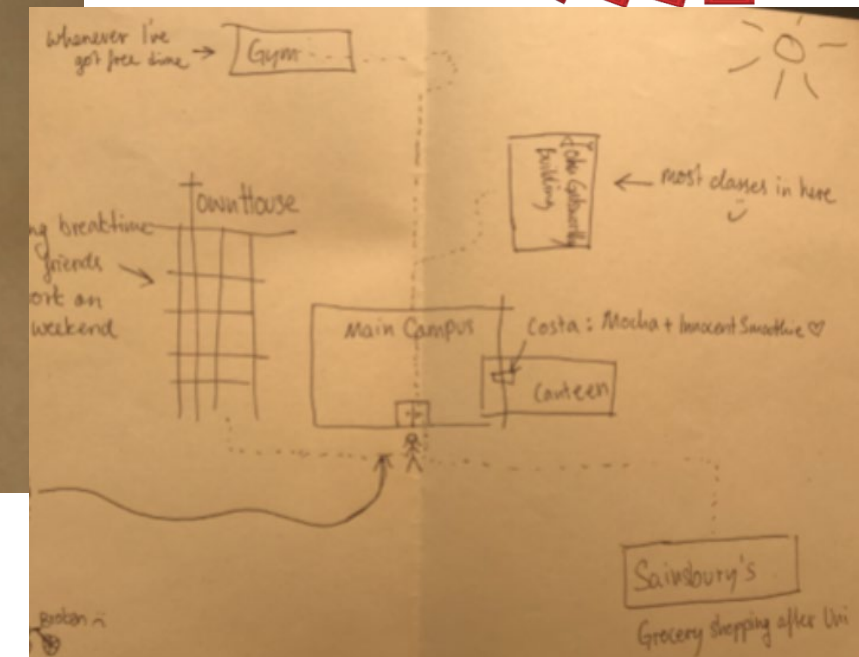
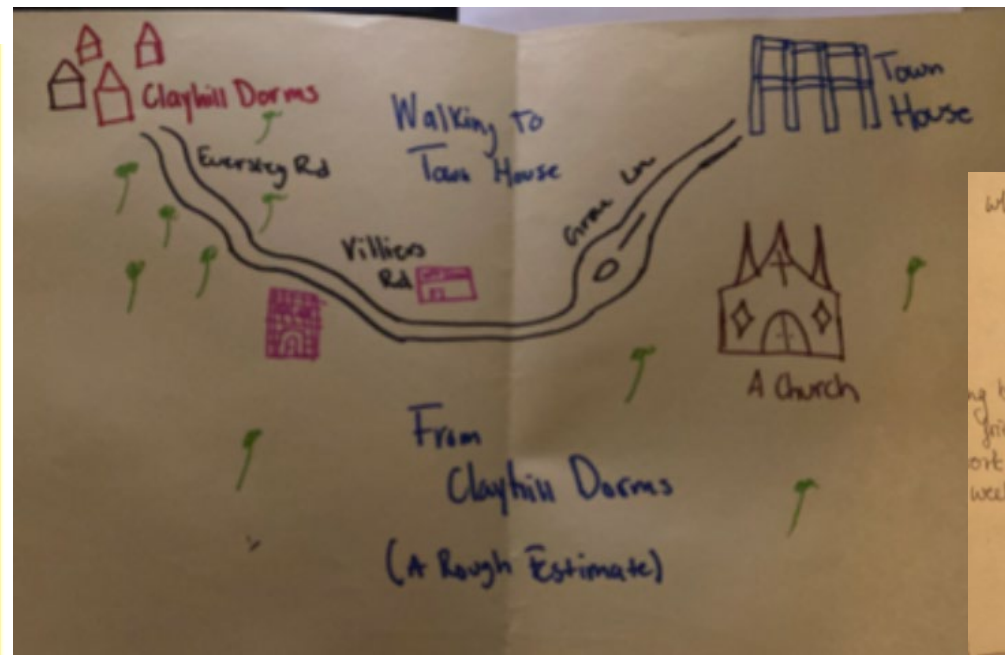


