

Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco

Where (in the library) do you belong?

Using an informal quiz to engage prospective new students

Every spring, the University of California (UC)-Merced welcomes newly admitted and interested students to campus for Bobcat Day. At the event, students and their families go on tours, meet with advisors, watch performances by student groups, and chat with representatives from departments.

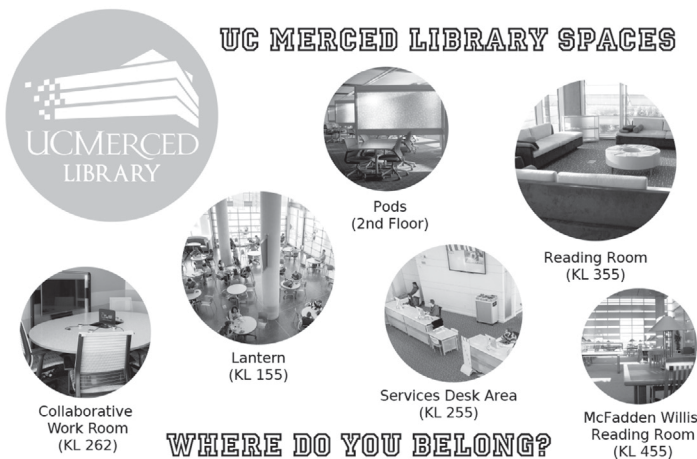
Tables line the main road through campus, full of information about various clubs and services. It is a time for students to get to know our campus

community as they decide whether to enroll, and it is typically a busy, informative, and upbeat event. Prospective students begin filing up the hill toward campus buildings early in the morning from all corners of California, looking to make decisions that will shape their next few years.

The UC-Merced Library has experimented with various ways to engage these students and their families during the Bobcat Day event. We have developed tours,

organized scavenger hunts, asked them to answer questions on a poster, and simply been available to talk informally at a table outside the library. In the past, although students seemed happy to talk to us, they tended not to engage as deeply as we would have liked.

For example, when asked to write their favorite part of the library on a Post-it, many wrote generic answers like “the books” in



Bobcat Day poster. View this article online for more detailed image.

order to receive a prize, which did not indicate that they had given much thought to the question. Since our goal is to engage students in conversation and encourage them to see the library as a vibrant, welcoming space, we hoped to both find a

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new way to connect with these students and their families and to encourage them to attend scheduled tours of the library so they could see it firsthand.

With this in mind, in the spring of 2015, we decided to take a new approach to Bobcat Day. Inspired by the ubiquitous Internet quizzes we had seen on social media, such as BuzzFeed (“Which Fairy Tale Do You Belong In?” “Which ‘Twilight Zone’ Episode Describes Your Love Life?” “What City Should You Actually Live In?”), we developed a fun, short (four questions) quiz of our own in the same spirit that asked students to answer informal, multiple-choice questions about their study preferences, fashion, and reading habits.

The answers we offered students matched their answers to the “personality” of one of six different library spaces, including a quiet reading room, a collaborative work space, and the bottom floor of our building, where students often meet to socialize and order food from the café.

We matched personality traits to the various spaces—for instance, we framed the busy café and meeting space on the first floor with activity, tendency to socialize, and enjoyment of tasty snacks. We then created a graphically appealing version of the quiz that looked like a short booklet, and distributed it to interested parties at a table set up during Bobcat Day outside the library.

Sample question: What’s your approach to fashion?

- U. Something understated and classic
- V. Something relaxed and earthy
- W. Something comfortable and versatile
- X. Something fun and trendy
- Y. Something bright and bold
- Z. Something unique and stain resistant with great shoes

Sample answer: If you scored mostly Y’s...You belong in the technology-enhanced Collaborative Work Room! Bold

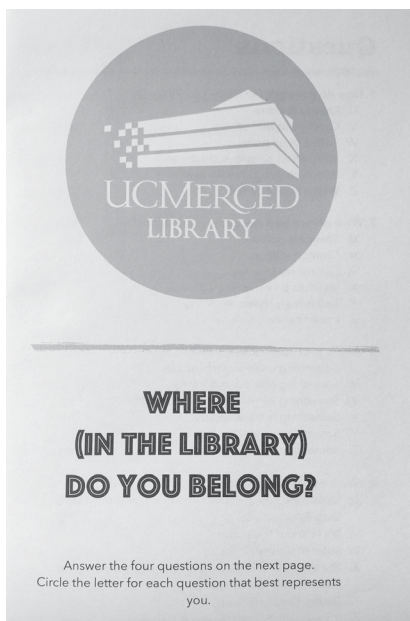
and innovative, you relish the chance to take life by the horns. In KL 262, you’ll find cutting-edge technology and bright modern furnishings that will help you move forward toward your exciting new future.

