

Making the user really matter – a test case from Delft

How do you become even more successful if you are already successful? That is a question that the TU Delft Library asks itself regularly. In the last few years, it has seen that its transformation into a Library Learning Centre was a good move, but there is more. Even more focus can be on the client, that is the choice that the library made last year. From now on, the customer is the focus in every design process. In this article, we explain how this can be done for the physical space, using different personas (archetypes) that we used in Delft for this process. Together with these personas, the library becomes part of the Living Campus, and in the coming years the library will contribute to bringing the TU Delft's Living Campus concept to reality.

Wie wird man noch besser, wenn man bereits gut ist? Das ist eine Frage, die sich die TU Delft Bibliothek regelmäßig stellt. In den letzten Jahren hat sich gezeigt, dass der Weg in ein sogenanntes »Library Learning Centre« der richtige war, aber dass trotz allem noch viel zu tun bleibt. Der Bibliotheksnutzer kann noch stärker in den Mittelpunkt gerückt werden, das hat sich die Bibliothek zum Ziel gesetzt. Und so steht der Kunde bei allen Maßnahmen der Bibliothek im Zentrum. In diesem Beitrag zeigen wir, wie Räume in der Bibliothek mithilfe von sogenannten »Personas« (Archetypen) umgestaltet wurden. Die Einrichtung ist so zu einem Teil des »Living Campus« der Universität geworden, und die Bibliothek wird dieses Konzept auch in den nächsten Jahren aktiv mitgestalten.

THE TU DELFT CAMPUS

Our campus provides an attractive environment for everyone working, studying or staying at the TU Delft. The physical learning and working environment contributes to the social process. You can not have one without the other. Besides being places to learn, these places are also an opportunity to meet each other, to exchange ideas, to learn surprising things and to engage in a debate with each other about them. Sometimes one prefers to do that in a closed setting, but at other times with scientists or students from other disciplines, or the business community and people from outside the TU Delft campus. By organising the campus in this way, the TU Delft capitalises on the contemporary lifestyle of students and staff, and the TU Delft Library Learning Centre has been giving substance to this ambition since 2010.

THE TU DELFT LIBRARY

The TU Delft Library is a progressive university library with 125 staff members who work in the departments of Products & Services, Resources, Operations and Development. The Products & Services department has seven product groups: Education Support, New Media Centre, Research Data Services, Research Support, Studium Generale, Document Management & Archive and Open Spaces. We have been working within this new structure since September 2013 and have indicat-

ed that it is important for us to work in a »user-oriented« way and show our ability to get things done. The world around us is in constant change, and we have to move along with it. We do that »moving along« by closely attuning ourselves to our user groups and by understanding that our own staff members are different and need to have other facilities to be able to work optimally. Our motto is »I enjoy working in a pleasant and appropriate working environment«, because we think that this is a step forward for everyone: for both our staff and our users. This does not have so much to do with the »new way of working« concept or with »social innovation«¹ as it does with the fact that we consider it important for us to be as mobile and flexible as possible and be attuned to our users. By working in this way, we make our ambition a reality. We let knowledge flow freely because we are convinced that you become more successful if you use other people's knowledge and share your own knowledge.

THE LIBRARY LEARNING CENTRE

The Library Learning Centre is the place on the TU Delft campus for studying, meeting people and collaborating. It has become something much more than just a library. The Library Learning Centre is »the place to be« on the TU Delft campus to study, to collaborate, to be seen, but also to participate in workshops, to be surprised by exhibitions or to organise a creative strategy session. The Library Learning Centre constitutes the »centre of belonging« in the life cycle of engineers educated at the TU Delft. From school pupil, university student, young professional and senior professional on the labour market to (retired) hobbyist: in every phase of life, »from cradle to grave«, they come back to this central meeting space.

After the transformation we saw a clear rising line in numbers of visitors. The library is full almost every day. The students understand the different kinds of places and seek out a quiet atmosphere when they need that and they book a project space if they want to work together on an assignment. During exam periods we have special rules. Then the whole library is quiet. This is something that you have to keep communicating: both permitting noise and asking for silence. We have opted to do this in a positive way, by saying what *is* allowed instead of what is not allowed.

The first project spaces set up (four of them) were such a great success that within a year we made five



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»centre of belonging«

you understand the customer better, and the customer comes more to life.

The TU Delft Library used personas again in 2010, this time for a completely different project. The library wanted to start working in a different way, called the New Way of Working, in which the basic principles are time- and place-independent working, trust and enjoying one's work. To guide staff members through this change in direction, we developed personas. We chose six criteria:

- flexible workplace versus fixed workplace
- unique work versus routine work
- bringing knowledge versus consuming knowledge.

