



## **How might we go about understanding the underutilization of the Radford University Accessible Technology Lab?**

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DSN 700 Advanced Design Studio III  
Project 1

## Problem Statement

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### **How might we go about understanding the underutilization of the Radford University McConnell Library Accessible Technology Lab?**

When deciding on what problem to focus on, I contacted Alyssa Archer, Instruction Librarian, and Beth Johnson, Head of Access Services and Student Engagement at McConnell Library to see if there was a problem they were facing that I could explore and would best utilize the methods focused on in this assignment: Stakeholder Mapping, Persona Profile and Experience Diagramming. They provided me with a few different topics for consideration. After several discussions, I decided to conduct a formal interview with the both of them to narrow down my focus and gain more insight into the problem.

From the interview conducted, I determined the greatest problem the Library was facing, that would be useful to explore with the methods focused on in this assignment, was to understand the underutilization of the Accessible Technology Lab located on Level 3 of the McConnell Library. I learned that the Accessible Technology Lab is run and promoted in conjunction with the Center for Accessibility Services (CAS). Archer and Johnson said the target audience for the lab are students, but public patrons and faculty have used it more.

The lab is primarily advertised through CAS, but the Library does their own promotions as well. I found out that they just changed the name from the “Assistive Technology Room” to the “Accessible Technology Lab.” The Accessible Technology Lab is available for use by the entire campus community as well as public patrons. However, students who are registered with CAS have priority use. I learned that the lab is small, and occupancy is limited to three people at a time. The lab does not have to be reserved in advance but can be done so through the Library or CAS via phone, email, or in-person. Johnson and Archer mentioned promotion for the Accessible Technology Lab, from the Library side, is typically done by word of mouth. The Library also hosts Open Houses to showcase what is in the lab and how it can be used by everyone, not just students who are registered with CAS. There is also some signage displayed throughout the Library advertising the lab as well. I learned through the interview that there is not a way of tracking usage of the lab at this time. It is done primarily through observations; when they walk by and notice the lab is closed and dark. CAS had suggested surveying each person who uses the lab to ask what they used the lab for and find ways to better service them. Johnson mentioned in the interview that the Library may consider surveying users at some point, but they are reluctant to do so with fear of prying into a disability a student may have. They mentioned that it is hard to come up with best solutions for the lab because they feel that if there is a big, glaring sign pointing and directing students to the lab, the student may feel uncomfortable being seen there. The lab also remains locked when not in use, and the student must ask for a key to enter the lab or for the lab to be opened for them by the Library front desk staff. The Library has spoken to CAS about how this may be an inconvenience to the student and they suggested leaving the room open at all times. However, the Library believes the

lab will always be occupied if they do that, perhaps by those who may not necessarily need the accessible equipment offered in the lab, but just a quiet space. This is believed to be a possible issue for those who may not be able to get in that actually need the services provided in the lab. Archer and Johnson mentioned CAS has been great to work with, however, they do not know what else the Library is able to do to help CAS promote the lab due to its location in conjunction to the CAS office, which is located in Russell Hall. The benefit of the Accessible Technology Lab's location in the Library is because of its operating hours; CAS is only open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday. Archer and Johnson said the Library is known for their assistive services and equipment, which is another a reason why the lab is located in that space. When asked their opinion about what resources the Library needs or what changes need to take place in order to increase the use of the Accessible Technology Lab, they said they just needed more publicity about the services offered.

After conducting the interview, I conducted the Walk-a-Mile Immersion method from the Luma Institute Handbook to get a better understanding about what a student goes through to reserve and use the Accessible Technology Lab. I first researched the lab online to get a sense of where it was located and what was offered. I learned that although they recently changed the name of the lab, the McConnell Library and CAS websites still have it listed as the "Assistive Technology Room" at the time of this research study. There is also a discrepancy of where the lab is located on both websites. On the CAS website, it said the lab was located on Level 2 in the Library and on the Library's website it said it is on Level 3. Although these are minor discrepancies, I think it could make a difference on how the service is perceived and accessed. It was also hard to locate information about the lab on either website, as it was buried within content.

After researching online, I decided to walk over to the lab and reserve it in-person through the Library. When I first walked into the main Library doors, I saw construction going on in the vestibule. I walked through the typical entrance door and saw a sign telling me to go through the other door. After entering into the correct entrance, I walked to the front desk and asked the student worker for access into the Accessible Technology Lab. Immediately, the student worker did not know what lab I was talking about. I proceeded to describe the lab and the disability equipment offered inside. The student worker thought I was talking about a collaborative room inside the Library, but I told them that wasn't the space I was looking for. I went on to further explain the technology that was in the room. The student worker ultimately ended up walking me to the collaborative room. After confirming that was not the room I was looking for, the student worker then asked library staff where the lab was located, and someone was able to direct us to the location. When we first arrived, the student worker had the wrong key and had to go back to find the correct one. So, I stood outside of the lab waiting to be let in until they came back. When I finally got inside the lab, I found it to be desolate and uninviting. It was very tight, stuffy and cramped as well; I do not see how 3 people could fit comfortably into the space. If I was a

student in this situation, I would feel very frustrated and embarrassed to request access into the lab.

After conducting research into this problem, I ultimately decided that the underutilization of the Accessible Technology Lab was a worthy topic to explore. There were initially many issues I identified through the research I conducted as to why the lab is being underutilized. Yet, it is important to further explore this topic in order to better understand the people and systems involved in operating and using the lab. There is a need for all students to know about the lab because of the accessible equipment it offers. It also has great potential of being useful to lots of people, not necessary those who have a certain diagnosis. I also believe this could affect a bigger issue the University is facing—student retention.