We used letters from the end of the alphabet to indicate choices because we didn’t like the potential value judgment that could be inferred from assigning students letters that could be seen as grades (i.e., You got all A’s!). Because the purpose of the quiz was to make a connection and not assign value to the places surveyed, we thought it would be better not to give answers that could be interpreted as implying one place was better than another. At the last minute we added a final answer option when we realized some students might have completely different answers to each question. This option informed students they belong in every library space.

Since the ultimate goal of the quiz, besides sparking conversations with students about how we could help them, was to push them toward taking a tour of the library building, and we did our best to dovetail the results of the quiz with participation in scheduled tours.

We gave library student workers who were leading the tours information about the quiz before the event started and encouraged them to highlight the spaces that corresponded to quiz answers. We also asked all student workers helping at the event to take the quiz themselves. Because we anticipated heightened interest in tours, we made sure to schedule them regularly throughout the event so interested visitors would be able to attend. This schedule also helped us keep a record of how many people went on each tour in each time slot.

As part of the event, we staffed a table during the event where interested families could drop by to talk to us, pick up free pens and candy, and learn more about the library. In addition to various giveaway items on the table, we developed a poster with photos encouraging visitors to take



Where (in the library) you belong!

*If you scored mostly Us... You belong in the **McFadden-Willis Reading Room!***
 Quiet and stately, you know the power of your own intuition and personal motivation. The McFadden-Willis Reading Room, an elegant silent study area, has what you need to embrace calm and quiet, and focus on your research.

*If you scored mostly Vs... You belong in our **Reading Room!***
 Casual and understated, you understand the importance of downtime spent in comfort. In KL 355, you will find cozy couches, chairs, and magazines that bring the spirit of relaxation into your fast-paced life.

*If you scored mostly Ws... You belong in the **Pods!***
 You understand that those who go fastest in life, go together. Collaboration and versatility are key to your worldview. In the Pods, you have the flexibility you need to work effectively with your like-minded colleagues.

*If you scored mostly Xs... You belong near the **Services Desk!***
 Sociable and open, you make multi-tasking an art. You know that in order to get ahead you need to be in the middle of the action - which is why you're stimulated by the computers, copiers, people, and constant activity in KL 255.

*If you scored mostly Ys... You belong in the technology enhanced **Collaborative Work Room!***
 Bold and innovative, you relish the chance to take life by the horns. In KL 262, you'll find cutting-edge technology and bright modern furnishings that will help you move forward toward your exciting new future.

*If you scored mostly Zs... You belong in the **Lantern!***
 The greatest minds are powered by the greatest foods - and you are no exception! In the Lantern, you can work alone or with friends, secure in the knowledge that a great cup of joe or a tasty midday snack are only steps away.

*If you scored a Wildcard ... You belong in **every Library space!***
 Versatile with a variety of interests, you love new experiences. You can enjoy a different library space each day, from the elegant and refined to the cozy and collaborative, depending on your mood.

Sample of the quiz given to prospective students at UC-Merced.

our quiz, and we asked them if they were interested when they stopped to talk to us.