For each criterion we interviewed a pre-selected colleague. We asked questions like: how do you begin your day, do you always perform these sorts of activities in the same way, can you also imagine another way of doing them, why do you do it this way, why do

you come to the building, etc. On the basis of data provided by the interviews and our own vision (the goal we had with this transition) we drew up six personas.

In the meantime, the library was no longer the only service at the university that wanted to get to work with the New Way of Working, and the use of personas attracted attention. Eventually the library was asked if it could also draw up personas for the students, scientists and support staff. These twelve personas (four per group) became the basis for the campus vision. Whatever places were to be set up, those twelve personas were the people we did it for. So, if you want to serve groups who consider collaboration as the most important component of their work/studies, then you set up different sorts of places than if you want to facilitate groups who prefer to work individually and in silence. And sometimes you seek a combination of various kinds of places.

personas

Credit: TU Delft Library

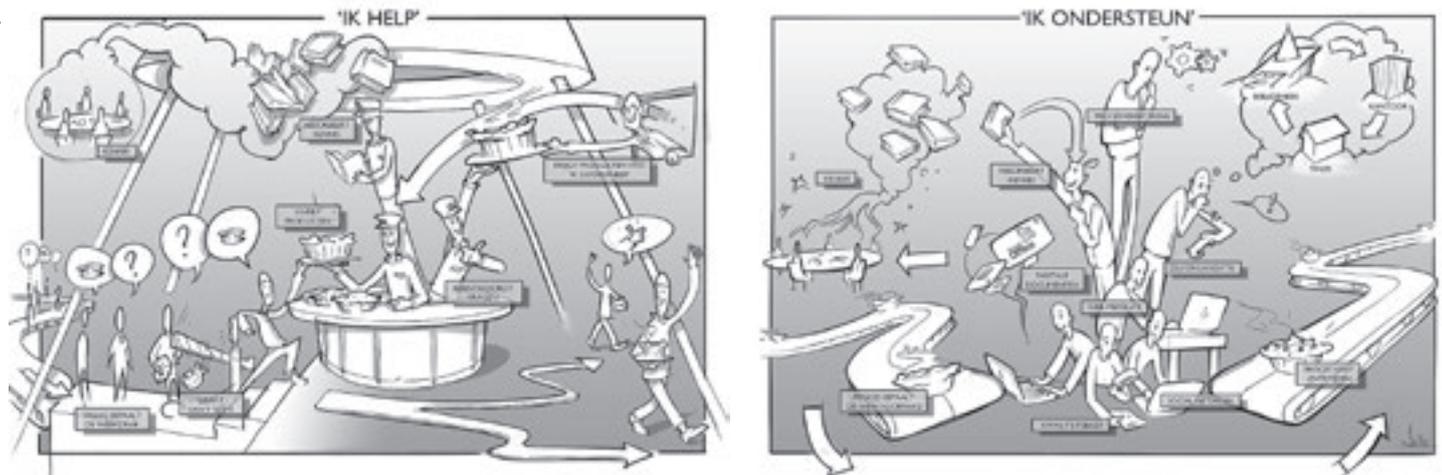


Fig. 2: Personas reflecting the library employees

Credit: TU Delft Library

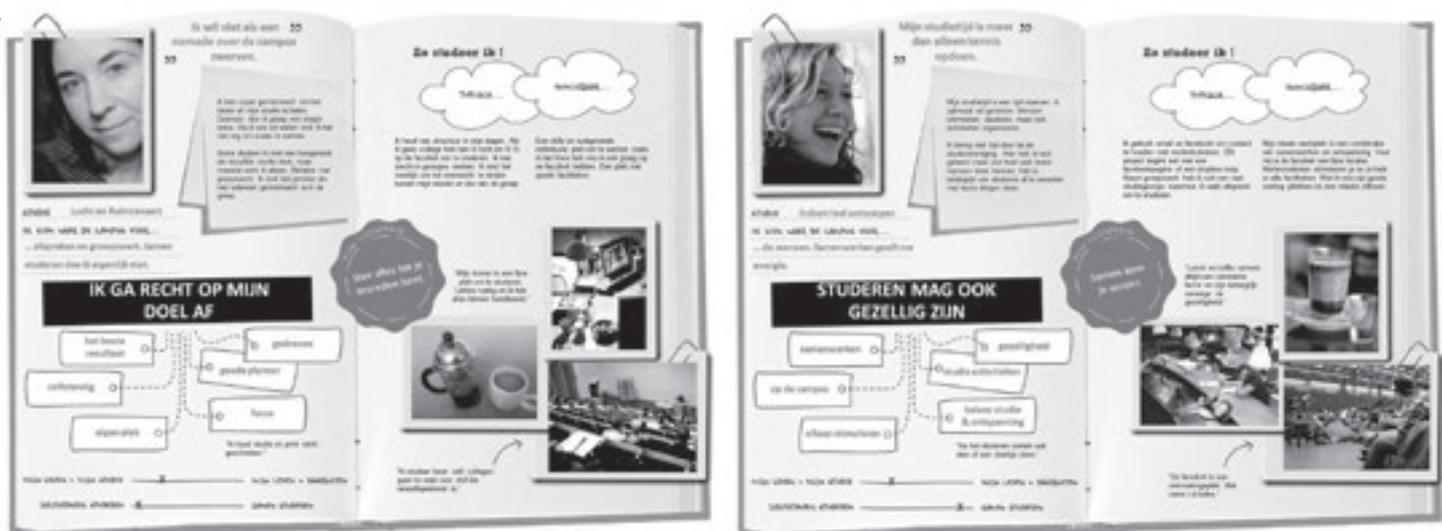


Fig. 3: Personas reflecting students at TU Delft

deliberate choice

The personas help you get started and are available for that purpose for everyone on the campus who wants to deploy them. The idea is that you no longer do everything for everybody but rather you make a deliberate choice about who you are working for and who not.

WHY THE LIBRARY?

There are three logical explanations for our involvement in developing the Living Campus and its personas:

1. As the library, we were occupied with developing personas because this is in fact a way of organising and ordering, traditionally a task with which we have an affinity.
2. We want our own staff to stay close to the users, and if we consider openness, meeting, connecting and providing inspiration to be important aspects of our library environment, then our staff needs to embrace this as well.
3. At one time, the library was close to students and researchers in the form of faculty libraries. This »old« library offered relaxation, inspiration and knowledge in the form of books and journals. These libraries have been replaced with a digital environment and all over the world, including in Delft, a lot of these branch libraries have been »closed down«. However, there is still this desire to escape the everyday routine for a while, find inspiration (or good coffee) and after this retreat to be able to go on, invigorated. The library can bring this experience back, partly in the library building, but always in the vicinity of the university's primary function.

