Focus Groups & Libraries: A Selected Bibliography

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Introduction: This bibliography is divided into three sections: Library Literature; Books & Handbooks; and Web sites. The databases and URLs for articles that are availble in full-text are listed. These sources require that your institution has a license. The article by Shoaf contains an excellent review of the literature on the use of focus groups in libraries. Many of the citations in this bibliography are discussed in his article. The article by Von Seggern and Young features a good annotated bibliography on focus groups including their use in libraries.

Library Literature Articles

Crowley, Gwyneth H., et al. 2002. User perceptions of the library's Web pages: a focus group study at Texas A&M University. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 28, no. 4:205-210. "This focus group study explored library patrons' opinions about the library's Web pages. The results indicated that patrons are frustrated and confused when trying to navigate the Public Access Menu. The insights gained into information-seeking behavior will enable the Web Team to create a more intuitive interface." [p. 205]
  WilsonWeb:
  HTML: http://wilsontxt.hwwilson.com/pdfhtml/02605/LW5J3/RS7.htm
  PDF: http://wilsontxt.hwwilson.com/pdffull/02605/LW5J3/RS7.pdf

Glitz, Beryl. 1997. The focus group technique in library research: an introduction. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 85, no. 4:385-390.
  "The focus group technique is one example of a qualitative research methodology used to explore the opinions, knowledge, perceptions, and concerns of individuals in regard to a particular topic. The focus group typically involves six to ten individuals who have some knowledge of or experience with the topic. The group discussion is led by a moderator who guides participants through a series of open-ended questions. The information gathered can provide important clues to human attitudes and values as they relate to the topic. Such information can be extremely useful to libraries that are trying to gain a better understanding of their patrons' needs and thus make better management decisions to help satisfy those needs. The technique can also be used successfully in conjunction with other research tools, such as surveys, either to help develop a questionnaire or to explain specific survey results. This paper introduces the use of focus groups in library research, the skills needed to conduct groups, and their strengths and weaknesses. Examples of the use of focus groups in health sciences libraries are presented, including the results of a survey from these libraries." [Article Abstract]
  PubMed Central:
  HTML**:** http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=226296
  PDF:http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/picrender.fcgi?artid=226296&action=stream&blobtype=pdf

Higa-Moore, Mori Lou, Brian Bunnett, et al. 2002. Use of Focus Groups in a Library's Strategic
Planning Process." *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 90, no.1:86-92.
"The use of focus groups to determine patron satisfaction with library resources and services is
extensive and well established. This article demonstrates how focus groups can also be used to
help shape the future direction of a library as part of the strategic planning process. By
responding to questions about their long-term library and information needs, focus group
participants at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas Library
contributed an abundance of qualitative patron data that was previously lacking from this
process. The selection and recruitment of these patrons is discussed along with the line of
questioning used in the various focus group sessions. Of special interest is the way the authors
utilized these sessions to mobilize and involve the staff in creating the library's strategic plan.
This was accomplished not only by having staff members participate in one of the sessions but
also by sharing the project's major findings with them and instructing them in how these findings
related to the library's future. The authors' experience demonstrates that focus groups are an
effective strategic planning tool for libraries and emphasizes the need to share information
broadly, if active involvement of the staff is desired in both the development and implementation
of the library's strategic plan." [Article Abstract]
PubMed Central:
HTML: http://www.pubmedcentral.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=64762
PDF:http://www.pubmedcentral.gov/picrender.fcgi?action=stream&blobtype=pdf&artid=64762

Leighton, H. V., Joe Jackson, and Kathryn Sullivan. 2003. Web Page Design and Successful Use:
A Focus Group Study. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly* 8, no. 3:17-27.
"This study discusses focus groups the Winona State University Library conducted to ascertain
the usability of various Web page design elements. Two focus groups were asked to use Web
pages that incorporated the elements under examination. While the users' preferences were
noted, the research team was more interested in which design elements affected the users'
ability to successfully find the information they were asked to locate. Whereas the authors'
findings agree in many cases with conventional tenets of good Web page design, variances in
user success suggest that those designing library Web sites may have other usability factors to
consider." [Article Abstract]

Massey-Burzio, Virginia. 1998. From the other side of the reference desk: a focus group study. *The
Journal of Academic Librarianship* 24, no. 3:208-215.
"A study examined how patrons seeking information in the library at Johns Hopkins University
thought and behaved. Participants were 38 undergraduates, graduates, School of Continuing
Studies students, and faculty at the Maryland university who took part in six focus groups.
Findings revealed that most of the participants were uncomfortable asking questions, felt they
knew well enough how to find information and manage the library, and had trouble with basic
information retrieval principles and were not aware of many resources and services. For
students and faculty, the taking of a class to learn how to use the library and how to retrieve
information and resources was not a priority. Finally, participants believed that the information
desk was unhelpful and that signage was poor."
WilsonWeb:
HTML: http://wilsontxt.hwwilson.com/pdfhtml/02605/0G56A/4ST.htm
Science Direct:
HTML: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/B6W50-45PSBB3-
35/2/9a571e8bdc6173be7ce47b935a5e903c

Shoaf, Eric C. 2003. Using a Professional Moderator in Library Focus Group Research. *College & Research Libraries* 64, no. 2:124-132.

> Brown University Library hired a professional marketing and opinion research firm to conduct focus group meetings with library users and to provide data analysis. The discussion includes a review of the library literature on focus group use, practical aspects of focus group methodology, and the benefits of employing professionals where librarian expertise is low. Logistics of focus group preparation, meetings, and report are discussed. Findings and lessons learned are presented along with outcomes for the library. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. [Author Abstract]
> **WilsonWeb**:
> HTML: http://wilsontxt.hwwilson.com/pdfhtml/03837/37XO2/USJ.htm
> PDF: http://wilsontxt.hwwilson.com/pdffull/03837/37XO2/USJ.pdf

Von Seggern, Marilyn and Nancy J. Young. 2003. The Focus Group Method in Libraries: Issues Relating to Process and Data Analysis. *Reference Services Review* 31, no. 3:272-284.

