

Introduction

At the heart of every library are the employees. A library cannot, and will not be successful without a successful fleet of librarians and professionals. Research shows that successful onboarding practices leads to greater retention and employee satisfaction (Hall-Ellis, 2014; Snell, 2006). The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) offers best practices for onboarding practices in libraries, which can be helpful in establishing, assessing, or revamping onboarding practices in academic libraries. In addition, the user experience research design technique of journey mapping can be utilized to research and capture the experience of new employees joining an organization, with the goal of gaining insight into how organizational practices impact the onboarding experience of new employees, and what changes can be made to improve the experience for future employees.

Customer journey mapping is a technique to help visualize the steps, process, or journey that someone goes through to accomplish a task or end goal, in order to help identify pain points and customer needs (Kaplan, 2016). Taking the employee onboarding approach, DESIGNING CX (n.d.) describes employee experience journey mapping (EXJM) as a way to quickly determine challenges employees are facing, and offer solutions in innovative ways to eliminate, fix, or help solve those challenges, with the goal of improving performance and engagement of employees. Using journey mapping, which is traditionally an outward facing user experience design technique, and focusing inward on the experience of new employees, libraries can improve onboarding practices in meaningful ways that increase the satisfaction of new employees and therefore overall retention of the organization.

Onboarding in libraries

Onboarding is the period between when an employee is offered a position, and when they are a fully functional employee contributing to the organization (Graybill, Carpenter, Offord, Piorun, & Shaffer, 2013). The ACRL describes onboarding as the second of four parts of the employee lifecycle including advertising and recruiting, onboarding, managing, and transitioning (Graybill et al., 2013, p. 201). It can also be described as “the direct bridge between the promise of new employee talent and the attainment of actual productivity” (Snell, 2006, p. 32). Snell (2006) goes on to explain that onboarding experiences can vary widely, which probably does not come as a surprise, and that by not having a comprehensive onboarding process organizations risk

Jacqueline Frank

[linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank)



losing productivity and interest of their employees. Keisling & Laning (2017) note that the initial period after being hired is an important time for establishing oneself as a professional, creating a professional identity within the organization, fostering engagement, and determining overall success of the employee.

Onboarding is important in libraries, and other organizations, because it has been linked to increased retention of employees, and greater employee satisfaction (Hall-Ellis, 2014; Snell, 2006). In addition, a well-executed onboarding process can reduce costs and speed up the time it takes the new employee to be productive (Snell, 2006). Hall-Ellis (2014) notes that developing an onboarding program “contributes to the organization's positive culture” (p. 138) and that it is increasingly important due to a perceived sense of younger workers feeling less loyalty s to their companies. Overall, developing a comprehensive onboarding practice is an essential step to foster a cohesive, productive, and engaged workforce in the library.

Onboarding Best Practices

The ACRL published some best practices for onboarding in academic libraries after looking at a variety of onboarding practices in libraries and identifying positive, commonalities among the most successful processes, which include components of socialization, policies, safety, communication, mentoring, significant program length, checklists throughout, as well as any other components each institution feels is important to them. (Graybill et al., 2013, p. 212). Keisling & Laning (2017) also make recommendations that libraries identify learning outcomes for the onboarding period, use guided and self-guided methods for achieving those learning outcomes, focus on relationships, expectations, and tools to be successful, facilitate social and professional interaction among colleagues outside of the employee's workspace, be candid and provide opportunities to hear different opinions, explain the strengths that led to their selection as a new employee, and bring them in on high visibility projects (p. 391-392).

Traditional librarian positions are changing as well, and onboarding practices should reflect and support those changes as they are happening. Williams (2009) argues that librarians are balancing traditional roles with expanded roles at the same time, which include ten primary areas of campus engagement, collection development, teaching and learning, scholarly communication, e-scholarship and digital tools, reference, outreach, fundraising, event planning, and leadership (p. 4-5). These changing roles can be supported with onboarding practices, and Cable, Gino & Staats (2013) recommend “encouraging newcomers to express their unique perspectives and strengths on the job from the very beginning and inviting them to frame their work as a platform for doing what they do best” (p. 24). They recommend doing this with four

Jacqueline Frank

[linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank)



steps of the onboarding process including not following traditional onboarding models, identifying the employee's authentic strengths, introducing new employees to others in the organization, and asking the new employee how they can apply their authentic strengths to their new position (p. 26-17). Similarly, Farkas (2016) explains how librarians new to a job can come with many exciting new ideas, and that libraries should take advantage of that energy and enthusiasm, and that mentoring through the onboarding process can be an effective strategy for doing this.

