Reimagining academic library user experience:

Using mystery shopping to inform service decisionmaking at the Czech National Library of Technology
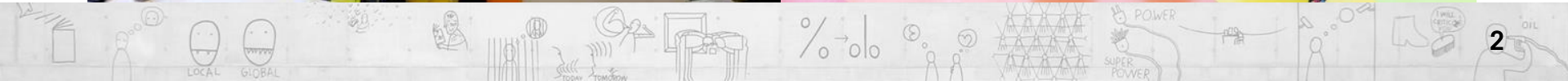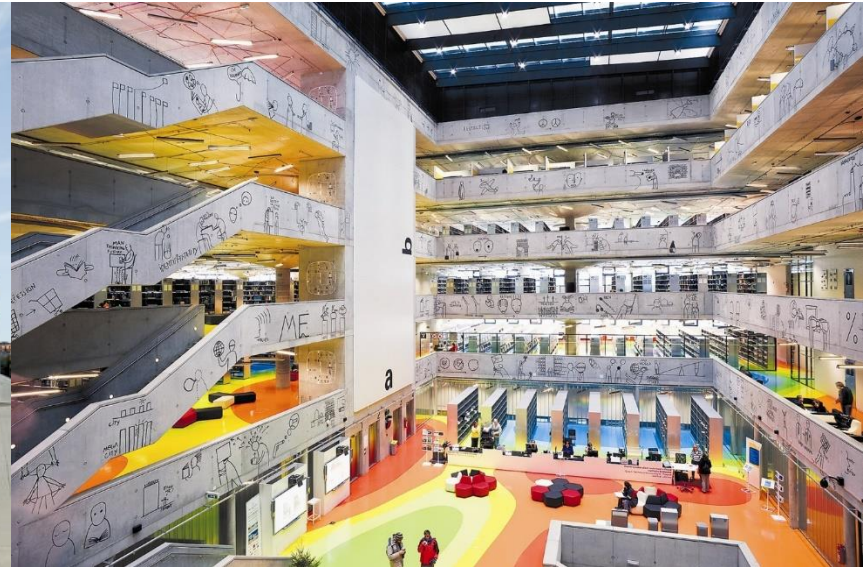
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Delivered by: Pavlína Tvrdá

National Library of Technology

QQML 2016

About NTK

NTK = "The library is a service"

- **Academic:** Cooperation with Prague's science and technology campus

    "**We want NTK to be the perfect academic library supporting a transfer of innovation into practice.**"

- **Integrated:** NTK library = joint collection of NTK + University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague + Czech Academy of Science's Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry

- **National:** Provides countrywide services (National Repository of Grey Literature, Czech ISSN National Center, Document Delivery Infrastructure [Virtual Polytechnic Library])