> "Focus groups are becoming more widely used in libraries as a means of gathering data from the users' point-of-view about how they find and use information. This article discusses the major issues in planning a focus group project and describes the use of a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software package, The Ethnograph, for data analysis. An annotated bibliography of useful focus group literature accompanies the article." [Article Abstract]
> **Emerald**
> HTML: http://zerlina.emeraldinsight.com/vl=5628776/cl=36/nw=1/rpsv/cgi-bin/cgi?body=linker&reqidx=00907324(2003)L.272

Books & Handbooks

Bloor, Michael. Focus groups in social research. London, Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications; 2001. vii, 110 p $24.95 (pbk.). ISBN: 0761957421. 076195743X (pbk.) Introducing qualitative methods.

Edmunds, Holly and American Marketing Association. The focus group research handbook. Lincolnwood, Ill: NTC Business Books; 1999. x, 276 p $49.95. ISBN: 0844202886.
> **netLibrary:**
> http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=68453

Glitz, Beryl and Medical Library Association. Focus groups for libraries and librarians. New York, NY: Forbes; 1998. xii, 144 p ISBN: 0828112495 (pbk.).
> Contents: Focus group interviewing: a qualitative research method -- How focus groups work: the small group process -- Development and usage of the focus group technique -- Focus groups in the library setting -- Strengths and weaknesses: when should the focus group be used -- The moderator -- Preparing for the discussion -- Question development -- Conducting the discussion -- The final steps: analysis, reporting, and use of the results -- Case studies: Focus groups in the library.

Goebert, Bonnie and Rosenthal, Herma M. Beyond listening: learning the secret language of focus groups. New York: J. Wiley; 2002. xvi, 224 p $29.95. ISBN: 0471395625 (cloth : alk. paper). netLibrary:
http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=72386

Greenbaum, Thomas L. The handbook for focus group research. 2nd ed., rev. and expanded ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications; 1998. xvi, 262 p $53.95. ISBN: 0761912525 (acid-free paper). 0761912533 (pbk. : acid-free paper).
Contents: Focus groups: an overview -- Research decisions -- Maximizing the effectiveness of focus group research -- Common mistakes in focus groups -- The moderator -- Focus groups and the technology revolution -- Controlling the costs of focus group research -- New moderating techniques -- Global focus groups -- Litigation focus groups -- Focus groups with physicians -- Focus group trends -- Effective management of field services and recruiting -- Threats to the focus group industry -- A career as a moderator -- Building business moderating focus groups -- The role of the facility

Greenbaum, Thomas L. Moderating focus groups: a practical guide for group facilitation. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications; 2000. xii, 249 p $47.95. ISBN: 0761920439 (hardcover : alk. paper). 0761920447 (pbk. : alk. paper).
Contents: Introduction -- The focus group methodology -- Focus groups versus one-on-one (in-depth) interviews -- The role of the moderator -- The characteristics of a successful moderator -- Preparation for moderating -- Recruiting participants -- Pre- and post-group briefings -- The discussion guide -- External stimuli -- The moderator report -- Moderating fundamentals -- Advanced moderating techniques -- Unique moderating situations -- Moderating focus groups internationally -- Building a business moderating focus groups -- Pricing focus groups

Krueger, Richard A and Casey, Mary Anne. Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications; 2000. xvi, 215 p $43.95. ISBN: 0761920706 (acid-free paper). 0761920714 (pbk. : acid-free paper).
Notes: Includes bibliographical references and index

Morgan, David L; Krueger, Richard A, and King, Jean A. Focus group kit. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications; 1998. 6 v $175.00. ISBN: 0761907602 (set : alk. paper). 0761908161 (pbk. : v. 6).
Contents: 1. The focus group guidebook / David L. Morgan -- 2. Planning focus groups / David L. Morgan with Alice U. Scannell -- 3. Developing questions for focus groups / Richard A. Krueger -- 4. Moderating focus groups / Richard A. Krueger -- 5. Involving community members in focus groups / Richard A. Krueger, Jean A. King -- 6. Analyzing & reporting focus group results / Richard A. Krueger

Web Sites

Focus Groups – Articles by Tom Greenbaum of Groups Plus, Inc.
    URL: http://www.groupsplus.com/pages/articles.htm. Date Accessed: 12/14/04

Guidelines for Conducting Focus Groups. By Carter McNamara. In Free Management Library
    (http://www.managementhelp.org/).
    URL: http://www.mapnp.org/library/evaluatn/focusgrp.htm. Date Accessed: 11/30/04

Lies, Damn Lies and Focus Groups: Why Don't Consumers Tell the Truth About What they
    Want? By Daniel Gross. In Slate. Posted Oct. 10, 2003.
    URL: http://slate.msn.com/id/2089677/. Date Accessed: 12/14/04.

Six Sigma: Focus Groups. URL: http://www.isixsigma.com/vc/focus_groups/. Date Accessed:
    12/14/04.

Social Research Update 19: Focus Groups. Sociology at Surrey. University of Surrey.
URL: http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU19.html. Date Accessed: 11/31/04.

What Are Focus Groups? American Statistical Association. Pamphlet. 8 pages. URL:
  http://www.amstat.org/sections/srms/brochures/focusgroups.pdf. Date Accessed: 12/14/04