Understanding Academics and the Student Learning Journey

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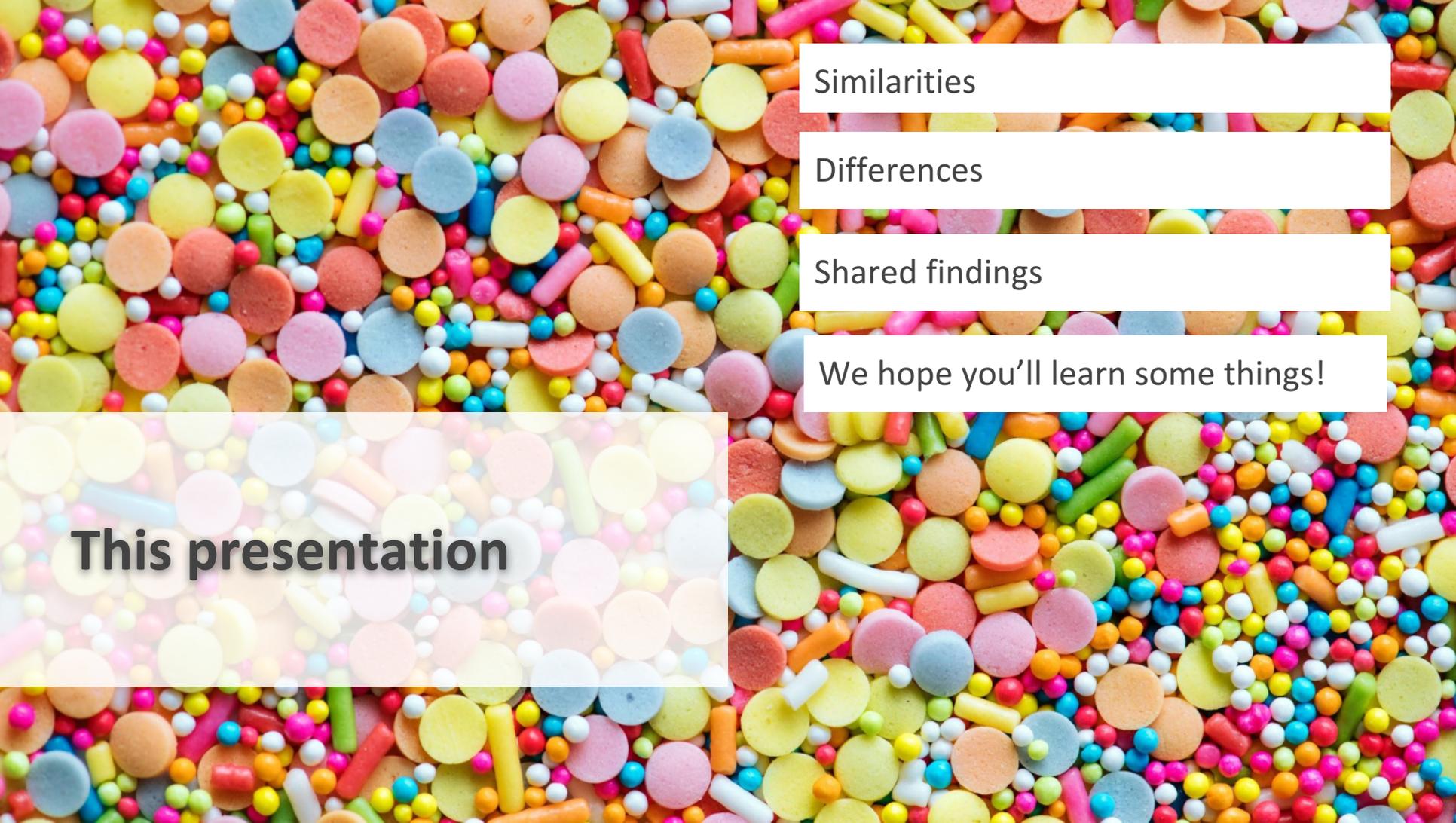
Similarities

Differences

Shared findings

We hope you'll learn some things!

This presentation

Aims - UA

- to gain a much better understanding of how academics at York approach their research and teaching activities;

- to consider how Library services currently facilitate and support those activities;

- to integrate the 'academic voice' into future service planning and development of support for academics, ensuring that the Library continues to engage departments in innovative ways that respond to both current and future needs.