### *Inside of the Accessible Technology Lab*





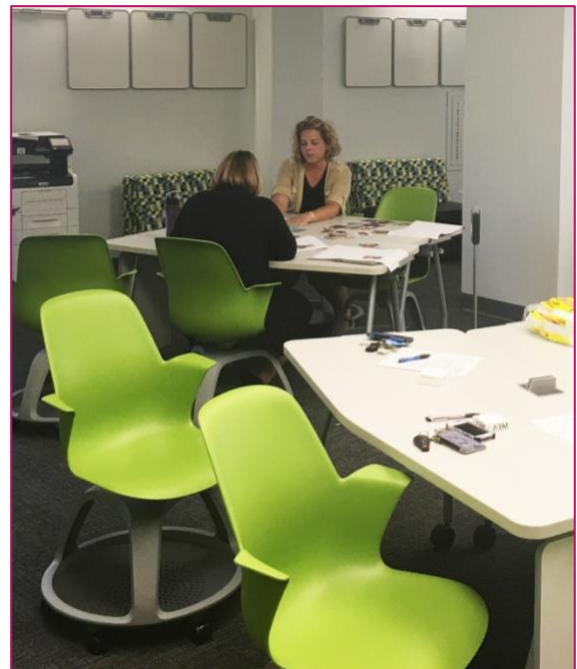
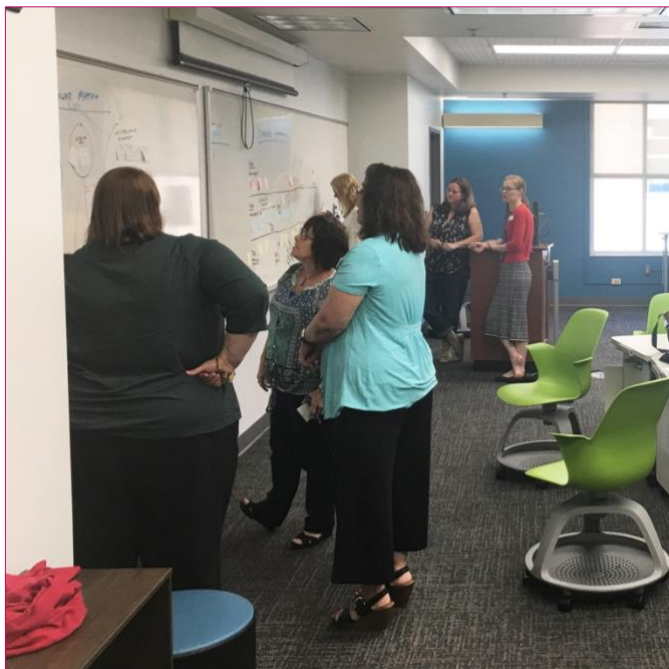
## Research Participants

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I decided to facilitate a design thinking workshop featuring Stakeholder Mapping, Persona Profile and Experience Diagramming methods for this project. I reserved a great, collaborative space within the library to hold the workshop and allotted an hour and a half to complete the methods. As far as soliciting participants for the workshop to implement the methods, I asked for help from Johnson and Archer to identify stakeholders in the Library who are knowledgeable about the Accessible Technology Lab and also invited the staff from CAS to participate.