Task 1: take a photo of
your favourite place to
study

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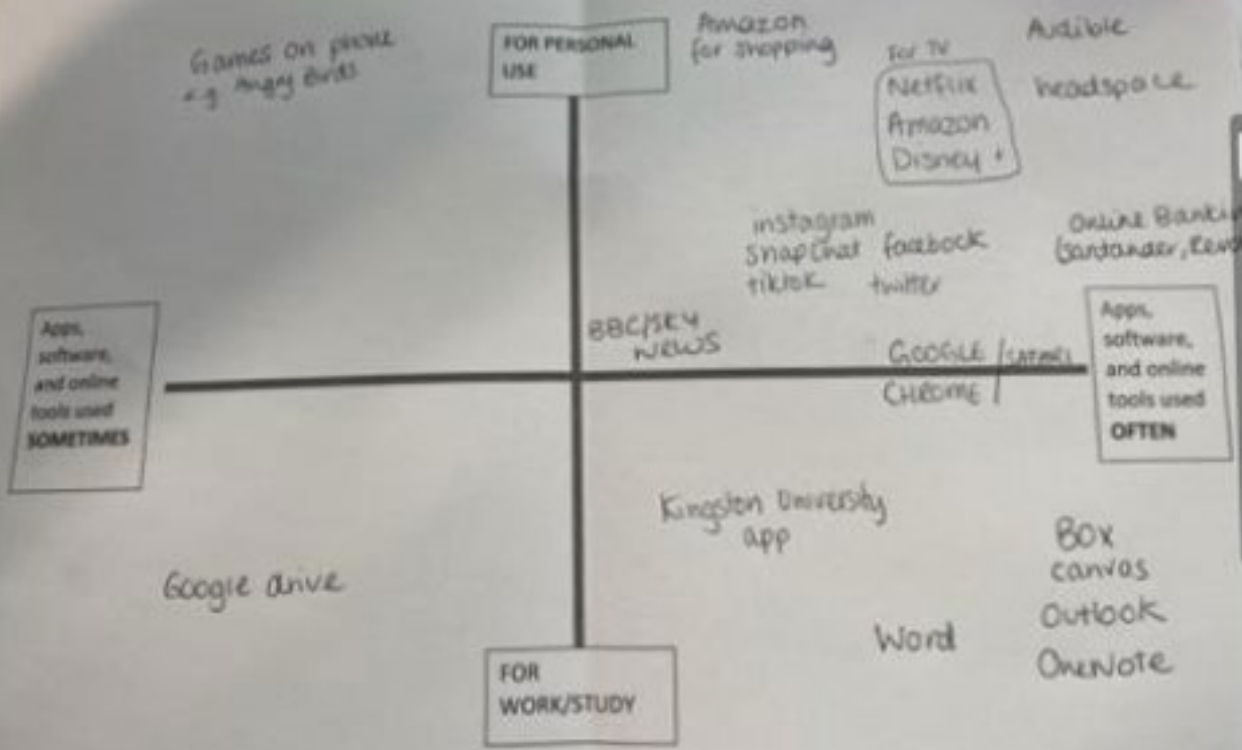
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Task 5 – draw a map of a typical day on campus

- busy days
- arriving earlier to lectures



Task 3: Visitor-Resident - show on a grid the apps you use for studying and for personal use





Photo of a food tried recently



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Task 9: Do you know your subject librarian?



- 14 out of 18 knew the name of their subject librarian, even those who didn't attend the library induction;
- Those who didn't know answered 'I guess they would help me in finding the books for my subject';
- If didn't know - would ask for them in the Library or search for them on the University website;
- All the mature students knew the name of their subject librarian; this was more mixed for 18-21 year olds.



Task 10: which book or film represents your first few months at Kingston

"The first film/book that came into my mind was Pippi Longstocking (...) as she has always been my biggest role model I couldn't help but compare the fact that I too now live completely on my own only seeing my parents (...) only about two times a year and rather than being scared by that thought I want to embrace myself and the fun that I can have living on my own as Pippi is going. (While also being far younger than me)"



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“22 Jump Street. Wait, let me explain! Without the whole undercover pretending to be going back to uni when most students are 18. Also, I am working 4x a week so for me it's a similar feeling.”



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"I could compare my first time at KU to the film The Hobbit: an unexpected journey. I chose this film as I felt a bit like Bilbo Baggins in a journey full of exciting adventures and complex challenges but that, if done well, could lead to great satisfaction in life. Like Bilbo I was hesitant at first, but now I am all in"

VIDEO
The hobbit : an unexpected journey
2013
directed by Peter Jackson ; written by Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Peter Jackson, Guillermo del Toro
Available at [Penrhyn Road Library Area H \(791.4372 JACK\)](#) >

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LOCATION ITEMS

Penrhyn Road Library
Available , Area H 791.4372 JACK
(1 copy, 1 available, 0 requests)