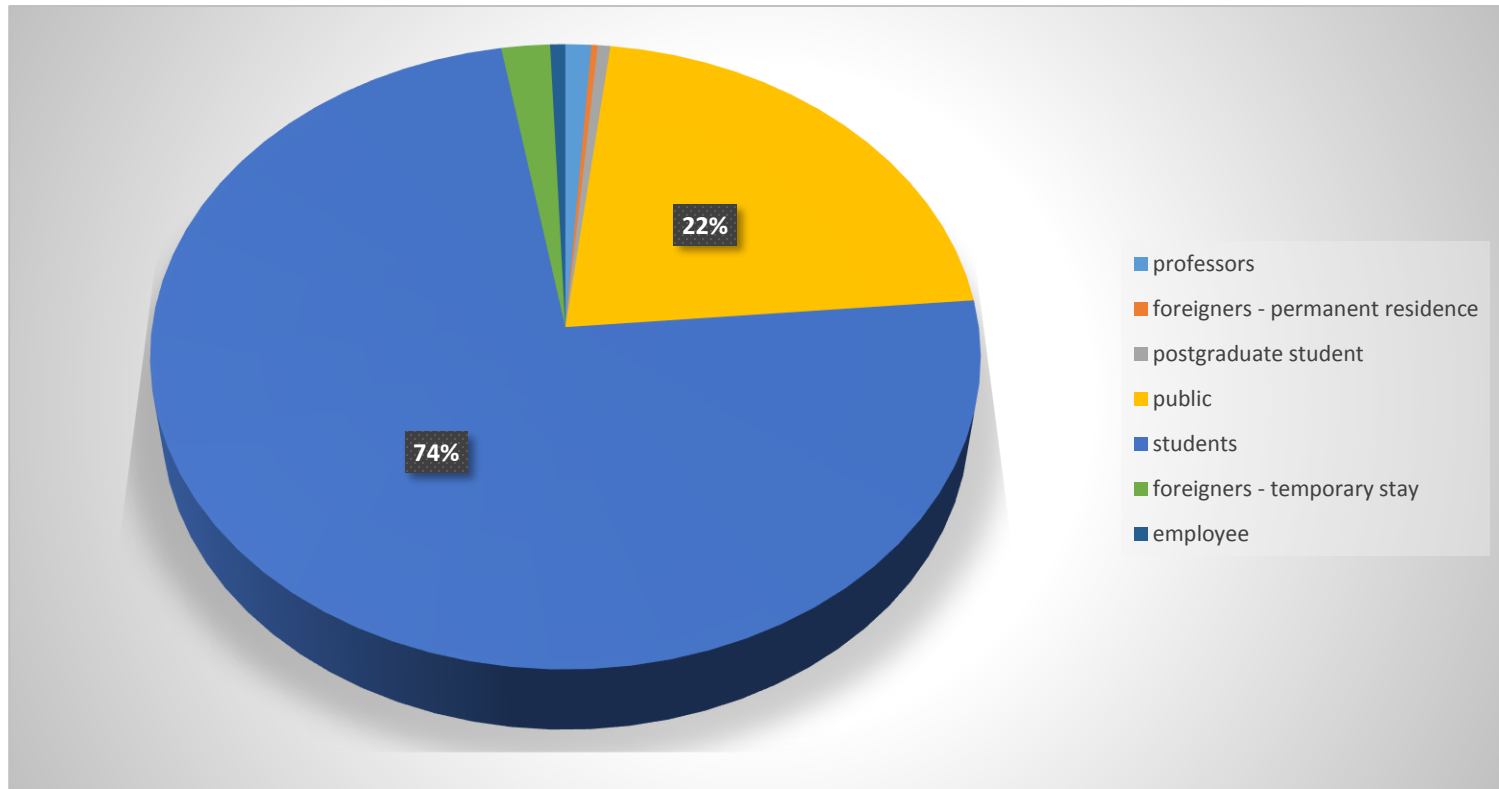- **Social and cultural center:** Frequent lectures, educational tours, cinema, events and exhibitions

NTK in pictures

About NTK

- **Approximately 27,000 patrons:** 74% students, 22% general public, 1% professors, 1% postgraduate students

Legend:
- professors
- foreigners - permanent residence
- postgraduate student
- public
- students
- foreigners - temporary stay
- employee

Mystery shopping (MS) 2014

- **Beginning:** MS 2014 started as a **part of diploma thesis** focused on evaluation of library services
- **Why this method:** MS in general is considered to be an effective and cheap decisionmaking tool targeted at the **improvement of services**
- **Preparation:** Only one person was in charge of preparations supported by the library's administration
- **Methodology:**
- Used prior MS experiences from other non-profit organizations in the CR
- Used library standards (IFLA Public Library Service Guidelines + RUSA Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers) and The Code of Ethics of Czech Librarians
    - → Creation of The Professional Behavioral Code for Service Personnel
- Creation of **Instructions** (tasks in person + by telephone + by email) and **MS form** (10 areas of activity, 38 specific questions)
- Using **Map of contact points** + **"The path of service"**
    - → Creation of a **Mind Map**

Mystery shopping 2014

- **4 tested areas:**
  - Service personnel at staffed desks
  - Library building
  - Services provided
  - Library IT infrastructure
  - → **MS 2014 focused primarily on the environment of the library**

- **Shoppers:**
  - 10 volunteers recruited
  - Students, employees, senior citizens
  - Stratification of shoppers **did not match** the structure of the library's patron base

- **Timeframe: November 3-23, 2014**

Suggestions for service improvement in 2014

- **Implementation of the following suggestions (rather slight changes):**

✓ **Service staff training** (in expertise and social skills)
  → Training courses for all service personnel

✓ **Signage** in the library space
  → Distributed a guide to the library, **"Getting Started at NTK"**

✓ Unreliable **Wi-Fi connections** and computers in public spaces
  → Made Ethernet cables available as alternative
  → Upgraded public computing equipment

