

Usability Test: Duke Digital Repository, Part 2

Recommendations

1. The “View Item in Context” link could be improved in several ways. First, it could be presented in larger font and in blue to visually indicate that it is a clickable link (similar to the “View details (Catalog)” link in task 2). This alone should make it much easier for participants to navigate to the finding aid. Second, the link text could be less vague. For example, some suggested terms that are more straightforward are “Open Finding Aid” or “View other items in box”. Third, users indicated that it would be intuitive if the link was embedded in the hierarchical visual graphic in the right panel of the item page. However, most users could easily find the “View details (Catalog)” link which was presented in the same location as the finding aid is now. If resources are limited, simply implementing the first two changes without integrating the link into the hierarchical visual should greatly improve usability.
2. It would be convenient if the item page could include a button to allow participants to directly request physical access to items without first entering the catalog.
3. The website should avoid using the exact same title for related collections. Even experienced users could not tell that the two collections were different, meaning that users are likely to ignore the related collections suggestion and miss relevant linked resources.

Background

This is part two out of two usability tests of the Duke Digital Repositories (DDR). Both parts were designed to answer stakeholder questions about the usability of specific DDR functions. All test sessions were conducted remotely via Zoom by Audrey Siqi-Liu. Part one included basic tasks like downloading digital materials and requesting access to metadata only items.

Part two included more advanced tasks: navigating finding aids and collection records, and using the relations feature. Participants were recruited from users of the DDR who had logged in for the first time over the past six months and were prescreened for either experience with browsing digital collections or using any reading room.

Questions we hoped to answer through this study

1. Can users navigate to the finding aid for the archival collection that an object is a part of?
2. Can users find the catalog record for collection objects?

For more information, please contact angela.zoss@duke.edu

3. Can users take advantage of the relations feature to identify other collections related to the current one?

Participants

Affiliation

3 graduate students
1 undergraduate student
1 staff member

Prior Experience with DDR webpages

All participants have downloaded or accessed online an item from the digital repositories

Prior Experience with Finding Aids (at Duke OR other institutions)

3/5 participants have used the DDR finding aid before

Prior Experience with physical collections (rare materials)

4/5 participants have used physical archives at the RL Reading Room
1 participant reported only knowing about the reading room)

Key findings

1. Can users navigate to the finding aid for the archival collection that an object is a part of?

When asked to look for other items in the same archival collection that are not in digital format, none of the users clicked on the “View Item in Context” link. All users’ first instinct was to search in the metadata under “Folder Info.” Then users searched in the right panel, specifically hovering over or clicking on links from the hierarchical graphic placing the item within the collection and collection group (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Hierarchical graphic in right panel shown in red box

Two users found the finding aid for the source collection by clicking on “Source Collection” in the metadata under “Folder Info”: <https://archives.lib.duke.edu/catalog/uabsa>. This was a different page than the item-specific finding aid we aimed to test: https://archives.lib.duke.edu/catalog/uabsa_ospace_ref19_uv2.

After prompting participants to notice the “View Item in Context” link, we asked: “What do you expect to see when you click that link?” Users responded that they expect to see a higher level page with other items similar to this one. One user correctly answered that she might find other items that were physically stored with the item.

Users thought that the finding aid might be useful for expanding their search and for accessing physical copies of DDR items.

When asked how the link might be improved:

- Three users thought that the finding aid should be somehow integrated in to the hierarchical graphic in Figure 1
- Two users suggested that link format should be made more visually prominent, either via using larger text, different colored font, and/or some sort of button design. Users assumed that light grey text on this webpage is not a clickable link.

- Three users indicated that the language “View Item in Context” is vague. The word context could suggest information about the item’s historical/social context, or other relevant collections. It does not directly suggest that the link will show other the other physical items the current one is stored with. Using more direct language like: “View other items in this box” or even “Open Finding Aid” or “See Collection Guide” would be helpful.

2. Can users find the catalog record for collection objects?

4/5 participants were able to find the “View details (Catalog)” link, when asked how they would make a request to see the physical item. Users indicated that this was easier to find than the “View Item in Context” link for task 1 because the link text was in blue (so that it looked like a canonical hyperlink).

Once in the catalog, all users easily identified the green request button in the catalog what they would use to submit a request to see the physical item.