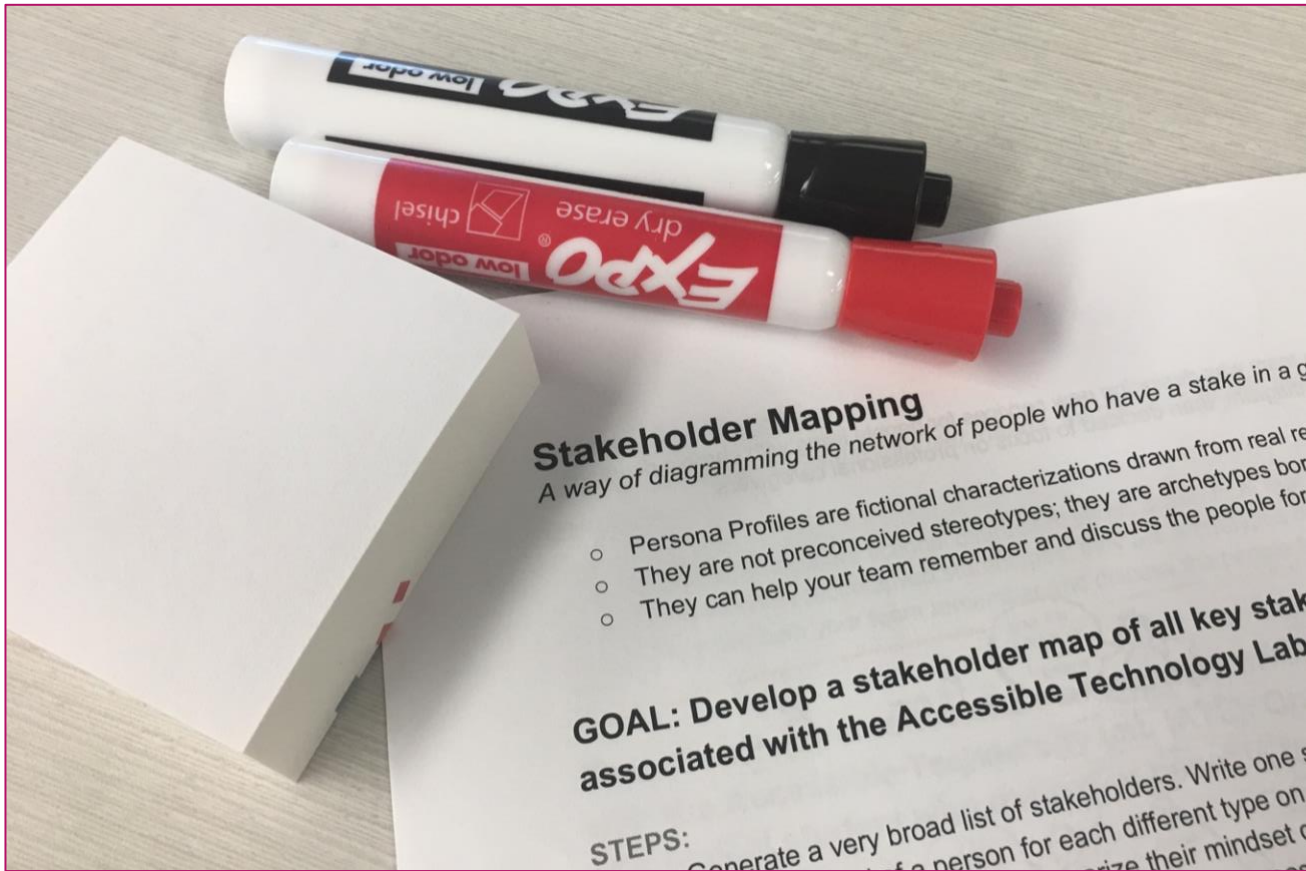
Out of the 28 email invitations I sent out, I had a total of 8 willing participants take part in the workshop. Each method had a team of 3, except Stakeholder mapping, which I joined to balance the teams out. I requested one member of CAS to work on each method to provide a different perspective. The Stakeholder Mapping method was conducted by Kelly Woodward, CAS Coordinator of Accessible Materials; Beth Johnson, Head of Access Services and Student Engagement; and Karen Montgomery, McConnell Library Administrative Assistance. The Persona Profile method was conducted by Andrea Sharpe-Robinson, Director of CAS; Lisa Dinkle, Instruction Librarian; and myself. The Experience Diagramming method was conducted by Kate Daby, Assistant Director of CAS; Alyssa Archer, Instruction Librarian; and Christi Wayne, Monographics Specialist.

Once the teams had been formed, to best utilize our time, I made handouts of each method with directions on how to facilitate the activity and distributed them to each team member to read over. I, then, went around to each team to further explain the method and answer any questions.



## Documentation of Process & Final Method Implementations

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### Stakeholder Mapping

The goal of the method was to develop a stakeholder map of all key stakeholders involved in, or associated with, the Accessible Technology Lab. Materials provided for participants to conduct the method were the Stakeholder Mapping instructional handout, post-it notes, pens, dry erase markers, and a dry erase board.

The instructional handout stated the following:

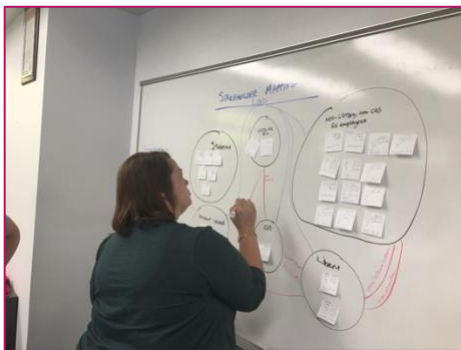
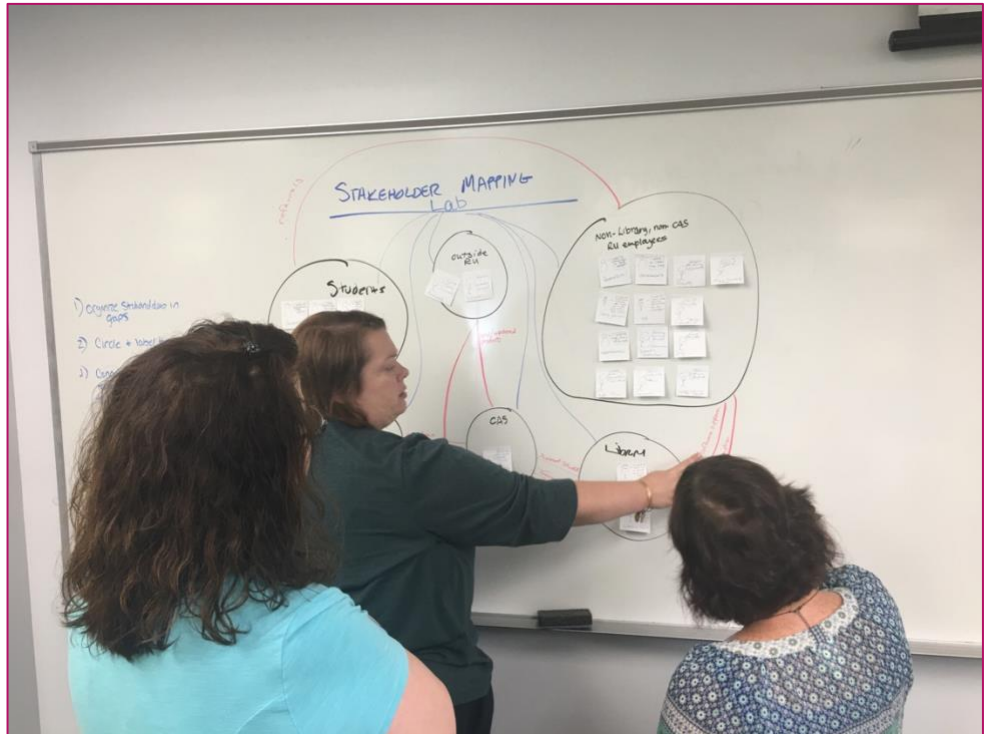
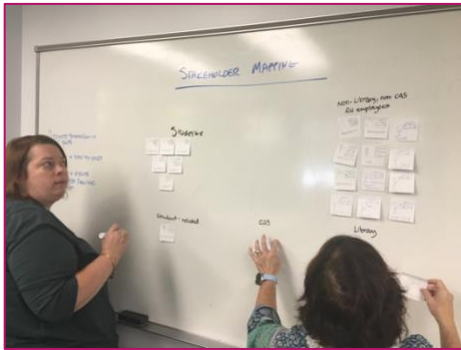
1. Generate a very broad list of stakeholders. Write one stakeholder per post-it note.
2. Draw a symbol of a person for each different type on that post-it note.
3. Write a speech-bubble to summarize their mindset on the post-it notes.
4. Write a label describing their role or title on the post-it note.
5. Once all stakeholders have been written out on post-it notes, plot on the dry erase board.
6. Organize by circling and labeling related groups.
7. Draw lines with arrows connecting the stakeholders.
8. Write a label on the line to describe relationships.

**Below are photos of participants implementing the Stakeholder Mapping method:**

*Participants brainstorming stakeholders on post-it notes.*

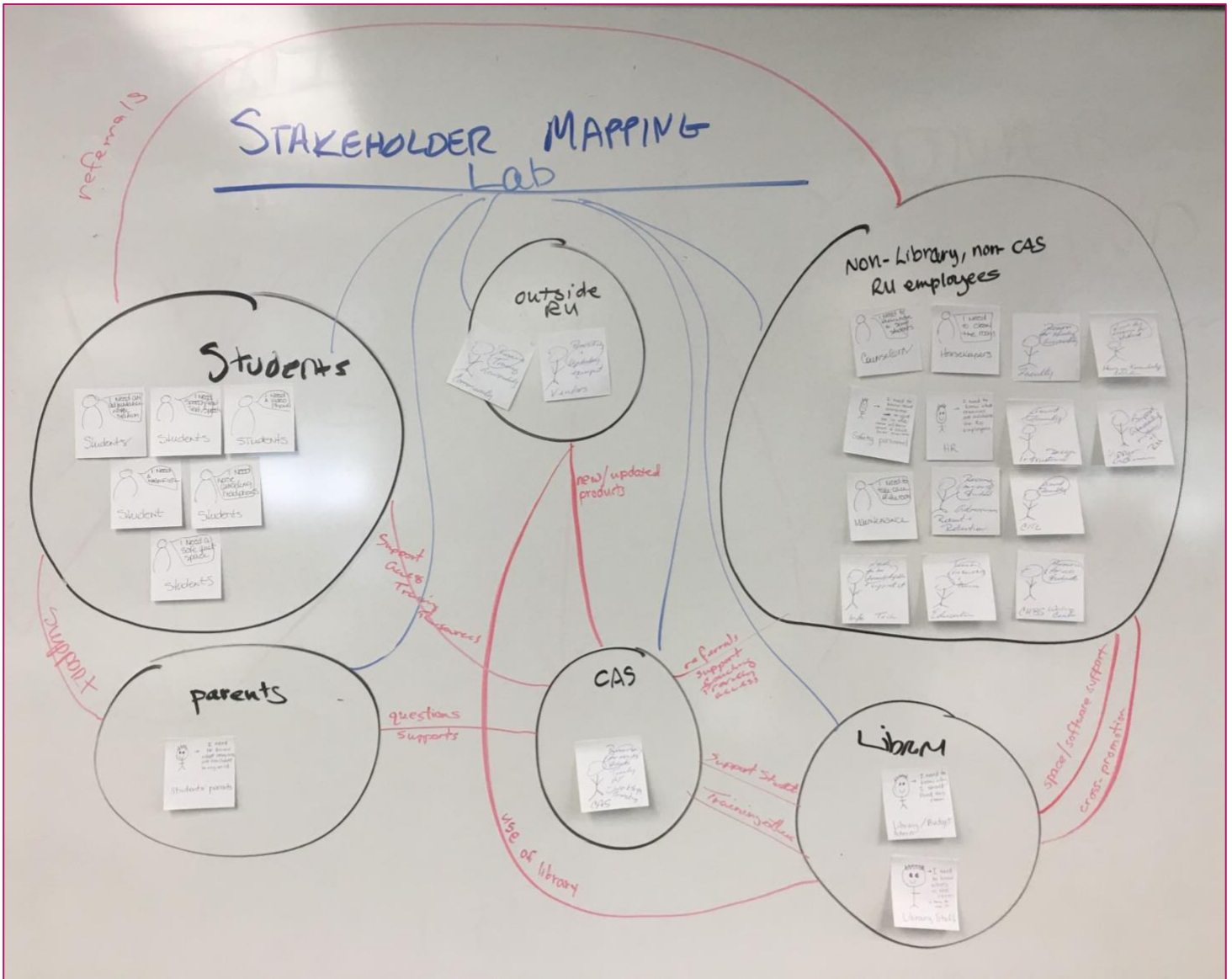


*Participants plotting stakeholders on the board, organizing in groups, and making connections.*





Final Stakeholder Mapping implementation.



