Usability Test: Duke University Libraries Staff Directory

Recommendations

1. Improve the functionality of the “Search by name...” bar. Currently, if a user clicks on a name that appears below the bar while they are typing, this does not initiate the search, and an additional click on the magnifying glass is required. Make it possible to initiate the search via a click on the provided name.

2. Add an instant search feature like the one found on the Subject Specialists page (the “Filter by Subject or Name” bar) to the Departments page that filters by department or name.

3. Organize the divisions on the Departments page alphabetically by division name. Arrange the boxes in one column the full width of the page, rather than two, half-width columns.

4. Change the title of Executive Group to one that is more accessible to all users. Potential alternatives include: Administrative Leadership or Library Leadership.

5. Expand the search function for the Directory to be “Search by name, department, or subject...” and maintain the predictive search function.

6. Include an organizational tree chart PDF as a link at the top of the Departments page, under the “Search by name...” bar. Non-staff users were unclear what to look for when tasked with identifying the “organizational structure”. The addition of a visual aid would assist those in identifying and interpreting the DUL organizational structure.

7. Add email addresses to the information listed underneath staff photographs the All Staff A-Z page and on each individual Department page. For example, this page should include email addresses under staff photos.

\[For \ more \ information, \ please \ contact \ emily.daly@duke.edu\]
Background
This study was conducted to test the usability of the updated interface of the Duke University Libraries staff directory. Testing was conducted using the development server prototype. The study was developed and conducted by Samantha Thorne and Eden Andes, with guidance by Emily Daly and Tom Crichlow. On August 5th and 7th, 2019, we recruited seven participants at a table set up in the lobby of Perkins Library at Duke. Each participant was given a voucher for a coffee or snack in exchange for their time. Eden Andes moderated the first three tests on August 5th, and Samantha Thorne moderated the final four tests on August 7th.

Questions we hoped to answer through this study:

1. How easily can a user find a staff member’s email address if the only information someone starts with is a person's name?
2. How easily can a user find the name and office location of a department head if the only information someone starts with is a department name?
3. How easily can a user find out the organizational structure of a division within the libraries?
4. How easily can a user find out the names of DUL's senior management team?
5. What features or design elements did users like and dislike the most about the staff directory?

Participants
Role at Duke:

- 1 undergraduate student
- 3 graduate students
- 3 library staff members

Had participants used the Duke Libraries website before?:

- Yes: 6/7
- No: 1/7

Had participants who have previously used the Duke Libraries website used it to find the contact information or office location for a librarian?

- Yes: 3/6 (all staff members)
- No: 3/6 (all students)

It is notable that students do not use the library website to find information about librarians.
Key findings

1. How easily can a user find a staff member’s email address if the only information someone starts with is a person’s name?

6/7 participants completed this task easily in two steps, and seemed to have a clear idea of what actions they could take to achieve it. A participant’s role as a staff member versus a student did not result in any trends.

4/7 used the letter filters under the main menu bar, then clicked the photo of the person they were seeking. 2/7 used the “Search by name…” search box to type the staff member’s name, then clicked their photo. Both participants who used the search used either the keyboard cursor or the mouse to highlight and select the name once it appeared in the predictive search. They anticipated that this would initiate the search, but found that an additional click on the magnifying glass was required. After completing the search, they clicked the staff member’s photo.

Participant 2 struggled more than others with this task. They were ultimately successful, but took a longer path that was different than any other participant.

These results suggest that finding an email address based on a name can be understood and accomplished by most users in a quick, straightforward way.

2. How easily can a user find the name and office location of a department head if the only information someone starts with is a department name?

Two tasks inform this research goal: finding the librarian for a particular subject area and finding a department head based on their department.

**Finding the librarian for a particular subject area**
For this task, a participant’s role as a staff member versus a student did not result in any trends. 4/7 participants took a very quick, straightforward path: clicked subject specialists, began typing the subject area in the “Filter by Subject or Name” box until the subject they were seeking had been filtered to the top, then clicked the staff member.

3/7 took a more circuitous path, but were still successful. One of these participants attempted to search the subject area in the “Search by name…” box before using the Subject Specialists link. Two participants clicked Departments as their first step and scrolled through this page.
looking for the subject area. When they did not find it, their next step was the Subject Specialists link, where they either used the filter box or scrolled down the page.

**Finding a department head based on their department**

5/7 participants began by clicking the Departments menu link, then scrolled and scanned the page for the department name. Some of these participants found the department faster than others. The three library staff members who were already familiar with the organization of the library found the department without much delay, though still had to carefully look for it. One staff member expressed that if they had not been successful using this method, they would have tried the search bar. The two students scrolled and scanned the page multiple times, and one ultimately used Ctrl-F to search the page for the department name.