Assessing onboarding programs with Journey Mapping

With many examples and best practices available to libraries, an onboarding program doesn't have to be started from scratch. However, implementing an onboarding program is just the first step and does not complete the process alone. The program should be assessed for effectiveness, and improvements sought out for the next employee who goes through onboarding. As Oakleaf (2010) writes "through assessment, librarians can gain the hard data they need to make decisions about what purposes they can meet and how well they can meet them" (p. 31) which can just as easily be applied to the onboarding process. Libraries need to know what needs they are meeting of new employees, and how well they are meeting them, so that they can make improvements as necessary. Using the user experience design research method of journey mapping can be an effective method of assessing a new employee onboarding program from the perspective of the new employee, and can help the library gain valuable insight into the experience of new hires in the organization. That insight, and identifying pain points, can then be used to make improvements to the onboarding process that have significant impact on the experience of the next new employee, leading to increased retention and satisfaction of employees overtime.

Journey Mapping as a UX technique

Journey mapping is method of participatory design and user experience research. The term user experience (UX) has been adopted to mean "a holistic approach to describe designing the ideal customer experience" (Fox & Doshi, 2011, p. 11).

Participatory design is

an approach to building spaces, services, and tools where the people who will use those things participate centrally in coming up with concepts and then designing the actual products...In the case of academic libraries, the challenge is to create a way for faculty members, university staff, undergraduates, and graduate students to contribute their specialized knowledge to the process (Council on Library and Information Resources, 2014, p. 1-2).

Jacqueline Frank

[linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank)



Journey mapping is one way in which academic libraries can bring that perspective of their faculty librarians and staff into the design process for the design of the onboarding program, so that the overall experience is positive from the perspective of the employee.

Journey mapping can help visualize the experience of someone else to better understand that experience, and optimize it, according to authors Marquez, Downey & Clement (2015) The authors go on to write “once we see the library as a service, and thus as a series of experiences, the task becomes making those experiences—from the user’s perspective—enjoyable and memorable” (p. 138). In employee experience journey mapping, the employee is the user, and libraries can gain learn from their perspectives. Journey mapping as a technique is helpful in determining satisfaction of the user, changes in their needs, and other details in each phase of the user’s experience (Howard, 2014).

Creating a Customer Journey Map

Customer journey mapping is a technique to help visualize the steps, process, or journey that someone goes through to accomplish a task or end goal, in order to help identify pain points and customer needs (Kaplan, 2016). There are three main sections of a customer journey map, including the expected journey made up of touchpoints and prompts with the user, the stages of the journey outlining the steps the user takes to complete their goal, and the actual journey representing when users interact with the expected touchpoints. The first step in creating a journey map is identifying the process that will be mapped, and determining the expected journey that the researchers think the user will take to complete the goal. Next, the user is asked to complete a goal, and either document all steps, or the user is observed to witness all steps taken. Researchers may need to ask for more detail on individual steps that users gloss over in descriptions, and digging deeper can lead to more insight on user motivations. The information gained from users completing the goal then becomes the actual journey, and is visualized in some way appropriate to the project, utilizing the general outline and sections described above. Pain points of the user are then identified in the process so that researchers can address those by offering solutions that accommodate different preferences of users. (Marquez, Downey & Clement, 2015).

An example of a customer journey map is shown in Figure 1 below. This example from Sukpisan (2014) shows the distinct parts of a journey map well. The first, top horizontal section shows the four main steps or stages a user is expected to go through in their journey as a customer. Then, the next horizontal section shows a visualization

Jacqueline Frank

[linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank)



of the customer's actual journey that they experience and report back to the company, which is aligned vertically with the expected stages of the journey to gain insight into which stages might need attention or improvement. Below, in the last two horizontal sections, are more details that are pertinent to understand the customer's journey, including what specific interactions the customer had with select services, and what the company is doing behind the scenes that the customer does not see, and that still impacts how the services are delivered and therefore the experience of the customer.

