

Usability Test: Research Databases

Recommendations

1. Change the text on the Clear Filters/Browse All Databases button. Also, change the color of the button to draw attention to it.
2. Change the hint text in the search box to “Find by title and subject” to match the previously used text and to better represent what the search box actually searches on.
3. Add a title to the page.
4. Add breadcrumbs to the Research Databases page.
5. Develop a way for the database search to always search without any subject or database type filters.

Background

During the summer of 2016 Duke University Libraries staff began a project to update the way that research databases are displayed on the library website. The new research databases page is a customized version of the default A-Z list that Springshare provides for its LibGuides content management system. Duke Libraries staff made adjustments to the content and interface of the page. In order to see how Duke users navigated the new interface, usability testing was conducted on August 9th, 2016.

Questions we hoped to answer through this study:

1. How do users find databases for a self chosen topic through the new research databases page?
2. How do users find a specific resource?
3. How do users find databases for certain types of information?
4. How do users find and select a database for a given subject?
5. What do users like about the new interface?
6. What do users dislike about the new interface?

Participants

On August 9, 2016, