

Usability Test: News, Events, and Exhibits

Recommendations

1. Make the “Exhibits at the Library” and “Upcoming Library Events” headings on their respective boxes on the News, Events, and Exhibits home page clickable links. These headings can direct to the same location as the “View all exhibits” and “View all Events” links at the bottom of each content box, but it may be more obvious to users to click the headings at the top of the boxes rather than the smaller links at the bottom. This will also provide consistency with the main Duke University Libraries page, which utilizes clickable headings.
2. Make the “Browse by Category” and “Browse by Month” dropdown selectors on the “Archive of all library news” page more prominent, visible, and distinguishable. They are currently buried on the sidebar underneath “Tweets by @DukeLibraries” and a “Browse our Other Blogs” dropdown selector that does not manipulate content on the news page but rather navigates the user to a different page. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that users are not immediately aware that these dropdown menus affect the library news archived content rather than being references to external content. These selectors could be moved to the top of the page underneath the “Archive of all library news” heading to make it more obvious that they can filter the content currently being displayed.
3. Make the top of the “Exhibits at the Library” and “Upcoming Library Events” boxes line up with each other on the News, Events, and Exhibits home page to allow for comparison between the two types of information in these boxes. This evaluation found that the events box captured users’ attention when they were looking for exhibits, so if both boxes were presented together, the user may be more suited to distinguish between what type of content they want to select.

Background

This study was conducted to evaluate the ways in which Duke University students, faculty, and staff use the Duke University Libraries websites to look at the libraries’ current news, events and exhibits. The study was developed and conducted by Filip Mazurek, taking place in the lobby of Perkins Library outside of the entrance to The Perk on October 19, 2017.

Questions we hoped to answer through this study:

1. Are library patrons including students, faculty and staff able to successfully use our site to look at the library's current News, Events & Exhibits?

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2. Do the differences between user interfaces used to present news, events, and exhibits influence a user's success or failure in locating information (beginning task at <https://library.duke.edu> vs. <https://blogs.library.duke.edu>)?
3. What are key pain points that users experience when trying to find information on our site about library news, events, and exhibits?

Participants

Six participants were recruited for this study from the lobby of Perkins Library outside of the entrance to The Perk. Five were undergraduate students—three seniors, one junior, and one sophomore—and one was a visitor to the libraries. Undergraduate majors represented included Biology, Visual Arts, History, African American Studies, Cultural Anthropology, English, and Sociology. Four participants had never attended an event or exhibit, one was unsure, and one had attended an exhibit by browsing in the exhibit space by the lobby.

Key findings

1. Are library patrons including students, faculty, and staff able to successfully use our site to look at the libraries' current news, events, and exhibits?
 - i. Participants were all able to successfully find information about events.
 - ii. Half of participants were unable to successfully find upcoming exhibits as they looked for exhibit information where information about events is found.
 - iii. Only 1/6 of participants were able to successfully find news about Lilly Library as they were not able to locate the "Browse by Category" dropdown menu and filter the news to display information about Lilly Library only.
2. Do the differences between user interfaces used to present news, events, and exhibits influence a user's success or failure in locating information (beginning task at <https://library.duke.edu> vs. <https://blogs.library.duke.edu>)?
 - i. All participants were successful in finding information about events regardless of which interface they began the task with. Therefore, differences between user interfaces did not produce differences in success or failure in locating event information.
 - ii. Only 1/3 of users who began the search for upcoming exhibits on the Duke University Libraries page were successful while 2/3 of users who began on the News, Events, and Exhibits page were successful. This may have yielded more success because users starting at the News, Events, and Exhibits page began the task in a space that required less navigation in order to find the correct information. However, 2/3 of participants that failed to locate information about upcoming exhibits failed once they reached the

News, Events, and Exhibits page while 1/3 failed on the Duke University Libraries home page. Though more success was achieved by participants starting at the News, Events, and Exhibits page, more failures occurred on the News, Events, and Exhibits page as well. This does not indicate that one user interface provides more success than another when searching for information about upcoming exhibits.

- iii. When searching for news about Lilly Library, 80% of participants that failed to complete the task were unsuccessful after reaching the archive news page that is linked to the News, Events, and Exhibits page, which they all reached regardless of which interface they began the task with. The remaining 20% of participants failed to complete the task when visiting the Duke University Libraries page, at which point they gave up on the task. The participant that successfully completed the task began on the Duke University Libraries homepage. Therefore, the differences in user interfaces at the start of the task only marginally affected the participants' success rate at finding news about Lilly Library, if at all.

3. What are key pain points that users experience when trying to find information on our site about library news, events, and exhibits?
 - i. Participants frequently selected information about events when looking for information about exhibits.
 - ii. When searching for news, the "Browse by Category" selector is difficult to find. Only 1/6 of participants found this feature.

Note: The printout data with circled and crossed out elements referenced in the script were not included in this report because they were lost before the results were documented.

Appendix A: News, Events, Exhibits 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 look at the library's current News, Events & Exhibits.

I will be asking you to complete a few tasks using our News, Events & Exhibits page. 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.

First some general questions:

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

- a. If you are an undergrad, what year are you?
- b. For undergrads: What is your major?
- c. For grads, faculty, staff: What department are you in?

Have you ever attended a library event or exhibit?

- If so, how did you find out about it?
- Have you ever used the Library website to find out about events or exhibits?

Now I'd like for you to complete a few short tasks using the Library website. 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.

Task One: navigating to events

[A/B:

- A. point page to <https://blogs.library.duke.edu/>
- B. point page to <https://library.duke.edu/>

]

Let's say you're interested in finding out about some library events that are going to be happening in the next few days, and you would like to choose one to go to. Find out more about some upcoming events, choose one to attend, and let me know its time and location.

Task Two: navigating to exhibits

[A/B:

- A. point page to <https://blogs.library.duke.edu/>
- B. point page to <https://library.duke.edu/>

]

Your friend is working on a library exhibit that's going to open in [November], but you've forgotten the name and what it's about! Show me what you would do to find what exhibits are going to be on display soon.

Task Three: searching news

[A/B:

- A. point page to <https://blogs.library.duke.edu/>
- B. point page to <https://library.duke.edu/>

]

You have been working in Lilly library for the past 8 hours, and you are starting to wonder what's been happening in the library this week. Find out what news has been posted about Lilly library recently.

Post-Test Interview

1. What was your biggest frustrations in completing the tasks?
2. What was your most positive experiences in completing the tasks?

[Give a printout of the News, Events & Exhibits page]

Looking back at this page that you used earlier,

1. Please circle one thing that was easiest and most intuitive for you to find.
2. Please cross out one thing that was the most frustrating

What is one thing that could be changed on this page that could make it faster for you to find what you need?