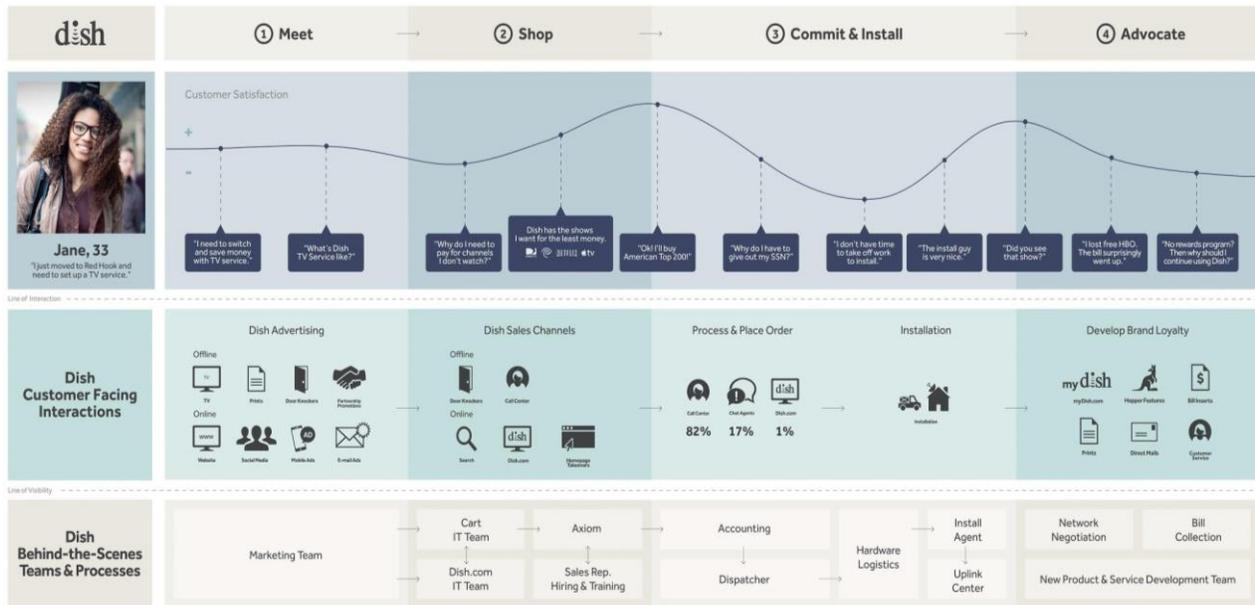


Figure 1: Dish Customer Journey Map (Sukpisan, 2014)

Customer journey maps are usually framed around a specific task or goal that the user is being asked to accomplish. However, journey maps may also be used to outline a process or abstract set of tasks, such as how a student starts formulating their research argument on a given topic. The goal of this type of journey mapping is to gain insight into the thought process of users, going beyond their behaviors and looking at how they approach a problem. Either way, whether looking at a specific task, or an abstract process, customer journey mapping is very useful in understanding the experience of the user along the path that they actually take (Marquez, Downey & Clement, 2015).

Jacqueline Frank
[linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank)



Employee Experience Journey Mapping

DESIGNING CX (n.d.) describes employee experience journey mapping (EXJM) as a way to quickly determine challenges employees are facing, and offer solutions in innovative ways to eliminate, fix, or help solve those challenges, with the goal of improving performance and engagement of employees. Employee experience journey mapping positions the new employee as the user, to map the experience of being hired and onboarded at an organization. When new employees are hired, they interact with new people, technologies, and learn new processes which all shape the experience and therefore the attitudes of the new employee, and ultimately their behaviors, motivations, and work product. Journey mapping a new employee's experiences can be effective at determining patterns and potential areas needing improvement (Doherty, 2014).

When starting a research project to create employee experience journey maps, the user is known because it will be the new employee, but first it must also be determined who will be conducting the research, and it's been suggested to use a mix of people with varying levels of authority ("What is Employee Journey Mapping" 2015). Next, the expected journey can be determined in a number of different ways. This can be done by either examining concrete training schedules, checklists or meetings with specific people, etc., or by asking the employee about their expectations of the onboarding process, and comparing their actual journey to their expressed expected journey. Then the bulk of the work comes in capturing the experience of the new employee. This process can also be done in various ways, but often includes a series of interviews in which the new employee is asked to describe their experiences. Using sticky notes, the researcher and new employee write down individual events or experiences that happened, and attitudes about how those experiences went. During the interviews, clarifying questions can be asked, and more detail can be gleaned about specific experiences if necessary. The sticky notes are then evaluated for positive and negative attitudes, and color coded to visually illustrate emotional highs and lows during the journey. After the journey is captured, the researcher focuses in on moments that matter, specifically low points or 'pain points' that need to be addressed to improve the experience of future employees (DESIGNING CX, n.d.).