Mystery shopping 2015

- **Why again?:**
- MS 2014 proved to be an effective and cheap tool for evaluating **"how to change and improve services"**
- To compare with the 2014 study's results and findings
- To gather additional information about library services and new feedback regarding potential areas for improvement

Mystery shopping 2015

- **Methodology:**
- Larger scale testing - **six member team**
- Use of **Professional Behavioral Code** designed in 2014
- Use of so-called **"personas"** and **"customer journey mapping"**

- Modified and updated **Form and Instructions**
- **4 tested areas –** in-person visit, website, phone services, email services
- **122 specific questions** selected in key testing areas
- Shoppers rated services with a grade and discussed in an in-person follow-up interview

- MS 2015 **focused on the user-friendliness** of systems and desk services

Mystery shopping 2015

- **Implementation:**
- Cooperation and co-creation of evaluated themes across library departments
- All employees informed about the process and terms of MS
- **Recruitment:**
- Recruitment of candidates through our website (Jobs & Internships section) and Facebook page
- 2014 volunteers vs. 2015 modest financial reward for shoppers

- **Timeframe: November 30-December 11, 2015**

Mystery shopping 2015

- **Recruitment:** 26 candidates; 20 shoppers selected – 80% of shoppers were students, which matches the structure of the library's patron base
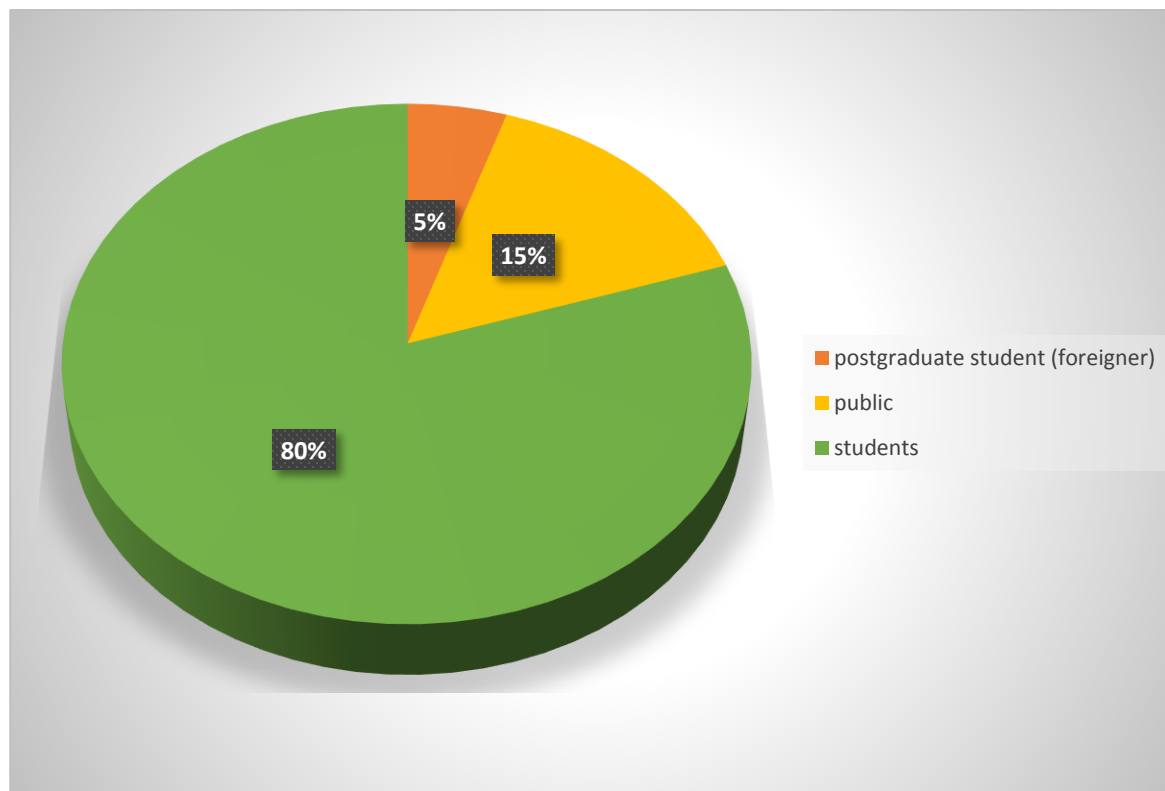
SWOT analysis comparison