Aims – SLJ

- to arrive at insights related to student experiences, approaches, needs and activity

- to develop a knowledge and an understanding of the Cambridge student experience that can be used to inform working practices on the part of Cambridge University Libraries

- to ensure that Cambridge library services continue to be based in and tailored to the changing and developing needs of their users

1. Methodology

York

142 academics interviewed

Cognitive maps

Semi-structured interviews

Transcribing

Coding NVivo

Themed analysis

Ithaka survey results

Cambridge

3-week digital diary study with 34 student participants

Semi-structured interviews

Card sorting (re-purposed!)

Ad-hoc interviews, questionnaires, comment cards, feedback walls

Coding NVivo

Themed analysis

2. Recruitment

"Who **listens** to the **needs of academics**?" Humanities Academic

Student Learning Journey project
 - Requests from participants for diary study data exports
 - No incentive offered for *ad-hoc* interviews but students often commented positively on how they had been forced to reflect on their approaches and experiences

3. Time pressures - UA

"REF, REF, REF"
Humanities Academic

"It is very important to say that **creativity is the hardest part** because as an academic you get **almost no time to think**"
Science Academic

"I mean the **pressure**, right now it just **feels relentless**. I did a module that was completely new for the first time but that was sort of the easy part really...In this department we do a lot of **pastoral supervision** and that has a paper trail involved and each time you meet with a student you have forms...we have to take on a minimum of 6 or 7 and I took on more that I was supposed to this year...And then there's all the **admin work** that people get asked to do in the department. And then **you're meant to have your research 'persona' carrying on**, you can't just let it go and that involves different things. It involves going to conferences and presenting papers, and the double thing of **publishing and bringing in funding and both of those things are pretty difficult even if you're a highly skilled person**" Science Academic

3. Time pressures - SLJ

"**I had to manage my time much better** in my third year as you're doing three papers at once. [I achieved this by] planning every week ahead and dedicating days to reading." (recently graduated undergraduate History student)

"This year I'm deliberately doing less work in term and **leaving more for the holidays**." (4th year undergraduate Natural Sciences student)

"**You need to have the time, which is in short supply** in this course, especially because I am working one day a week in general practice, so even that self-study time which other people get for me is a day, a full day, seeing patients, which generates its own admin and is typically a long day." (MPhil Public Health student)

4. Motivations - UA

"...the kind of conversations I'll have, especially with three seminars, will actually be really helpful...I found that days after I do **seminars in the morning**, I often **do much more writing that afternoon even though it's often unrelated**." Social Sciences researcher

"I don't think I'm a researcher who is forced to do teaching, I don't think of myself as a teacher who fits in a bit of research. I think they're **pretty equally important** to me and I **enjoy them both**, and they **feed off each other** in a way...The idea of just being a researcher would send me round the bend and the idea of just teaching would send me round the bend. **I like being an academic.** I like the public, sociable side and I like then going away and shutting the door and getting on with my work." Humanities Academic

4. Motivations - SLJ

"**I see this programme in general as being entirely pragmatic**. That's really why I'm here – to take as many skills as I possibly can out of it." (MPhil Public Health student)

"The course means that we're always doing something different [...] We're working with people in different areas of industry. [...] What we're doing in the course is very like what we'd be doing working in companies." (MPhil Engineering student)

5. Collaboration - UA

"There's **a lot of collaboration** but **less explicit co-authorship**." Humanities Researcher

"**Grants make research** a much **more sociable business**!" Humanities Researcher

"You don't want someone who is doing exactly what you're doing. What you want is **complementary but non-competing** [research]" (Science Researcher

"There's pretty much **no project I do that isn't collaborative**. There's **almost nothing I sit and do on my own**." Science Academic

5. Collaboration - SLJ

"We travel as a pack"

(MPhil Conservation Leadership student)

"We often work together and ask each other about the questions we're working on. We meet up in the Faculty building between lectures." (1st year undergraduate Economics student)

