

Usability Test Report: Homepage / Search Interface

Summary

Emily Daly, Bendte Fagge, and Steph Matthiesen conducted usability testing of the homepage and search interface in the newly redesigned Duke Libraries website. The test was held outside of the Von der Heyden Pavilion on February 4, 2014 from 11:30am – 1:00pm. A pilot was conducted with Steph prior to her viewing the test. The test consisted of a short set of background questions, six tasks, and four post-test questions that lasted approximately 10 minutes. See Appendix for test script.

Overall, users really like the new search box and the redesigned interface. Finding information about the library proved to be more challenging though. Also, several users felt that the black bar in the new search box is easy to overlook.

Participants

Nine individuals (excluding our pilot participant) completed this test. Participants included seven undergraduates and two graduate students representing the following departments: divinity, East Asian Studies, economics, English, environmental sciences, evolutionary anthropology, history, and public policy. One undergraduate interviewee had not yet declared a major, but mentioned that it would be Russian.

Seven out of the nine participants said they have used the Libraries homepage since the new website launched. Of those seven: two use it every day, two every week, and three less often (about once a month or a few times a semester).

Key Findings

1. The dropdown menus and autosuggest text feature of the “Books & More” tab are popular.
2. Users (including our pilot participant) who clicked on “Hours by Month” on the Lilly Library homepage had a difficult time finding the current date in this interface (<http://library.duke.edu/about/hours/lilly>).
3. Finding the email address of a subject expert proved to be the most challenging task (task four, see Appendix). Most participants didn’t know where to find this information and bounced between the top menu items, Search & Find, Using the Library, Research Support, Course Support, and About before clicking their first path selection.
 - a. Once on the Subject Experts page (<http://library.duke.edu/research/experts>), it took users some time to find the expert via scrolling and most participants used their

browser's search functionality to find the expert.

4. In our task to test the "Online Journal Titles" link in the search box, only one participant clicked on this link.
5. The majority of participants clicked on the "Research Databases" link in the search box. Since this link is almost directly below the search field, could this be why more participants noticed this link? Or is the "Research Databases" link explained during library instruction classes at Duke?

Key Recommendations

1. Make "Hours by Month" interface for Library hours more user-friendly (i.e., make dates bold and possibly use abbreviated spelling for months since there are so many numbers on this page).
2. Add a search box to the Subject Experts page that is more prominent than the overall search box in the upper right-hand side of this page.
3. Make the options in the black bar of the search box (i.e., Online Journal Titles, Research Databases, . . .) more prominent.
4. In the "Books & More" tab, provide explanation of Classic Catalog, TRLN, and WorldCat using mouseover text.

Potential Recommendations

1. After choosing Subject Headings dropdown in "Books & More" tab, a list of subjects to choose from would be helpful.
2. An option for Google Scholar on the "Books & More" tab would be great in addition to having more ways to search through Google Scholar on the Duke Libraries website.
3. Including a general search box on the homepage in the upper right-hand corner would be helpful.

Results

Task One: Topic

Task one required participants to find resources that would help with research on a class paper/project.

No. Participants	Path from Search Box on Homepage
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6	Books & More – Keywords – Entered topic into search field
1	Books & More – Subject Headings – Entered topic into search field – Chose topic from auto-suggestions
1	Articles – Keywords – Entered topic into search field
1	Research Databases – Clicked on appropriate databases

Task Two: Known Item

Task two required participants to find out if they could check out a copy of a book they would like to read.

No. Participants	Path from Search Box on Homepage
5	Books & More – Keywords – Entered title and/or author into search field
4	Books & More – Title – Entered title and/or author into search field

Task Three: Library Info

The third task required participants to find out how late Lilly Library was open that day.

No. Participants	Path from Homepage
5	All Libraries & Hours
2	Libraries – Lilly Library – Found hours in widget
2	Libraries – Lilly Library – Hours by Month – Lilly Library Hours

Task Four: Library Info

Task four required participants to locate Linda Daniel's email address. Note: The following are the final paths participants used to complete the task. Most all participants took quite a bit of time hovering over the top menu items on Libraries homepage and in general were not quite sure where to start this task.

No. Participants	Path from Homepage
2	Research Support – Subject Experts – Browser find for Linda Daniel
2	Research Support – Subject Experts – Scrolled to find Linda Daniel, but couldn't – Browser find for Linda Daniel
1	Research Support – Subject Experts – Scrolled to find Linda Daniel
1	Ask a Librarian – Find a Subject Expert – Scrolled to find Linda Daniel
1	About – Staff and Departments – Entered Linda Daniel into top right search box
1	Research Databases – Social Sciences – Sociology – Noticed Linda's contact info on the right
1	Our Website – Entered Linda Daniel in search field

Task Five: Online Journal Titles

Task five required participants to find online access to a journal.

