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## Interview to the Double: Uncovering Student Motivations in the Library

Students reflect on both the conscious and unconscious choices they make in the library, informing service and resource design.

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### NUTRITION INFORMATION

Students make choices every time they enter the library: what to bring, where to sit, who to talk to, and more. The Interview to the Double method is a semi-structured interview technique that asks library users to imagine they have a double who will replace them in the library the next day. They are asked to provide all the instructions needed to ensure their “double” is not unmasked (Nicolini, 2009). This approach allows researchers to uncover behavioral and motivational details of library use that might not be elicited from traditional surveys or user observations. Unearthing these tacit motivations provides a deeper understanding how students use the library’s services and resources and identifies possible areas for improvement.

### DIETARY STANDARDS

*ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* (2011) Principle 1, Indicator 1.5; Principle 4, Indicator 4.4; Principle 5, Indicator 5.4; Principle 9, Indicator 9.3

### COOKING TIME

20–60 minutes per interview, depending on the number of follow-up questions asked

of students; 1–3 hours per interview to transcribe; 1–2 hours per interview to analyze transcript

### COOKING TECHNIQUE

One-on-one semi-structured interviews

### INGREDIENTS

- Advertising materials
- Participants (variable depending on population size, time available)
- Question sheet
- Audio recorder
- Quiet space in which to conduct interview
- Qualitative research analysis software
- \$20 participation incentive (to taste)
- Consent form (to taste)
- Research Ethics Board approval (to taste)

### PREPARATION

Obtain approval from your institutional research ethics board, if necessary.

Distribute advertising materials to the group you’re trying to reach; this may include posters, email, text messages, or social media messages.

Print the consent form (if necessary) and questions.

Ensure the audio recorder is in working order.

### THE ASSESSMENT

1. Meet your interviewee in a quiet, private space, suitable for obtaining a good audio recording.
2. Introduce yourself and the purpose of the interview. Begin each interview in this way:

“An actor is going to take your place next time you go to use the library. They’ll do whatever you normally do when you’re in the library and will even look like you. Everyone will think it’s you in the library and not someone else.

“Walk me through a typical time that you spend in the library so that I can direct the actor playing you accurately. I’ll ask you questions about what you think the actor will experience, the things you do, and how you think the actor should behave. Let’s begin outside the library doors, as you come in.”

3. As the interviewee walks you through a typical time in the library, ask supplementary questions (e.g., Why do you like to study there? What do you bring with you? How do you usually feel

in the library?). These can flow naturally from the interviewee's responses.

4. Thank the interviewee and provide them with any participation incentive you may be offering.
5. Transcribe, analyze, and report the results. Make improvements based on the findings.

### ALLERGY WARNINGS

Interview to the Double can be used as a rigorous method in a research study as described in this recipe, or more haphazardly as an assessment tool. If you choose to transcribe and thoroughly analyze the results, be aware that this takes significant time. You may wish to hire a sous-chef to undertake transcription to save librarian time.

### CHEF'S NOTE

One of the follow-up questions asked of all interviewee was, "Tell us about a memorable time in the library. It might have been something involving you or you might have seen something, but it's stuck with you." Frequently, interviewees talked about the value they placed on library resources and spaces. This question elicited stories and quotes that helped illustrate trends and provided valuable anecdotes about library use.

Although we used the Interview to the Double method for exploring space and information practices, it is a highly adaptable technique that could be used for a variety of assessment activities within library and information settings.

### REFERENCES

Nicolini, Davide. "Articulating Practice Through the Interview to the Double." *Management Learning*, 40(2) (2009): 195–212.