

DUL Usability Test: Ask a Librarian

Recommendations to Consider

1. Elaborate on phone services under the Perkins' number.
2. Embed a chat window on the draft Ask a Librarian page. If possible, add a feature that allows users to "pop out" the chat.
3. Change the layout of contact method "sections" from 3 columns of 2 rows to 2 columns of 3 rows, making the layout more vertical than horizontal, and allowing space for a chat window to be prominently placed near the top (see Appendix A screenshot).
4. Break the second line of Subject Specialist duties into more inviting things students can do with a Subject Specialist (eg, "Need a better way to manage your citations? Want to master your current research topic? Looking for the best research sources in your field? Schedule an appointment with a Subject Specialist!")

Background

Emily Daly and Hannah Hiles, field experience student in the Assessment & User Experience Department, conducted a usability test on the Duke University Libraries current "Ask a Librarian" webpage and on the newly designed draft version of the same page on March 24, 2016, from 10:15am-11:40am. A pilot test was completed the previous day by Emily Daly. The test consisted of a short set of background questions, three tasks, and five post-test questions. The test lasted approximately 5 minutes. See Appendix B for the full test script; see Appendix C for user's feedback on the live and draft versions of the web pages.

Questions that we hoped to answer through the test included the following:

1. Do users show a preference for embedded chat and email versus pop-up chat and email?
2. Do users prefer any one method of contact above the others?
3. Are there features that users seem confused by?
4. Are there features that users seem to prefer?
5. Are there behaviors that both user groups seem to exhibit?
6. What are the final user preferences between the live page and the draft page?

Participants

Seven individuals (excluding the pilot participants) completed the test. All participants were undergraduate students. The six students with declared majors represented Neuroscience; Linguistics; Spanish; Statistics and Computer Science; Economics and Political Science; and a double major in Psychology and Global Culture Studies with a certification in child policy. One first year student was not affiliated with any

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program. When asked if they had contacted a librarian before for help, 3 (42%) responded that they had. Of those students, 1 (14%) contacted librarians on a weekly basis, and 2 (29%) contacted librarians on a monthly basis. When asked if they had ever used an embedded form to contact a company or person, 7 (100%) responded that they had, with 4 (57%) citing it as an overall positive experience, 1 (14%) as a negative experience, and 2 (29%) not providing feedback on whether their experience was negative or positive.

Key Findings

1. Do users show a preference for embedded chat and email versus pop-up chat and email?

Users were nearly evenly divided on their preference for embedded chat and email versus pop-up chat and email, with 57% preferring an embedded option and 42% preferring a pop-up option. Those who preferred the embedded option seemed to prefer it because it appeared more library sanctioned, as well as requiring less click-throughs. Those who preferred the pop-up option liked that they could resize the chat, and could minimize it or work with it over the same screen that their research was on.

2. Do users prefer any one method of contact above the others?

For each of the three tasks, the seven users could choose a different method of contact, offering a total of 21 communication choices made during the three tasks. Of the 21 communication choices made:

- 62% preferred chat
- 19% preferred email
- 14% preferred calling
- 5% preferred to make an appointment with a subject specialist

It is worth noting that 29% of users only used chat as a first method of contact; one user would only use it if they were in a hurry to get information and would prefer to contact a subject specialist, another user would use chat as a primary source of information but turn to email if they needed further assistance.

3. Are there features that users seem confused by?

- 57% of users seemed unsure about what calling the library would entail, including what the library's phone hours were and if they'd encounter an automated phone system or a live person.
- 71% of users reported having a more difficult time navigating the live page because of its organization or structure, and disliked the disorderly linebreaks between items in the grey boxes.
- Only 29% of users utilized the "contact a subject specialist" feature, with one user citing that they would rather use Google than make an appointment. Another user reported that making an appointment would be a waste of time, and that calling or chatting would be faster.

- One user was confused by the difference between an offered email address and the form email option, as "asklib@duke.edu" was not an email address that they were familiar with.

4. Are there features that users seem to prefer?

- 86% of users noted a preference for an emphasis on chat, either citing the large "Chat Now" image or the big green "chat with a librarian" button.
- All users who preferred the live page primarily preferred it because of the embedded chat window.
- All users who preferred the draft page primarily preferred it because of the minimal amount of text and the addition of chat icons.

5. Are there behaviors that both user groups seem to exhibit?

- 43% of users preferred to copy and paste a provided email address into the email client of their choice, rather than click the address and launch an email client.

6. What are the final user preferences between the live page and the draft page?

- 57% of users preferred the live page while 43% of users preferred the draft page.
- Only one user preferred the page that they did not test on (tested draft; preferred live).

Appendix A: Screenshot Draft

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES My Accounts Ask a Librarian

Search & Find ▾ Using the Library ▾ Research Support ▾ Course Support ▾ Libraries ▾ About ▾

Home > Research Support > Ask a Librarian

Ask a Librarian

Available Chat with a librarian

Type here to chat. Press ENTER to send.