No. Participants	Path from Homepage
7	Books & More – Keywords – Entered journal title
1	Articles – Title – Entered journal title, didn't work – Back to search box All – Entered journal title
1	Online Journal Titles – Title equals – Entered journal title

Task Six: Research Databases

Task five required participants to find a women's studies research database.

No. Participants	Path from Homepage
3	Research Databases – Keywords – Entered women's studies
3	Research Databases – Social Sciences – Women's Studies
1	Books & More – Subject Headings – Entered women's studies
1	Books & More – Keywords – Entered women's studies
1	Research Support – Research Guides – Entered women's studies in search field

Post-Test Interview

Participants had the following responses in their post-test interview.

What participants like about using the new Duke Libraries website to complete these tasks:

- Search box and black bar subheadings in the search box
- Carousel of news, events, and exhibits
- Easy-to-find information
- More user-friendly interface
- Search seems to provide better results than old site

What participants dislike or find confusing about using the Duke Libraries website:

- Sometimes there is a lot of information on the site, not sure where you need to go.
- Didn't see the library hours for Lilly on their homepage.
- Sometimes searching on a book title doesn't bring up the result, which is frustrating (even though subsequent revised searches find the book title).
- Links to Online Journal Titles and Research Databases are not prominent enough.
- Often looking for buttons or something flashier instead of text links.
- Finding information on specific libraries is confusing.

Recommendations for improvement:

- After choosing Subject Headings dropdown in "Books & More" tab, a list of subjects to choose from would be helpful.

- Make getting to full-text or pdfs of articles easier.
- For users not familiar with Classic Catalog, TRLN, and WorldCat, provide explanation of each using mouseover text.
- On the Research Databases page, it would be helpful to search for a subject rather than only browse by subject. (**NOTE: There is a search box at the top of this page.**)
- An option for Google Scholar on the “Books & More” tab would be great in addition to having more ways to search through Google Scholar.
- Make black bar at the bottom of the search box more prominent.
- Including a search box (other than upper right-hand search box) on the Subject Experts page (<http://library.duke.edu/research/experts>) would be helpful.
- Including a general search box on the homepage in the upper right-hand corner would be helpful.

Appendix: Homepage / Search Interface Usability Test Script

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

Three weeks ago, we launched a new Duke Libraries website. The purpose of this test is to learn more about how the search functionality on our homepage works.

I will be asking you to complete a few tasks using our new homepage. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers and that we’re testing a tool — not you. If you have any questions as we go along, feel free to ask them. I may not be able to answer them right away, since we’re interested in how people do when they don’t have someone sitting next to them to help. But if you still have any questions when we’re done, I’ll try to answer them then.

Okay, first some general questions:

1. Are you an undergrad, grad student, faculty member, staff member?
 - a. If you are an undergrad, what year are you?

- b. What is your major/what department are you in?
2. In the past three weeks, have you used the Duke Libraries homepage?
 - a. If yes, would you say that you use it every day, every week, or less often?

Now I'd like for you to complete six short tasks using the Libraries homepage. It would be really helpful if you would share your thoughts and observations as you are completing the tasks, so try to think aloud as much as you can. Like I said, there are no right or wrong answers.

What do you typically use for your research? A laptop? Desktop? Smartphone?

If you have this device with you, would you do these tasks using your own device?

[If they don't have the device, or if their preferred device is a laptop, we'll use our laptop]

TASK ONE: TOPIC

- a) Think of a class that you're taking this semester that requires some kind of a research paper or project. Would you mind telling me what the class/project is?
[If users don't have a class that requires research, ask them to search for a topic that interests them, or suggest "climate change", "food and globalization" or "African American dance."]
- b) Use this site to search for resources that would help you with your research.

TASK TWO: KNOWN ITEM

Think of a specific book you like or want to read. Use this site to find out if you can check out a copy of that book.

[If users can't think of a title, suggest Let the great world spin]

TASK THREE: LIBRARY INFO

You're going to Lilly Library to study later this evening. Use this site to find out how late Lilly is open today.

TASK FOUR: LIBRARY INFO

You would like to schedule an appointment with the sociology librarian, Linda Daniel, but you don't have her contact information. Use this site to locate her email address.

TASK FIVE: ONLINE JOURNAL TITLES

You're interested in seeing if we have online, full-text access to the *African Journal of History and Culture*. Show me where you would go on this site to see if we have online access to the *African Journal of History and Culture*.

TASK SIX: RESEARCH DATABASES

You would like to find a database that covers the field of women's studies. Show me where you would go on this site to find a database with materials on this topic.

Okay, that concludes our tasks. I have a few questions I'd like to ask you about your experience – feel free to leave the homepage open.

POST-TEST INTERVIEW

1. What did you like about using the Duke Libraries website to complete these tasks?
2. What did you dislike or find confusing about the Duke Libraries website?
3. If you could change the options available for doing research on this site in any way, what would you change?
4. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience using this site?