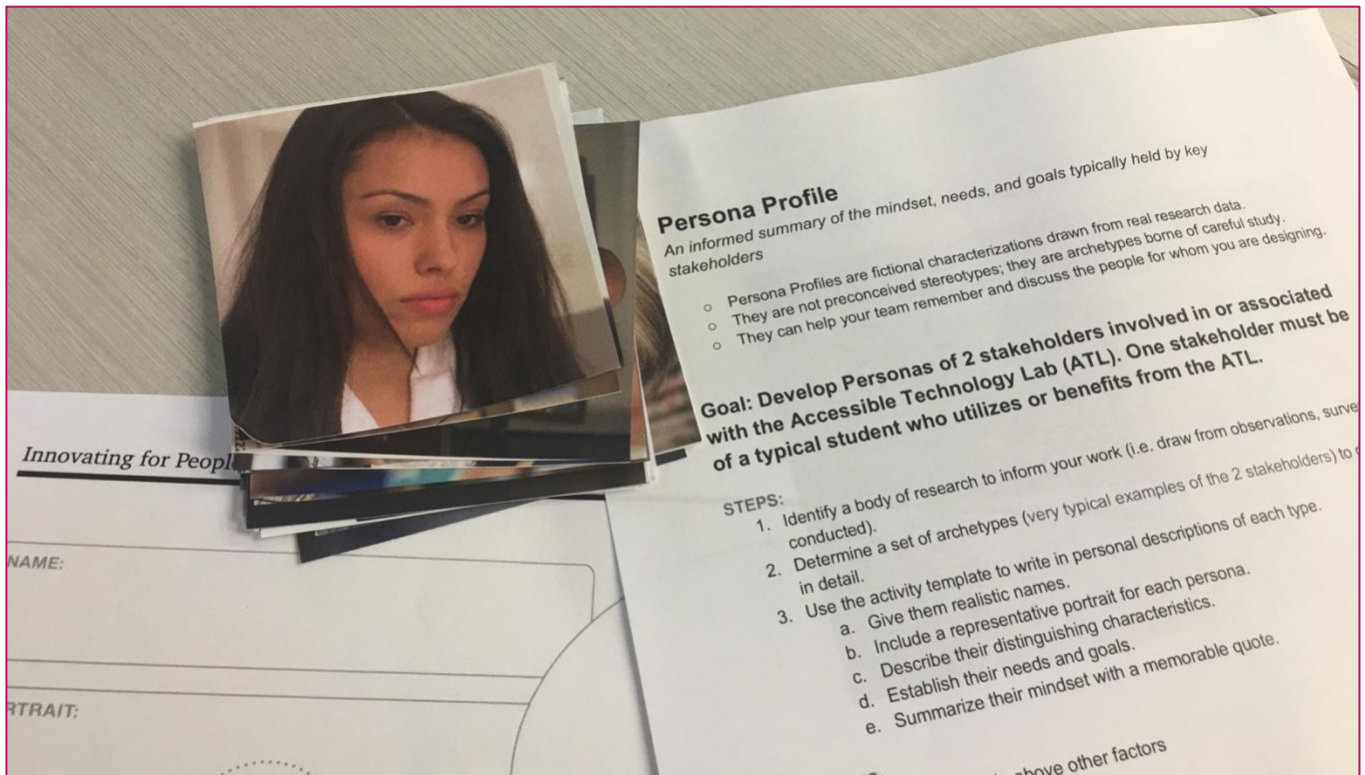
Video of the Stakeholder Mapping discussion can be found at the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1H--jUx-1bFfZ3mvX0WQPnONug4ZRuv8L>

A close-up video of the final Stakeholder Map can be viewed at:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YH\\_Fhq8bAzvva8V2vmha9zavqVEiscHy/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YH_Fhq8bAzvva8V2vmha9zavqVEiscHy/view?usp=sharing)





## Persona Profile

The goal of the method was to develop personas of 2 stakeholders involved in, or associated with, the Accessible Technology Lab; specifying that one stakeholder must be a typical student who utilizes or benefits from the lab. Materials provided for participants to conduct the method were the Personal Profile instructional handout, Luma Institute Persona Profile activity template, pens, tape, and a diverse array of portraits. The portraits I pre-selected for this method featured people of various ages and races with different temperaments.

The instructional handout stated the following:

1. Identify a body of research to inform your work (i.e. draw from observations, surveys conducted).
2. Determine a set of archetypes (very typical examples of the 2 stakeholders) to develop in detail.
3. Use the activity template to write in personal descriptions of each type.
  - a. Give them realistic names.
  - b. Include a representative portrait for each persona.
  - c. Describe their distinguishing characteristics.
  - d. Establish their needs and goals.
  - e. Summarize their mindset with a memorable quote.

**Below are photos of participants implementing the Persona Profile method:**

*Participants discussing stakeholders and filling in the activity template.*




Final implementation of a Persona Profile for a student stakeholder named Gina.

Innovating for People | Activity Templates | Persona Profile

NAME: Gina

PORTRAIT:



"I don't want my friends to know. In high school there were people looking out for me, now I'm on my own and don't know where to begin."

ATTITUDES:

- Nervous
- Lack of confidence
- Panic
- Isolated
- Hesitant
- Worried, but willing

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

- Young-nervous
- Lacks confidence
- Doesn't know what to ask
- Limited technical skills
- Not wanting to identify
- Race/Gender/Age not factors

GOALS:

- Complete an assignment
- Learn a new skill
- Pass / Graduate
- Internship / Interview


KURIA INSTITUTE



Final implementation of a Persona Profile for a faculty stakeholder named Frank.