6. Student-researcher conflict - UA

"I don't really know how to describe it. It's kind of like we've kind of given them a **drug or something** and they are **never going to go back now to looking at bookshelves…Maybe if I was stricter** or something but **what's the point in that?** If I did that they just wouldn't come to the seminar and then **it's just a losing battle**…if we can't teach them to, that's such a skill, **one of the best things about a** [named Humanities] **degree is to know nothing about a subject** and then have a **grooved way of approaching the material** which includes **asking the right questions, looking in the right places, being able to form a picture then analysing it and writing about it** and **that's what we teach them.** So **if they don't learn to use the Library** then they are just **not learning to do a big section of that."** Humanities academic
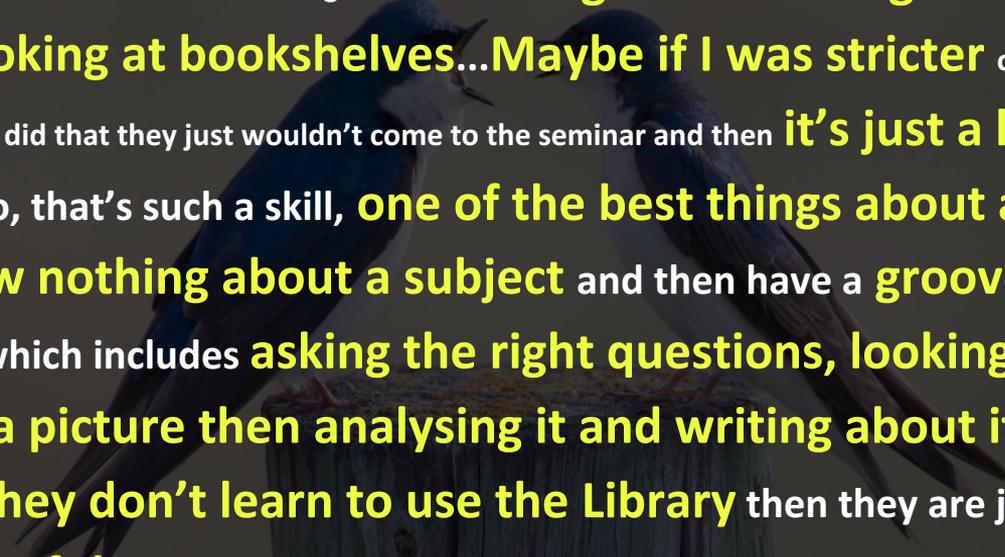
6. Student-researcher conflict - SLJ

"My current, sort of, main goal, is to become a good researcher and to go into academia, at least to try it out. […] **Becoming a good researcher, a good scientist, is fairly far from getting good results in exams.** There is a little bit of overlap between the two worlds, but it's not really that much. But, at the same time, to keep continuing, and going to […] higher education, you do need those results." (2nd year undergraduate Natural Sciences student)

For PhD-relevant research skills, the main component developing those is the project next year […] And that's a good taste for working in a lab environment, because it's hopefully - you can choose the project you work on, directly relevant to what you might go and do a PhD in." (3rd year undergraduate Natural Sciences student)

7. Student dissertation - UA

"All the time I'm **melding my research and teaching**, that's why I have **so much time compared to other academics**! It is so **collaborative and content rich** that I am **constantly learning from my students**" Humanities Academic