▪ **STRENGTHS 2014:**

- Study and relaxation areas
- Library environment
- Self-service borrowing/returning machines
- Helpful staff

+ Clarity of space

▪ **STRENGTHS 2015:**

- Study and relaxation areas
- Library environment
- Self-service borrowing/returning machines
- Helpful staff

+ The main webpage and "My Account" (patron account)

+ Speed and factual accuracy of email communication

+ Online credit card payment

+ Information and consultation services

- **WEAKNESSES 2014:**
  - User-unfriendly kiosks
  - Difficult orientation in the building
  - Hard to find a book in the open stacks

  + Staff knowledge
  + Leaving clothes and bags to enter the Periodicals Reading Room

- **WEAKNESSES 2015:**
  - User-unfriendly kiosks
  - Difficult orientation in the library
  - Hard to find a book in the open stacks

  + Checking out a book for the first time
  + Web terminology
  + Confusing interface transitions between discovery tools
  + Complicated and unclear settings for the Kramerius digital library
  + Unreliable Wi-Fi connection
  + Complicated self-service print/scan/copy machines
  + Study room reservation software: user-unfriendly and slow
  + Hectic registration process and blunt communication;
  insufficient emphasis on card payment options
  + Library staff nametags: not always visible
  + Invisibility of some services

- **OPPORTUNITIES 2014:**

  + **Staff training (social competence and expertise)**
  + **Improvement of signage throughout the building**
  + **Removal and performance improvements for kiosks, with instructions for use**
  + **Better signage to guide patrons to books on shelves**

  (e.g. tabs for separating various subject categories)
  + **Better promotion of services**

- **OPPORTUNITIES 2015:**

  + **Circulation staff: more training**

  + **Lack of study places on campus**
  + **First contact and expectations during registration**
  + **Escape from procrastination**
  + **Open on weekends**

- **THREATS 2014:**

  • Patrons do not want to return to the library after a bad experience

  + Might be unsatisfied with some services provided
  + Services personnel sometimes unprepared for difficult questions
  + Damage to journal collection

- **THREATS 2015:**

  • "library anxiety"

  + Google effect
  + High expectations for library's IT infrastructure
  + Lack of seating during semester peaks

  + Low awareness of specialized services
  + Competitive environment

Suggestion for service improvement 2015

- **Supported by the library's administration:**

✓ **Web:**　　　　Simplification of terminology and easier access to answers about fundamental questions

→ Autumn 2016 focus group on web orientation and terminology + FAQ

✓ Setting rules and standards of **email communication**, defining responsibilities, and improving the quality

→ 2016/2017 implementing of CRM system

✓ Unreliable **Wi-Fi connection**

→ New connection provider (already completed)

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WWW			✉			**WI–FI**

Suggestion for service improvement 2015

✓ Make the process of **registration** more individual and personal, providing "tailored" information

→ Concept of rearranging desk services and contact points; self-service payment and holds; more space for individual services (2017/2018)

✓ Proactive, motivated and **well-trained services staff**

→ Concept of continual internal staff training (done)

→ "Minimum of competencies" for all staff with various levels – 1. user support, 2. collections, 3. reference services (2016/2017)

→ Internal Wiki – better dissemination of information and communication between departments (done)

Suggestion for service improvement 2015

- ✓ Redesign of study room reservation software
  - → 2017/2018: new system
- ✓ Redesign of **online catalog**
  - → Beta version of updated catalog interface (personalized VuFind)
  - → User testing and questionnaire
- ✓ Video tutorials
  - → Made with interns
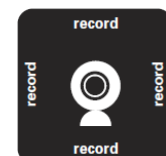
What next?

- MS identified main problem areas of user experience and brought surprising recommendations, encouraging us to make changes differently and more boldly

- In 2017, plan to conduct **another round of MS** to examine whether or not issues and solutions identified in the previous rounds have been resolved

- MS approved as a useful tool for informed decisionmaking; will be supplemented in the future with focus groups and consultative student committee

Thank you and contact information

- **NTK's web side:**
- https://www.techlib.cz/en/

- **MS form and Instructions:** http://repozitar.techlib.cz/record/1003/?ln=en

- **Contacts:**

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