Chat
Pop Out Chat

Phone
(919) 660-5870

Email

- asklib@duke.edu
- Or use our email form; we typically respond within a few hours

Subject Specialists

- Find a subject specialist
Need a better way to manage your citations? Want to master your current research topic? Looking for the best research sources in your field? Schedule an appointment with a Subject Specialist!

More

- Contact us: Phone numbers, email, and mailing addresses for each library at Duke University
- Directions, maps, floor plans & parking

Contact Us
411 Chapel Drive
Durham, NC 27708
(919) 660-5870
Perkins Library Service Desk

Services for...

Faculty & Instructors	Alumni
Graduate Students	Donors
Undergraduate Students	Visitors
International Students	Patrons with Disabilities

Re-use & Attribution / Privacy
Support the Libraries

Drupal Sign In

Appendix B: "Ask a Librarian" Usability Test Script

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

We are trying to understand more fully how students, faculty and staff use our site to get help from librarians. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers and that we're testing a tool – not you.

Okay, first some general questions:

Are you an undergrad, grad student, faculty member, staff member, or visitor to Duke?

- a. For undergrads: What is your major?
- b. For grads, faculty, staff: What department are you in?
- c. What is your year (or how many years have you been at Duke)?

Have you ever contacted a librarian for help?

- a. If yes, would you say you contact a librarian once a week, once a month, once a semester, or less often?
- b. How did you contact a librarian?

Have you ever used an embedded form like this one [point to <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/ask>] to contact a company or person?

- a. If yes, think of the last time you used a form like this one. What was your reason for using this form? Describe your experience. Positive? Negative?
- b. If no, why have you not used a form like this one?

Now I'd like you to complete three short tasks using this page [open Ask a Librarian page A or B]. 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.

****NOTE:** Alternate between PAGE A and PAGE B, so that half of the test participants use PAGE A and half use PAGE B

- PAGE A: <http://library.duke.edu/research/ask-draft>
- PAGE B: <http://library.duke.edu/research/ask>

TASK ONE

You have a research project due at the end of the semester, and you have heard that librarians are available to help locate sources for papers. Using this page, show me what you would do to get help from a librarian with your research.

- a. Why did you use that option to get help?

TASK TWO

You received a notice about a library fine for a DVD last week, and you have questions for a librarian at Lilly about the fines. Using this page, show me what you would do to ask someone about library fines on the DVD you turned in late.

- a. Why did you use that option to get help?

TASK THREE

You have a paper due in two hours, and you have a question about how to cite one of your sources. Using this page, show me what you would do to get help from a librarian.

[For Test A participants who click "Chat Now"]: You clicked the Chat Now button, and your chat opened in a new window. What are your thoughts about that? (Show alternate version if needed and appropriate)

[For Test B participants who click “Chat with a librarian”]: You clicked the Chat with a Librarian box. When you do that, your chat will stay embedded in that webpage. What are your thoughts about that? (Show alternate version if needed and appropriate).

Okay, that concludes our tasks. I have a couple of questions I’d like to ask you about your experience – feel free to leave this page open if you like.

POST-TEST INTERVIEW

[Ask the participant about the page they used for tasks one through three, then show them the other page and ask the same post-test questions about it.]

- 1) What two things do you like best about this page?
- 2) What two things do you like least?

Now, I’d like you to look at this page, which you did not use to complete these tasks:

- 1) What two things do you like best about this page?
- 2) What two things do you like least?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about these web pages?

Thank you for your participation in our study.

Appendix C: Feedback on Live and Draft Webpages

Live Webpage

- “It’s harder for me to organize this in my head since things are sectioned off but not parallel in their format. But it’s nice to have it all in the same page. You don’t have to click to have something chat, or email.”
- “Less visual than the other page; chat and email don’t jump out at you as much [as on the other page]”
- “I like that the chat is already embedded, it’s faster.”
- “It’s less obvious what I’m trying to look for. All the lines [buttons] are the same and I can’t differentiate between them. It takes longer to figure out what I need to find.”
- “It’s more inviting to not have to click a second chat pop up -- here we are saying *chat is the first line of defense*. The chat looks like it actually works. It’s prominently placed, it has an “available” button, it seems like the DUL thinks it works.”
- “The titles seem more tiny, and the important information isn’t in the biggest font.”

Draft Webpage

- "I like how big the chat link is, and that it's green. It's the first thing I look at. Everything else is small."
- "There's no way I can visit this page and NOT know how to contact a librarian, so I like that."
- "I don't like the layout, it's strange. It's very spread out, lots of space. Too much space. I don't like the horizontal layout, it takes more time to look through it."
- "It's very open. I like the pictures because I'm dyslexic, it's all obvious and there and immediate."
- "I like the two options between the copy email and the form email. You can choose what you want."
- "Things are really clearly listed. I like how there are links so things are concise, they don't list out all the information."