2/7 participants ultimately found the department head, but took more circuitous paths. One began by using the “Search by name…” box to search for the department name, then clicked the Executive Group menu link and used Ctrl-F to search this page for the department name. Another participant began by clicking the Executive Group menu link while expressing uncertainty about its meaning. Next, they scrolled through this page, but stated they were unsure which category this department would fall under. Finally, they turned their attention to the left menu, clicking on an incorrect division, then expanding the correct division and finding the department they sought.

Once reaching the department’s page, all participants easily located the department head and clicked on their photo for more information.

The results of these two tasks suggest that the majority of users can find a direct path to this information, but there is some confusion. The Departments page takes time to navigate. Its organization is somewhat unclear and there is no function for focusing the information. Some users wish to use the “Search by name…” box for terms other than personal names. The meaning of and difference between the Departments, Subject Specialists, and Executive Group menus is not obvious to some users.

3. **How easily can a user find out the organizational structure of a division within the libraries?**

For this goal, participants were asked to find how the Information Technology Services (ITS) department fits within the organizational structure of the library. 5/7 found the link to this department. Three scrolled through the Department page before clicking on the ITS department link. One used Ctrl-F to find the term “information” on the Department page, then clicked on the department link. One participant started from the Assessment & User Experience (AUX)
Department page, and located ITS using the left sidebar drop-down menu for Digital Strategies and Technology.

3/5 clicked on Core Services. Two stated that they would contact the director listed under Core Services to find the structure, as they were not confident they understood what was meant by the term “organizational structure”. The third participant simply said that those listed under Core Services were the structure that they were tasked to find. Three participants were able to identify the organizational structure of the division from the Information Technology Services page. Two proceeded to click on the ITS link after identifying the organizational structure from the Departments page. These two participants were also the only two that were confident they had found the correct information.

Participant 2 seemed unfamiliar with the term “organizational structure”. They were confused by the task and unsure of what they were seeking. They attempted many different paths to complete the task, and never completed it.

The results of this task suggest that people aren’t familiar with the term “organizational structure” or what to look for. Those that were confident they found the information were staff members, and admitted to being at an advantage because of that.

4. How easily can a user find out the names of DUL's senior management team?

6/7 participants clicked on Executive Group first. 4/6 were confident that this page was the correct response to the task, and were finished.

Two participants were unsure whether the individuals on the Executive Group were the senior management team. Both used the left sidebar to click on Administration. One participant stated that those listed on the Administration page were “the people running the library day to day and...[the Executive Group page] are the people at the top that run the department of the library.”

Participant 2 struggled with this task in a similar way to the previous task. He made 19 clicks during the task and never completed it, while the second-highest number of clicks for this task is 5. They stated, “I don’t know whether administrative services counts as management team. Maybe only [these two people listed on the Administration page]?”

These results suggest that the title Executive Group may be misleading for non-staff users. Those that weren’t sure whether the Executive Group was equivalent to the terms “senior management team” or “highest leadership positions” as stated in the task descriptions went to
the Administration page after examining the Executive Group page. Of the four who were confident that they found the correct information on the Executive Group page, three were staff. One staff member stated that “I’m at an advantage... if I wasn’t sure about ‘executive’, then I’d go to Departments and you’d see Administration.”

5. What features or design elements did users like and dislike the most about the staff directory?

The staff photographs, predictive search for staff names, and Subject Specialists page were all cited by two participants each as features they liked the best. Two participants expressed a desire for search options or filters on the home page other than the name search. As one stated, “As a student if I’m looking for someone to help me I wouldn’t know their name... different filters would be helpful in addition to search by name.”

Reactions were mixed regarding the organization of the directory into Departments, Staff A-Z, Subject Specialists, and Executive Group. 4/7 participants cited this menu and its four ways of navigating the directory as one of the features they liked the best, although one participant qualified their assertion: “I liked the way it’s organized. Once I figured out it out it was pretty easy to use. Once you figure out the difference between Departments and Subject Specialists and stuff, it's all easy to find...But initially it's not clear what all those things mean.” 3/7 participants (all students) mentioned aspects of this menu when asked what they dislike most about the directory:

- “I can’t understand the structure of these 4 categories. They are parallel, they contain all the same faculty but in different ways...here you have many departments [under Executive Group tab, left menu] and on the Departments page it’s the same. What’s the point of having these 4 categories? I’m not sure what to search, I have to do it 4 times. I want to know if they are all the same, or if they are all different, otherwise I have to guess where a person is.”
- “Departments and Executive Group sound the same.”
- “For me, I don't really know that much about how libraries tend to be organized, so what these headings meant don’t mean a lot to me, especially Executive Group.”

