

My internship by the EPFL's LaSUR

Or how to have fun even if you are not allowed to work on your beloved project.



Foreword

I was supposed to take part in an exciting research about the social segregation induced by urban planning (a project called "Diff_Urb" and led by the Laboratory of Urban Sociology at EPFL– see my research proposal [here](#)) but as you are going to notice, it absolutely did not get that way.

Indeed, due to the lack of staff responsible for this project in the lab when I arrived (yes, it was the middle of the summer holidays!), I was put on another project that kept me going until the end of my internship.

Introduction

This project, called the "Cahiers du LaSUR" serve an interesting cause which is to get up-to-date science accessible to people.

The aim here is to give life to the "grey literature" (a blind spot which is normally the final destination for all scientists' working papers) by taking the risk of publishing in progress works whose incompleteness offers a scientific voice that is actually and ultimately not hampered in its choice of themes and words.

In other words, the Cahiers du LaSUR compile a diverse and varied sample of scientific productions such as working papers, study reports, conference proceedings, preparatory papers, works combining texts and images, research project progress, introductory notes, essay drafts, and even abandoned concepts that fill the pages of the researchers' notebook.

In order to be accessible to all who are a bit curious about urban sociology and the laboratory's activities, these Cahiers are available online on the LaSUR website ([here](#)) as well as in physical copies.

My job was therefore going to be to collect the work of researchers and to compose and publish the related Cahiers.

Getting to grips with the file

This project was already running for a certain number of years within the laboratory, but it was struggling to find a stable graphic line and process. As a basis, I was given a very rough InDesign template with several (and often incomplete) versions for each part of the Cahiers. Apart from the fact that the information was scattered and not always consistent, the problem was that I had no access to this software as an intern (this task was carried out by some lab PHD student before I arrive). So, in order to obtain a base that would be reusable by future interns, I set about recreating the layout completely in Word (an easier-to-use and more widely known program).

However, this stage was not an easy one as compatibility between the two programs was not always up to scratch and I experienced several failures.

Negotiating and finding solutions

While redesigning the Cahiers du LaSUR's layout, I also got in touch with the EPFL's impression center (REPRO) to make sure what I was doing was right and usable as a template for the Cahiers' production and publication. This, of course, was not the case, as the Cahiers still had the same layout since their creation (back in 2001) and the EPFL's rules in matter of graphic design had evolved.

The dilemma here was to develop a new layout that met EPFL's new criteria without destroying the established graphic line of the Cahiers du LaSUR. This was for sure going to be a challenge as change was inevitable.

However, thanks to the help of the REPRO team, I managed to redesign the cover of the Cahiers and develop a graphic line that was reconciling the new requirements of EPFL with the previous pattern of the Cahiers du LaSUR. These modifications finally resulted in some minor cover adjustment and adaptations and in some impressum corrections as well as a new content template.

Working hard

I now had good basis to make the Cahiers. It was time to seek out the information I needed from researcher and ask them about their latest analyses and discoveries.

The main task here was to make sure that the documents I received do fit into the layout I previously drew up, which of course was not always the case.

It took me a lot of time to get through the different adjustments needed and come through with a coherent and usable pdf document.

Seeing me work on this project, some researchers also take the opportunity to come to me to make new Cahiers. I finally had to work five Cahiers out instead of the two originally planned.

Publication and outcomes

Once I had been able to compose the final pdf for each Cahier, I had to get my work published.

It was time to test the interoperability between my documents and the EPFL printing system. To my great relief, the transmission of the files went smoothly and the REPRO team was happy to have a solid, reliable base from which to work. This however was certainly no coincidence, as I had made a point of going back and forth with the REPRO team many times during the templates design phase to ensure their smooth integration into the printing process.

After their printing, I had to control the delivered Cahiers, distribute them to the concerned people and give an update to the laboratory's library.

For the digital version of the Cahiers, which should be posted on EPFL's website I also had to write a short introductory text inspired by the abstract of each report to accompany the pdf. It was a good exercise in synthesizing and popularizing a scientific essay.

Transmission of the file

Finally, as my internship was slowly coming to an end, I had to hand over the dossier of the Cahiers du LaSUR. The difficulty here was that I did not know who was going to keep this project going and I therefore could not explain it out loud to him/her. So, the solution was to draw up an exhaustive and precise specification. Taking into account the fact that the person who was going to pursue the publishing of the Cahiers could be any lab newcomer and that I will no longer be part of the laboratory, this dossier had to be absolutely complete and contain all the tools and indications needed to enable someone to pursue the publishing of the Cahiers without me being reachable.

In addition to the templates I created, this resulted in an exhaustive guide to the actions to be taken, their explanation and how to carry them out to ensure the coherence and lasting of the Cahiers du LaSUR.

I also took care to leave a clean and clear digital workspace to facilitate the working process comprehension for the next user.

Conclusion/experiences

I will not hide the fact that I was really disappointed that I could not take part into deep and rough research, particularly regarding the possibility I should have had to join the Diff_Urb project, a project I was really in love with and I would have been really proud to be part of. Despite that, I enjoyed the great opportunity this internship has been for me to discover the world of research and the possibility the Cahiers du LaSUR gave me to explore the current lab's research and discoveries. Moreover, this dive into a world of which I was totally unaware offered me incredible opportunities and opened doors that I am now delighted and can not wait to be able to discover.

I would like to end this report by saying that I can't thank the people at LaSUR enough for the welcome they gave me and the time they kindly devoted to me. It has been a pleasure for me to share this summer with each one of them and learn from their experiences.