While the insight and knowledge gained from journey mapping can be invaluable, it can also be very time consuming, which should be noted (Marquez, Downey & Clement, 2015). However, journey mapping has other benefits that should be considered beyond just learning about the actual experience of the user. Journey mapping can also be used as a conversation starter across departments in an organization, because users often do not just interact with one department in a silo

Jacqueline Frank

[linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank)



(Marquez, Downey & Clement, 2015). This is also true in employee experience journey mapping, as employees do not just interact with people within their own department, but often interact with human resources, administration, technology and systems departments, and public services, regardless of the position being hired for. Since a journey map includes experiences across departments, it can be used as a tool to start discussing interconnections, and how to work together on improving and delivering the best services to patrons and internal employees alike (Marquez, Downey & Clement, 2015).

Conclusion

In recent years, libraries have started turning toward techniques that capture the user experience, and using that insight to help make decisions and guide our future. Journey mapping is a powerful UX design research technique that compares an expected journey, to the actual journey experienced by the user. Employee experience journey mapping focuses the lens inward on the organization and its internal onboarding practices, and how those are ultimately experienced by a new employee as the user. The method can be used to assess the effectiveness of current onboarding practices, and through the process highlights pain points of the new employee so that those can be addressed with innovative solutions with the goal of improving the experience for the next new employee, and the onboarding program as a whole. The method can also be used to start a conversation across departments within an organization, about where they overlap and how they can work together to create an overall positive experience for employees as well as patrons. Improving the onboarding experience of new employees in libraries is highly important, as research shows that comprehensive onboarding programs which are viewed positively by employees lead to increased retention, employee satisfaction and engagement, and reduce the time it takes for new employees to become productive members of the organization (Hall-Ellis, 2014; Snell, 2006). Ultimately, having an engaged workforce leads to better services for patrons, and can also lead to a more positive work environment for both staff and library patrons alike, and help generate positive perceptions of the library within the community.

Jacqueline Frank

[linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank)



References

- Cable, D. M., Gino, F., & Staats, B. R. (2013). Reinventing employee onboarding. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 54(3), 23.
- Council on Library and Information Resources. (2014). *Participatory design in academic libraries: methods, findings, and implementations*. Washington, D.C.: CLIR.
- DESIGNING CX (n.d.). The CX Journey Mapping Blog. Retrieved April 16, 2017, from <http://designingcx.com/cxjmblog/>
- Doherty, R. (2014). An Employee Centric Approach To HR: Employee Experience Journey Mapping (EXJM). Retrieved April 16, 2017, from <https://blogs.oracle.com/oraclehcm/an-employee-centric-approach-to-hr%3A-employee-experience-journey-mapping-exjm>
- Farkas, M. (2016). From both sides now. *American Libraries*, 47(6), 76.
- Fox, R. & Doshi, A. (2011). *SPEC Kit 322: library user experience*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries.
- Graybill, J. O., Taesil Hudson Carpenter, M., Offord Jr, J., Piorun, M., & Shaffer, G. (2013). Employee onboarding: identification of best practices in ACRL libraries. *Library Management*, 34(3), 200-218.
- Howard, T. (2014). Journey mapping: A brief overview. *Communication Design Quarterly Review*, 2(3), 10-13.
- Kaplan, K. (2016). When and How to Create Customer Journey Maps. Retrieved April 16, 2017, from <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/customer-journey-mapping/>
- Keisling, B., & Laning, M. (2016). We Are Happy To Be Here: The Onboarding Experience in Academic Libraries. *Journal of Library Administration*, 56(4), 381-394.
- Marquez, J. J., Downey, A., & Clement, R. (2015). Walking a Mile in the User's Shoes: Customer Journey Mapping as a Method to Understanding the User Experience. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, 20(3-4), 135-150
- Oakleaf, M. (2010). *The value of academic libraries: A comprehensive research review and report*. Association of College & Research Libraries.
- Snell, A. (2006). Researching onboarding best practice: Using research to connect onboarding processes with employee satisfaction. *Strategic HR Review*, 5(6), 32-35.
- Sukpisan, K. (2014). Dish Customer Journey Map. Retrieved April 20, 2017, from <http://www.kate-sukpisan.com/?portfolio=dish-customer-journey-map-3>
- What is Employee Journey Mapping. (2015). Retrieved April 16, 2017, from <http://www.thinkdesignmanage.com/employee-journey-mapping>
- Williams, K. (2009). A framework for articulating new library roles. *Research Library Issues: A Bimonthly Report from ARL, CNI, and SPARC*, 265, 3-8.

Jacqueline Frank

[linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquelinelfrank)