inspiration

CONCLUSION

We have learned a great deal from using our personas and the way in which we use them to approach our users or clients and to really listen. Through them we understand better what we should and should not do and that not all of our choices can be intended for all of our target groups. We notice that our personas also fit in with other university libraries in the conversations we have in the Netherlands and Belgium. We invite everyone to develop these personas further with us.

It is known that the library as a place is undergoing change. By specifying the function of what a library offers, we can reinstate this function everywhere. That was something we needed to learn in this process. Within the Open Spaces product group, in the coming years we will be bringing the Library Learning Centre to a higher level: the Library Learning Centre 2.0.

FURTHER READING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Bibliothèques d'aujourd'hui: À la conquête de nouveaux espaces / par Michel Melot – sous la direction de Marie-Françoise Bisbrouck, Paris, Éditions du Cercle de la librairie, 2010.

Short movie at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iY-37HztCU4>

Personas were created with Muzus (www.muzus.nl/) and work21 (www.work21.nl/).

¹ The terminology is translated from Dutch to indicate a working environment where people can choose where and when they do their work, and at the same time can be counted on for their responsibility and results.

² Karin Clavel has written an extensive article on this topic: <http://resolver.tudelft.nl/uuid:b95543a2-257d-4b88-b320-4e8778b0bcdd>

³ The Persona Lifecycle: keeping people in mind throughout product design / John Pruitt and Tamara Adlin, 2006, p. 6.

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TU DELFT

With 17,500 students in eight faculties and 2.500 scientists, the TU Delft is the Netherlands' largest university of technology. The TU Delft is the first Dutch university in the »World Reputation Rankings« of the *Times Higher Education* magazine, the third European technical university, and is ranked 42nd.

As one of the world's leading training grounds for engineers, the TU Delft defines its role in society as supplying solutions that take us further along the road towards sustainability and a healthy economy. We position ourselves as an open academic community, which, through its scientific personnel and graduates, is represented throughout the world and is deeply rooted in our own regional and national, social and economic environment.

Library Learning Centre