When asked how they might improve the catalog link, two users suggested introducing a direct request button (like in the catalog, and similar to a download button) on the original item page. Since users would mostly be using the catalog to make requests, this would simplify the process. Most participants indicated that the verbiage for this catalog link is good and much clearer than the link in task 1.

3. Can users take advantage of the relations feature to identify other collections related to the current one?

Four users noticed the “Related Collections” section at the bottom of the page, but all thought that the collection with the same name linked there was the same collection. One user did not notice the related collections section and tried to look for related materials at the source collection level or in the left bar.

Users struggled to understand what the difference between the two collections were. They indicated that it might be more helpful to add a note in collection items’ metadata about the method of acquisition where relevant, rather than organizing collections in different groups based on whether they were born digital or digitized.

4. Final comments

Several experienced users indicated that they found the website intuitive and easy to use on the whole when they have used it before, even though the tasks today were confusing. Users indicate that direct searches are their primary method for looking for resources, so they do not usually encounter the kinds of tasks that they are required to complete in this usability study.

Appendix A: Duke Digital Repositories Pt.2 test script

My name is **[name]** and I will be walking you through our task today. I will mostly be reading from a script to ensure each testing session is as consistent as possible.

We're testing the usability of the Duke Digital Repositories and would like to hear your feedback.

We only have a few general questions to ask and 2 tasks, it should only take around **[number to be tested in pilot]** minutes. Don't worry about going too fast or too slow. There are no right or wrong actions here because we're testing the website, not you. This is less about finding the correct information and more about the process in which you search. Feel free to provide opinions and feedback; it won't hurt our feelings.

Do you have any questions so far?

We would like to record each of your sessions to allow us and other library staff members who are not here today to debrief later and benefit from your sessions. If you are willing to let us have the recordings, here is the consent form and pre-test questionnaire, please read and sign it.

[Share Qualtrics Survey: https://duke.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5tEEGB0bWRiQybQ]

Now, let's begin our test. As you answer questions or complete tasks please tell us what you're thinking so that we can get an idea of your thought process.

[Start screen recording]

Task 1 – Collection Guides for Digitized Item

In this first task, we are interested in how you would navigate an item page to find other items in the same archival collection.

[Share link: [Association of African Students, 1972-1976](#)]

Please click on this link that I shared in the chat. Based on the information on the page, do you think that the library also has a physical copy of this item? What makes you think that?

[Record response]

How would you look for other items from the same archival collection that are not in a digital format?

Follow-up questions:

What is not as clear or confusing? What do you think it should be? What could make it clearer?

[If participants click on a different link than the correct one, "View Item in Context"]

Notice on the right of the page under "Source Collection," there is a link that says "View Item in Context." What do you expect to see when you click on that link?

[Record response]

Now, please click on "View in Context" and pull up the collection guide/finding aid [change terminology according to previous experience with finding aids]. Could you give me a few examples of other items in the collection?

Can you imagine any situations where this collection guide would be helpful to you?

[Record response]

Now return to the previous page using the back button on your browser.

Could the text "View in Context" be changed to make it clearer that this is the link to the finding aid?

Task 2 – Catalog record

In this second task, we will look at a different type of repository item:

[Share link: [Young woman's scrapbook, 1900-1905 and n.d. / Duke University Libraries Books / Duke Digital Repository](#)]

Based on the information on the page, do you think that the library also has a physical copy of this item?

How would you make a request to see the physical item?

Follow-up questions:

Where do you go to request other physical archival items? [Catalog]

How would you find the catalog record for this item?

[If participants click on a different link than the correct one, "View details (Catalog)"] What do you expect to see when you click on the "View details (Catalog)" link?

[Record response]

Now, please click on "View details (Catalog)" and pull up the catalog record. What does this page tell you about the collection item?

[Record response]

Now, return to the previous page using the back button on your browser. Could the text for the catalog link be changed so that it is clearer?

Task 3 – Related Collections

In this last task, we are interested in whether users can find related collections. Here is the link to the collection we will be looking at.

[Share link: [Black Student Alliance records](#)]

Take a look at this page. Is this collection related to another collection?

[Record response or prompt correct action if needed (scroll to bottom of the page)]

Can you navigate to the related collection?

[Record response or prompt correct action if needed (Click on “black student alliance records”)]

Can you tell how these collections are related?

Follow-up questions:

What is not as clear or confusing? What do you think it should be? What could make it clearer?

[Record response]

Ask for final comments or questions.