Innovating for People | Activity Templates | Persona Profile

NAME:  
Frank

PORTRAIT:  


Provide Students Opportunities to become more efficient & effective. Giving them tools to be successful students & citizens.  
productive

ATTITUDES:  
Positive  
Encourage  
Inventing

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:  
Interested in Student welfare & well being.  
Interested in the big picture.  
Student - Leader - Citizen

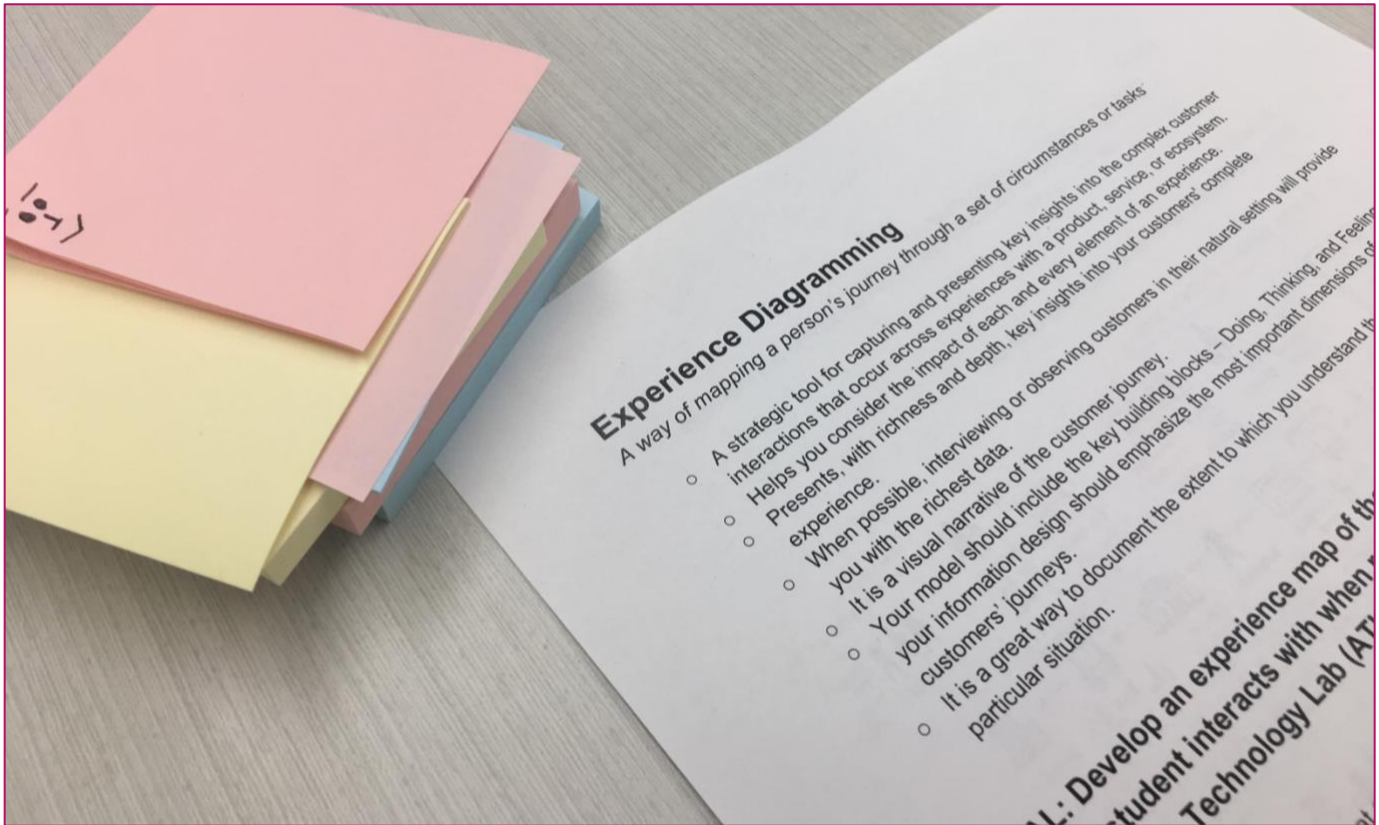
GOALS:  
Creating learning opportunities  
Collaborative efforts  
Student success Retention

LLPFA INSTITUTE

Video of the Persona Profile discussion can be found at the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/14bX7Iifrv67Steu7mBj6-4h6eM-9FjW4/view?usp=sharing>





## Experience Diagramming

The goal of the method was to develop an experience map of the people, places, and things a typical student interacts with when reserving and using the Accessible Technology Lab. I selected the “People, places and things” timeline from the Luma Institute website, which I drew on the dry erase board for participants to diagram the experience. I believe using this format was most beneficial to best understand who is involved, where students are, and with what they are interacting with on their way to the lab. Materials provided for participants to conduct the method were the Experience Diagramming instructional handout, pens, colored post-it notes, dry erase board and markers.

The instructional handout stated the following:

1. Concentrate on what a student does, thinks and feels from the time they leave their dorm/residence until they reach the Accessible Technology Lab.
2. Write the following people, places and things a student experiences on their journey to reserving and using the Accessible Technology Lab:
  - a. Write the people a student interacts with on pink post-it notes.
  - b. Write the places a student goes to on blue post-it notes.
  - c. Write the things a student interacts with on yellow post-it notes.
3. Organize and plot the post-it notes on the timeline on the dry erase board.