7. Student dissertation - SLJ
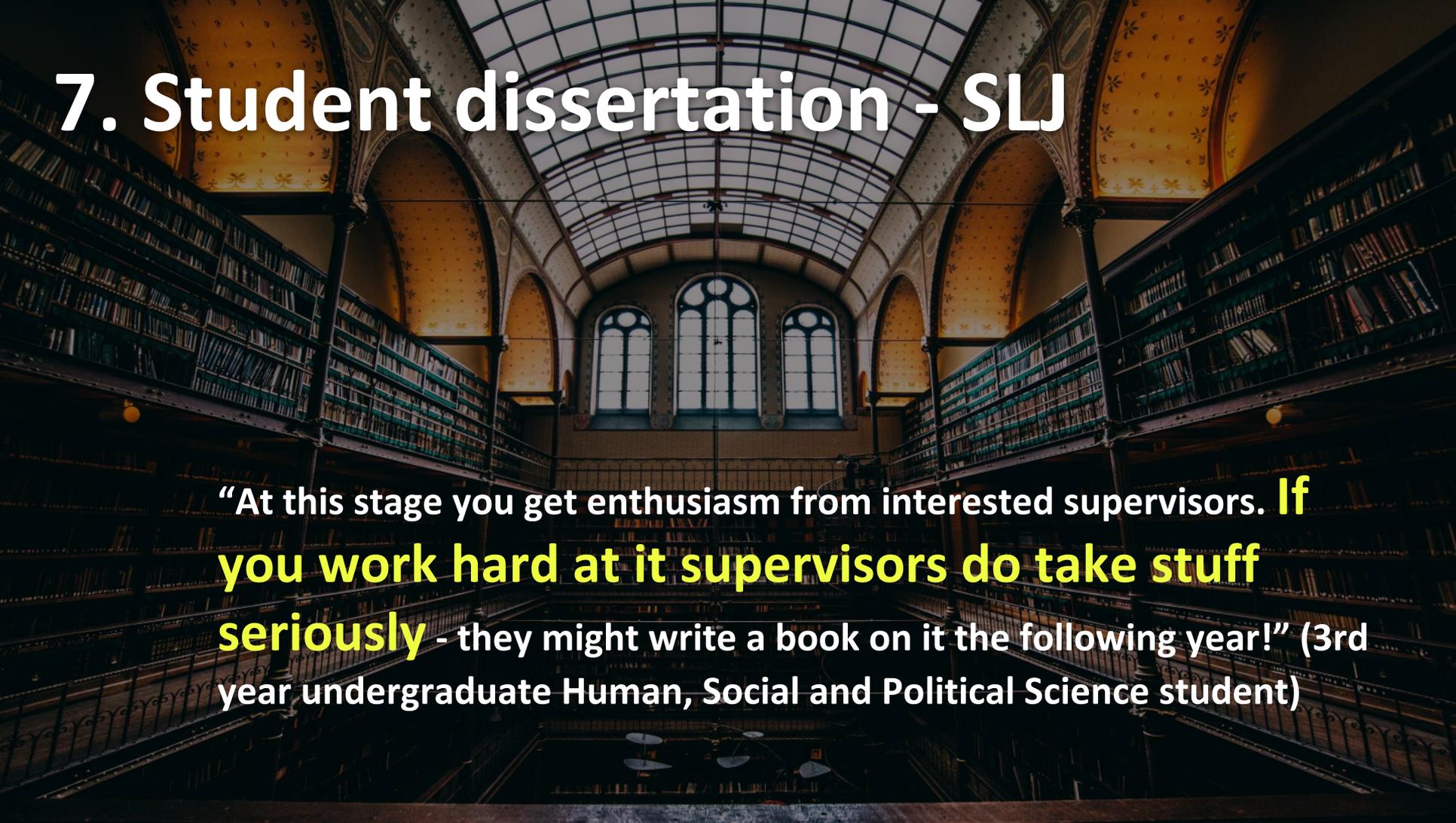
"At this stage you get enthusiasm from interested supervisors. **If you work hard at it supervisors do take stuff seriously** - they might write a book on it the following year!" (3rd year undergraduate Human, Social and Political Science student)

