

Editorial

Ethnography

What makes a population or group tick; how do we reach them? I came across two articles on homeless women in Chicago by T.J. Luhrmann (2008, 2010), an anthropologist from Stanford. Luhrmann's research focuses on why some homeless women refuse housing. One way to get off the streets is to agree to a psychological examination. Many homeless women refuse even though they exhibit behaviors associated with mental illness. Survival on the streets depends upon the perception of not being "crazy." Luhrmann noticed that these women negotiate two worlds. On the streets, they appear fierce and aggressive to minimize their vulnerability. In the shelter, they are required to obey rules and demonstrate compliance. For some who end up in housing, the many regulations present barriers. Luhrmann discovered that "housing first" client-driven housing with no strings or diagnosis attached works best. This approach emphasizes the client's perspective. The results show that these women stay in housing longer, and receive treatment. The cost is the same as traditional methods.

Key points here are twofold: listen to the client's perspective, and observe participants. In other words, become an ethnographer. The University of Rochester Library hired an ethnographic anthropologist in 2006 to renovate the library to best meet students' needs. In a revised edition, the editors build upon the results of the first study. Armed with surveys, interviews, photographs and lots of data, the researchers analyzed the components that make up a good term paper, how students work and use tools to create those papers, and ways the library contributes. Foremost, they wanted to see the library from students' perspectives.

While hiring anthropologists may not be feasible,

there are instruments at our disposal. Embedding librarians allows close relationships to develop. And frankly, corporate/special libraries have always been embedded within their institutions. Other tools include surveys, focus groups, and let's face it, just talking to people. The authors of the two articles in this issue describe how they reached their primary users.

Foster, N.F., ed. (2013). *Studying students: A second look*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Luhrmann, T.M. (Winter 2010). Down and out in Chicago. *Raritan*, 140-166.

Luhrmann, T.M. (2008). 'The street will drive you crazy:' why homeless psychotic women in the institutional circuit in the United States often say no to offers of help. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 15: 15-20.

If you are interested in contributing book reviews, please contact Kim (kimberly-bloedel@uiowa.edu).

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Education Libraries is looking for an editor starting in 2015. Please contact Maya Kucij, maya.kucij@mcgill.ca, for more information.

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