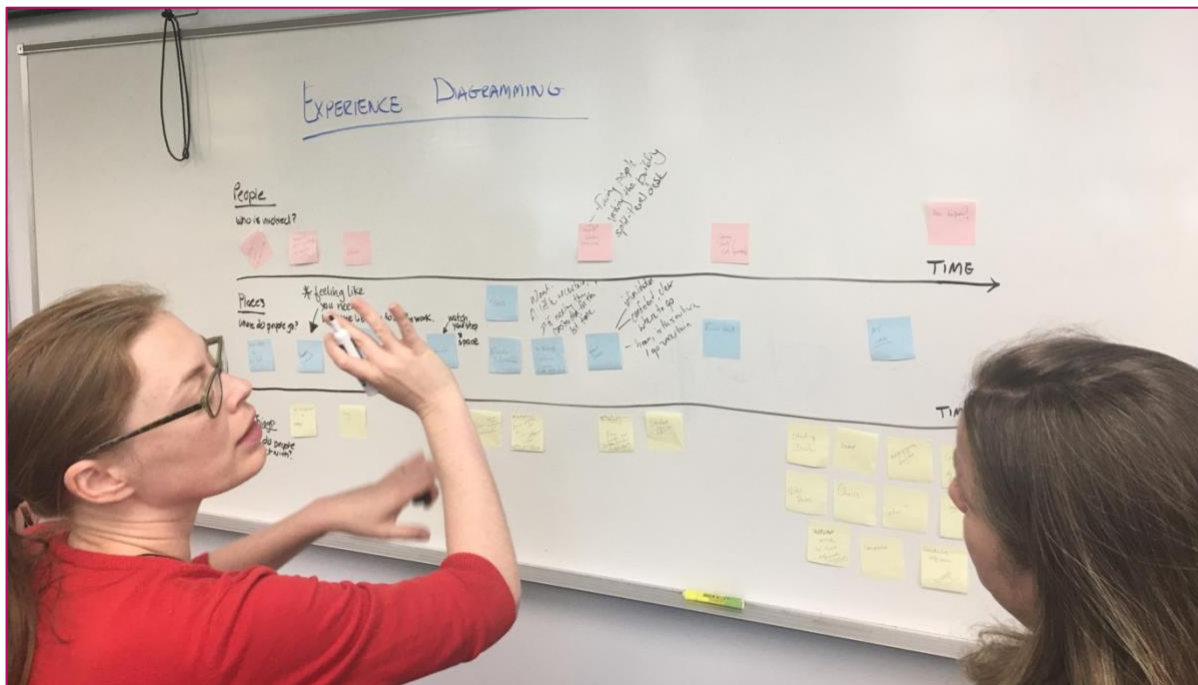
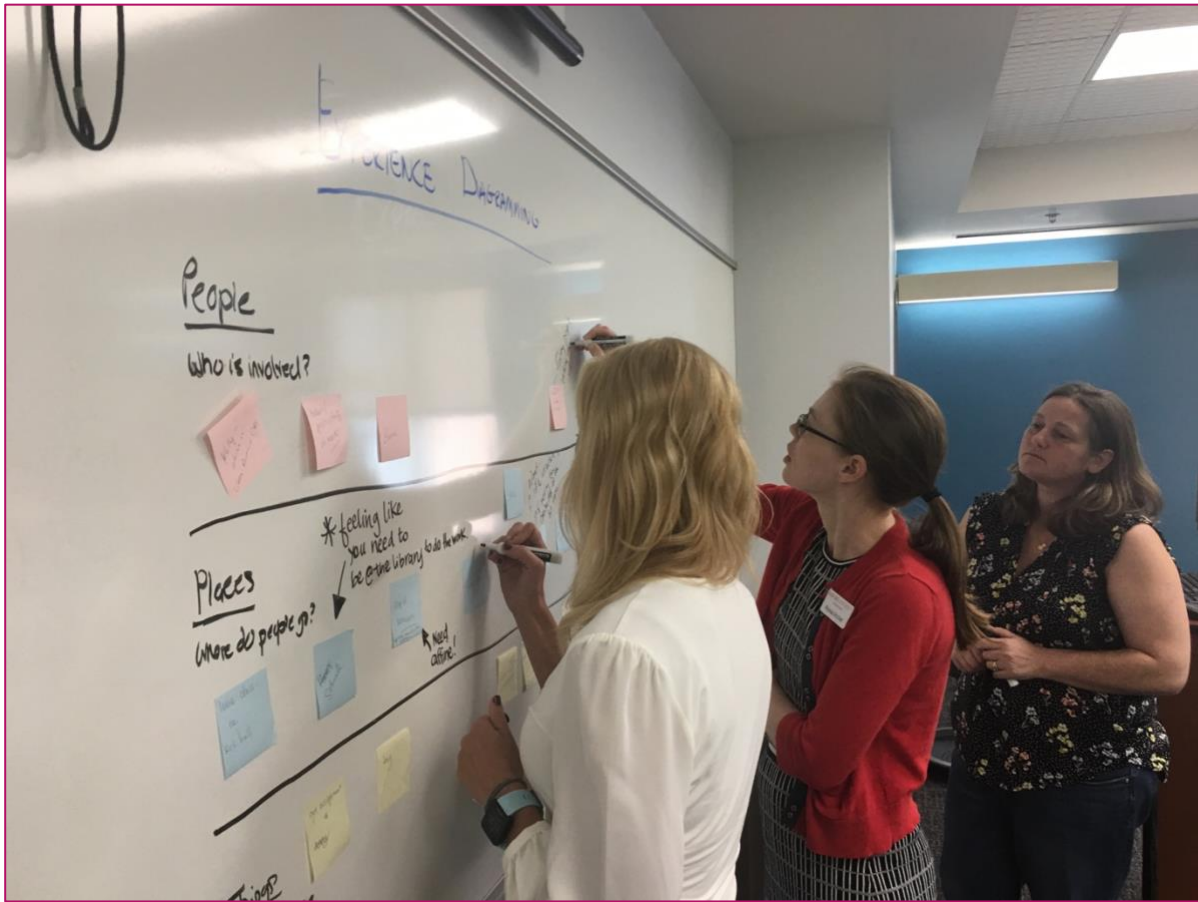
4. Things to think about: What is the process a student goes through from beginning to end when they go about reserving or using the Accessible Technology Lab? Who do they talk to (e.g., professors, students, CAS, Library)? By what means? How do they get there (e.g., leaving from class, dorm, dining hall, Starbucks)? Think about all touch points of their journey. The journey to get to the Accessible Technology Lab can take different routes—explore and discuss.