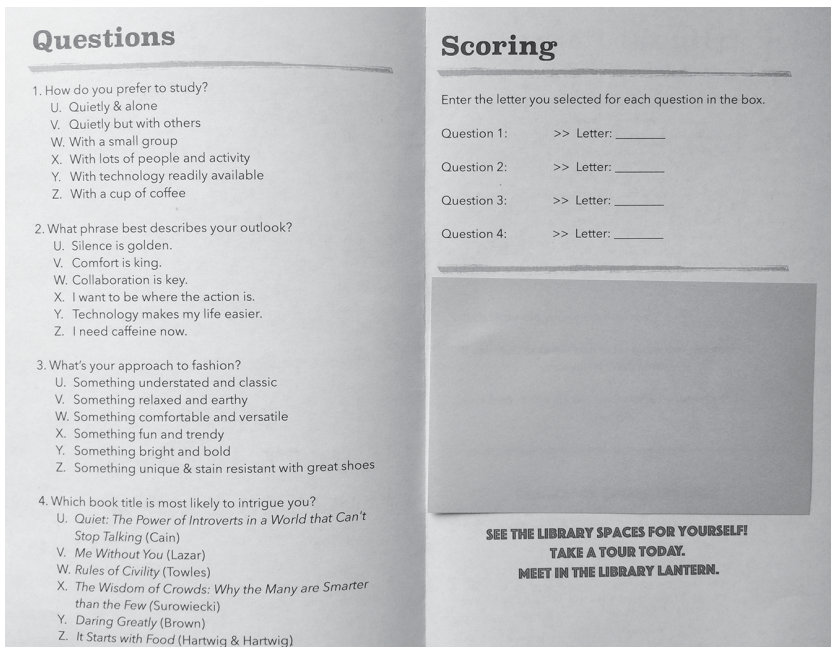
The quizzes in some respects served as conversation starters for our table. It may have been easier for students to approach us with a predetermined activity available. In addition to librarians standing at the table, library student workers helped by mingling with the crowd of people passing in front of us and encouraging them to ask questions about the library. This was invaluable since our student workers can give visitors the inside story on life at UC-Merced.

We were pleasantly surprised by the reception to the quiz. By about 11:30 a.m., we had gone through approximately 80 quizzes, and we went through more as the event progressed. Students who took the quiz had a variety of different answers, and completed the quiz enthusiastically, sometimes laughing at the options and comparing answers with friends. We were pleasantly surprised at how excited the students were to take the quiz, and at how seriously they seemed to treat it.

As a reward for completing the quizzes, we gave participants library magnets, but most people seemed more interested in the quiz for its own sake. As we talked with students about their answers, we were able to highlight areas that might be important to them as individuals and began to get to know them. The quiz's informal style seemed to help them more directly see the connection between the library and their academic success.

In order to gauge whether the reception to the quiz had any bearing on the number of library tours given, we kept a tally of people who went on tours at various times throughout the event. Overall, about 130 people went on library tours, with the largest number of people in a group (31) in the tour at 11:30 a.m. Most of the other tours during the day included between seven and 18 people. We haven't kept a count of tour participants in the past, but we found these numbers to be encouraging.

Anecdotally, as we walked back through the library after the event, we saw other people we had spoken to at the table ex-



Another sample of the quiz.

ploring on their own (the library remained open the whole day), so it is possible that some people were inspired to visit the library even without going on a more formal tour.

Room for improvement

While we were pleased with the response to the quizzes, there are some things we would change in the future. Initially, we had students determine their answer by filling out a worksheet covered by a Post-it note on the quiz booklet.¹ In retrospect, we probably didn't need to include this step, as it was not difficult for students to figure out their answers on their own. Also, it took students longer to complete the quiz than we had anticipated. If we decide to offer something similar in the future, we may want to include a second table so there is more space for people to take the quiz while we continue chatting with others.

In the future, we might also consider cutting one of the questions. We would also like to record how many people got each answer choice. We attempted to do this

during the event, but often there were so many people visiting at a time, that it was impossible to chat with students and record answers all at once. Because of this, it may be helpful to have more people staffing the table, if we repeat this activity.

Overall we were very happy with the quiz and feel that it helped us make a friendly connection with prospective new students and their families. The informal questions and personal focus allowed us to start conversations that may not have happened otherwise, and prompted students and families to get to know the library and our services. Based on our experiences, we encourage other libraries to consider creating similar activities in order to generate dialogue about services, spaces, and research at their campuses. We hope to continue to engage with the students we met at Bobcat Day in the future.

Note

- UC-Merced Library Bobcat Day Outreach: http://libguides.ucmerced.edu/bobcat_day_outreach/. *ZZ*