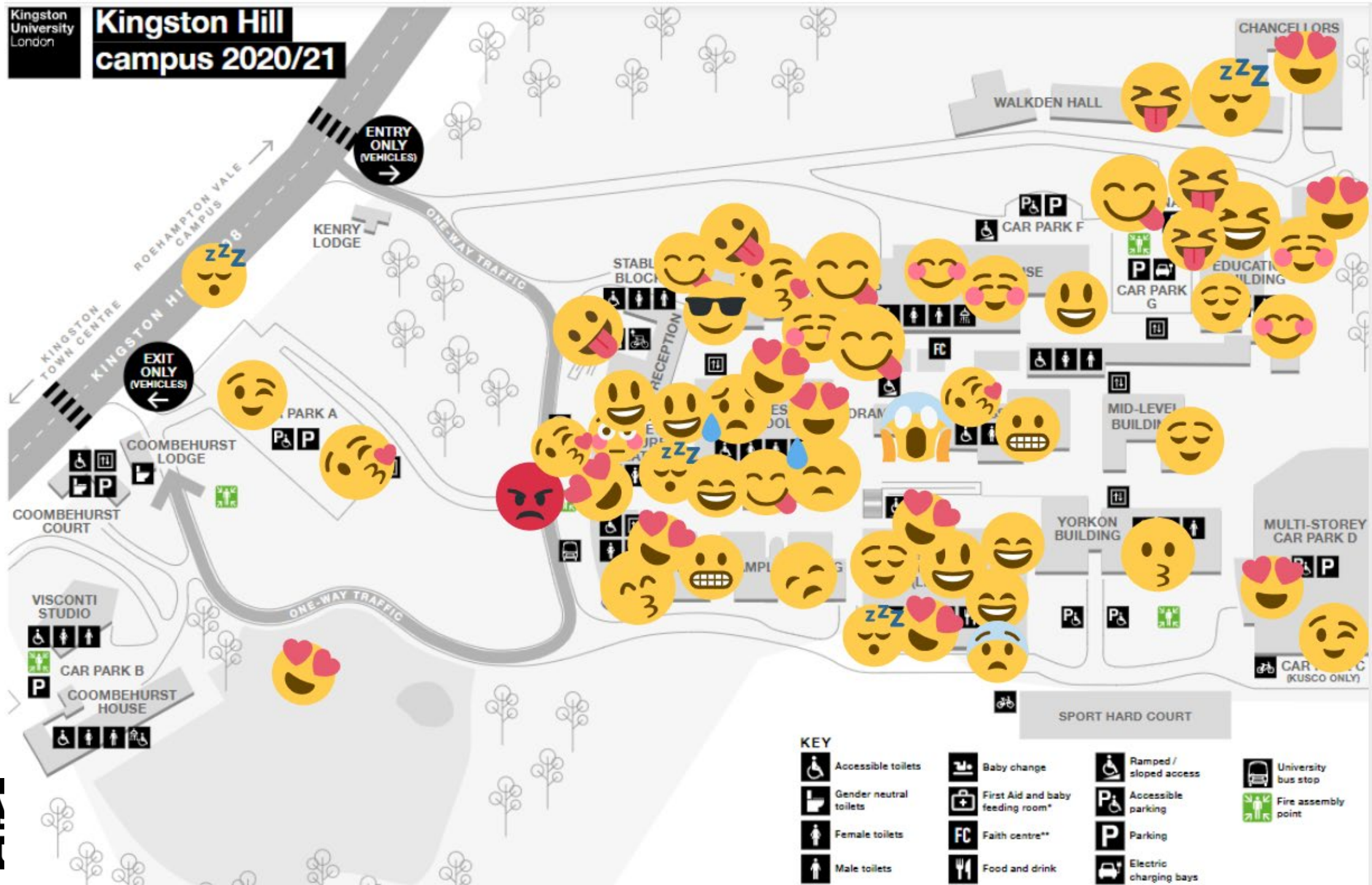
Item in place
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Kingston Hill campus 2020/21



ENTRY ONLY (VEHICLES)

EXIT ONLY (VEHICLES)

KEY

- | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| | Accessible toilets | | Baby change | | Ramped / sloped access |
| | Gender neutral toilets | | First Aid and baby feeding room* | | Accessible parking |
| | Female toilets | | Faith centre** | | Parking |
| | Male toilets | | Food and drink | | Electric charging bays |
| | | | University bus stop | | Fire assembly point |



Task 12: If you could go back in time to before your first assignment, what piece of advice would you give yourself?

- The most common theme was time and planning: a few wished to submit their work earlier;
- to meet the subject librarian to receive help with finding the resources, as well as attending a library session;
- to read the assignment brief carefully;
- not to overthink it and not to stress too much as everything would fall into place.

Start early and just write!



Other tasks included:

- Did you attend your library induction, having done your first assignment was there anything you wish was included?
- What surprised you most when you first visited the library?
- When you started your first assignment what help did you need?
- How are you planning on celebrating after you have finished your assignments?



I found the experience enjoyable.
It was a nice 5 minutes out of my
day to do something simple
and relaxing.



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Lessons learned

- Ask, 'is it cosy, is it comfortable' when planning new learning spaces at KU;
- students value having a named subject librarian for each course;
- online, self-guided materials are useful;
- practical and subject specific information during the induction sessions is useful



What we did next

- Reintroduced physical tours
- Weekly “library basics”
- Improvements to Library module on VLE
- Targeted information through the year
- Practical video guides



Could this tool be used elsewhere?

- Don't need many students to get very rich data
- Both you and the students gain something - Students really enjoy doing this
- Understand how students are feeling, too much in HE is metrics
- Help to challenge pre-conceptions about students
- Identify areas for more focussed research



References

Gaver, B., Dunne, T., and Pacenti, E. (1999) 'Design: Cultural probes'. *interactions* 6(1) pp.21–29. <https://doi.org/10.1145/291224.291235>

Phillips, D. and Brzozowska-Szczecina, E. (2019) 'Love at first sight: consolidating first impressions' in: A. Priestner (ed.) *User Experience in Libraries: Yearbook 2019*. Cambridge: UX in Libraries, pp.123-128.

Priestner, A. and Borg, M. (2016) "Uncovering complexity and detail: the UX proposition" in: A. Priestner and M. Borg (eds.) *User experience in libraries*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp.1-8.