8. Reading / views of students - UA
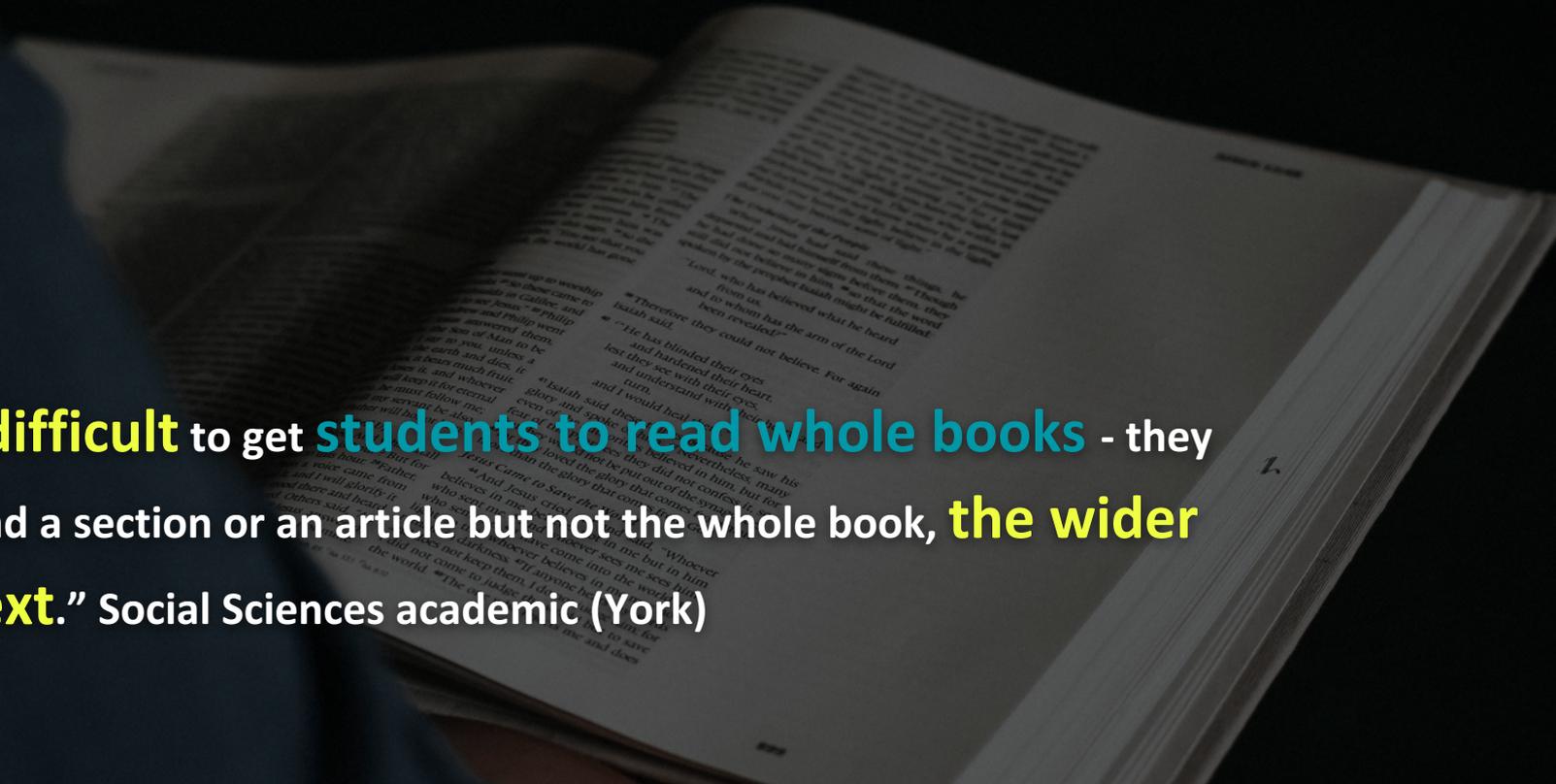
"Very **difficult** to get **students to read whole books** - they just read a section or an article but not the whole book, **the wider context**." Social Sciences academic (York)

8. Reading / views of students - SLJ

"I'm also learning Greek, so I have to kind of fit that in - we have a test every Monday, sometimes there's a list of 30 odd words, sometimes it's grammar that we're memorising. So **I kind of have to fit that in between my reading**." (1st year undergraduate Theology student)

"**Stay on top from the very beginning on.** If you do that it's all going to be fine, if you don't it will be a lot of trouble catching up." (3rd year undergraduate Mathematics student)

9. Space - UA

"I **don't** tend to **work in the library** very much, often because it's quite **full,** whereas **I do in** the **vacation,** I quite **like working in libraries** as **nobody can bother me.** At **my desk** there are **always emails pinging in**."
Humanities Academic

"I think it's amazing and I **sometimes come here** just to work, to **get away from the department.** At the moment it's a bit full so I have been over to the Library in town instead."
Social Science Academic

9. Space - SLJ

"[I'm] doing an ambulance shift. **Best time to learn (/remind myself of something) is when I see a patient with a problem!** That's why I like having apps to get information quickly." (4th year Graduate Medicine student)

"[I'm] listening to a podcast on situation ethics, looking for analytic and evaluative questions. Mostly completed. **Couldn't make notes while driving. Had to take quick notes while picking someone up from the station**. Perhaps if I had telephoned myself I could have left a message (hands free) and then taken notes." (PGCE student)

Benefits

York

- Development Library strategy
- User requirements for our Reading List software
- 10 quick wins
- Customer Insight (and CSE accreditation)
- Analysis of what it means to be an academic at York (published journal article NRAL)
- Analysis of key themes - space, scholarship and skills (published in Liber Quarterly)
- Staff skills - UX
- New relationships with academics

Cambridge

- Evidence base to inform strategic planning
- Insights to feed in to work conducted by CILN (Cambridge Information Literacy Network)
- 10 concepts for library service design
- In-depth, open report on the Cambridge student experience
- Continued and reinforced good relationships with Cambridge University Students Union
- Highly positive reception from Cambridge education leads

Questions?

futurelib.wordpress.com

Futurelib

Imagining the future of library
services at University of Cambridge.

- **Full project report**

- **Executive summary**

- **Shorthand web story**

libinnovation.blogspot.co.uk

Lib-Innovation
creativity + innovation in the library, university of york

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13614533.2018.1466716
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