**Below are photos of participants implementing the Experience Diagramming method:**

*Participants brainstorming and writing on post-it notes the people, places and things involved in the student's journey to the Accessible Technology Lab, as outlined in the instructional handout.*

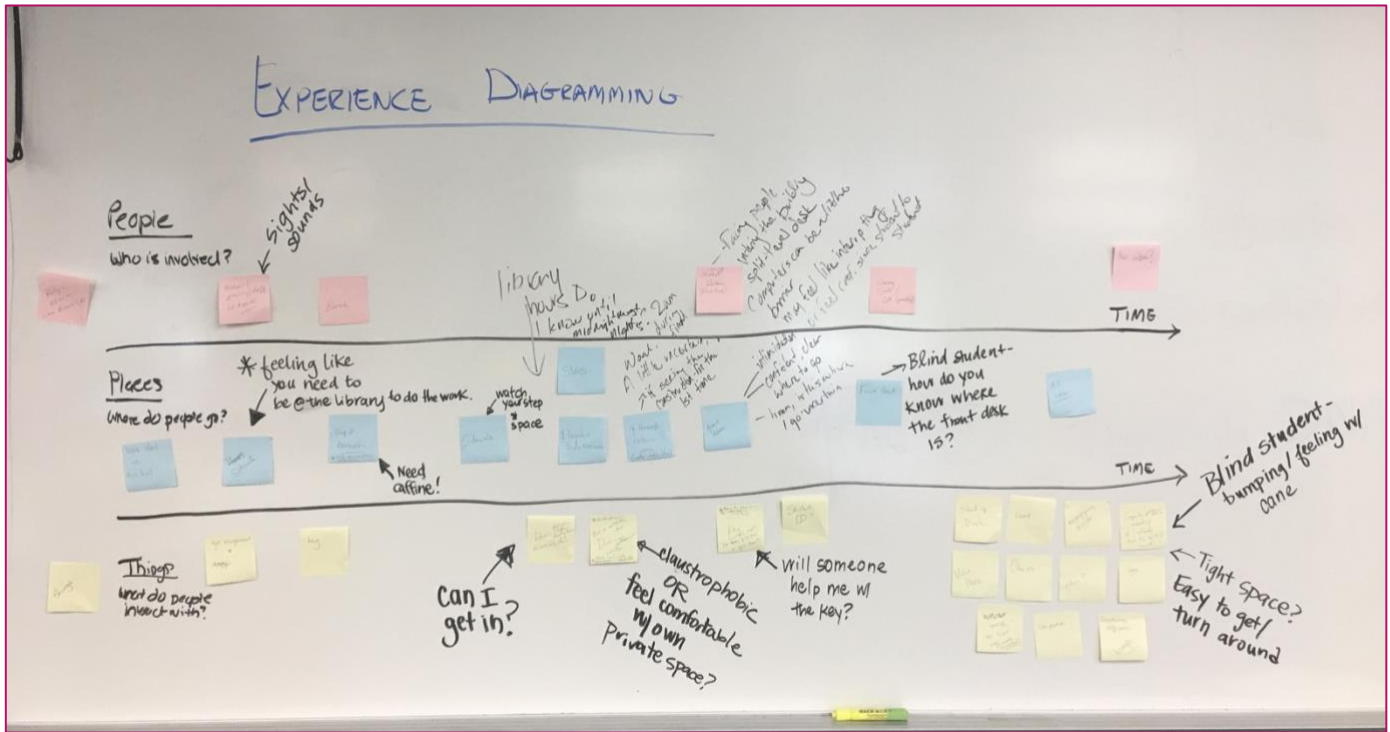


Participants discussing, plotting post-it notes and writing comments along the timeline on the dry erase board.





Final implementation of the Experience Diagram.



Video of the Experience Diagramming discussion can be found at the following link:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/12-zdMPO6SU\\_xf0ckeCBVykIcp\\_pdjJds/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/12-zdMPO6SU_xf0ckeCBVykIcp_pdjJds/view?usp=sharing)

Close-up video of the Experience Diagram can be found at the following link  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z3crNrhmIOzRuIB3JIngZd\\_VKtXJs7I/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z3crNrhmIOzRuIB3JIngZd_VKtXJs7I/view?usp=sharing)



## Closing Thoughts

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I found each of these methods beneficial in helping understand the problem of the underutilization of the Accessible Technology Lab. Although, I was hoping for more participants to execute the methods, I think I had good representation of the stakeholders who manage and facilitate the lab. All participants in the workshop found these methods to be very informative in understanding the people and systems involved in the Accessible Technology Lab. Participants from CAS asked if I would be willing to continue exploring this issue and come back to facilitate other methods to help them better understand the problem and inform solutions.