Participants also had mixed reactions to the presentation of the departments and organizational structure. 3/7 liked the structure and organization of the departments. They found it helpful in understanding which departments are in each division. A staff member commented that the structure of the departments is easier to understand than it was in the previous version of the directory. At the same time, 3/7 participants were not totally satisfied with the way departments are presented. One did not like the design of the Departments page, stating, “The Department list is overall busy. It can be a bit confusing, there's a lot going on at once so it's
visually overwhelming." Another mentioned that they might need to use the DUL site search to find a department if they were unsure what they were looking for. A third participant (a staff member) expressed a desire for organizational charts or tree diagrams for each department. The current way departments are presented does not indicate that there is a structure that continues below the department level (e.g. supervisors or managers under the head within a department), and the job titles are not enough to communicate that structure. Access and Delivery Services is a good example of this. This participant feels that a more complete, clear organizational structure would be the added value of using the library staff directory instead of the Duke University directory.
Appendix A: Test script

Hello [NAME]. Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. My name is [NAME] and I will be walking you through our tasks today. This is [NAME] and she will be taking notes. I will mostly be reading from a script to ensure each testing session is as consistent as possible.

We are considering making some changes to our website and we’re trying to better understand how our users interact with it.

Completing all of the tasks today should only take around ten minutes, but don’t worry about going too fast or too slow. There is no right or wrong action, because I am testing the system, not testing you. I will ask you to think aloud while you complete tasks so that I can get an idea of your thought process. Your input is very valuable to our research so please be as honest as possible when providing feedback. If you have any questions as we go along, don’t hesitate to ask.

Do you have any questions for me so far?

First, I have a few general questions.

[PRE-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE]

We would like to record your session to allow Duke University Libraries staff members who are unable to be here to observe your session and benefit from your comments.

[HAND PARTICIPANT THE CONSENT FORM]

Please read and fill out this form if you give consent for us to record your session.

[PARTICIPANT CHOOSES TO GIVE OR NOT GIVE CONSENT]

Thanks. If you are ready to begin, I am going to start recording.

[START SCREEN AND AUDIO RECORDING]
Now I’m going to ask you to try doing some specific tasks based on different scenarios. Please remember to think aloud as you complete each task.

[TASK 1]

You need help finding information in the University Archives for a research project. You were told that Valerie Gillispie is the appropriate person to ask. Use the directory to find their email address.

[RECORD]
- Their path - what do they click on?
- How many clicks does it take to complete the task?
- Do they find the email address?
- Features they notice or comment on in particular

[EVALUATE: How easily can they find a staff member's email address?]

[RETURN to landing page]

[TASK 2]

You need help with a research project in your Japanese Studies class and want to find the name and office number of the librarian who specializes in your research topic. Use the directory to find this information.

[RECORD]
- Their path - what do they click on?
- How many clicks does it take to complete the task?
- Do they find the name and office location?
- Features they notice or comment on in particular

[EVALUATE: How easily can they find the name and office location?]
[TASK 3]

You are the head of the Assessment and User Experience department at UNC Libraries and you want to contact the person who holds this same position at Duke Libraries. Use the directory to find their name and office number.

[RECORD]
- Their path - what do they click on?
- How many clicks does it take to complete the task?
- Do they find the name and office number?
- Features they notice or comment on in particular

[EVALUATE: How easily can they find the name and office location?]

[TASK 4]

You were recently hired as an intern in the Information Technology Services department in the library. You want to know how your department fits within the organizational structure of the library. Use the directory to find this information.

[RECORD]
- Their path - what do they click on?
- How many clicks does it take to complete the task?
- Do they find the organizational structure?
- Features they notice or comment on in particular

[EVALUATE: How easily can a user find out the organizational structure of a division?]

How confident are you in your understanding of how the library’s departments are organized?

[RECORD RESPONSE]
[TASK 5]

You’re writing an article for The Chronicle about the library, and you would like to include the names of the people who hold the highest leadership positions in the library. Use the directory to find these names.

[RECORD]
- Their path - what do they click on?
- How many clicks does it take to complete the task?
- Do they find the names?
- Features they notice or comment on in particular

[EVALUATE: How easily can a user find out the names?]  

[END TASKS]

Great! That concludes our final task. I have some additional questions I’d like to ask you.

[POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE]

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your participation in this study. Here is your voucher for The Perk; you can use it until [TIME] today. Have a great day.
Appendix B: Pre-test Questionnaire

1. Which of the following describes you best?
   a. Undergraduate student
   b. Graduate student
   c. Doctoral candidate
   d. Faculty
   e. Staff
   f. Other: ____________

2. Have you used the Duke Libraries website before?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. [IF YES] Have you ever used the site to find the contact information or office location for a librarian?
   a. Yes
   b. No
Appendix C: Post-test Questionnaire

1. What two things about this website did you like best?

2. What two things about this website did you like least?

3. Do you have any other comments or suggestions? Anything else you would like to say that you haven’t had a chance to tell us yet?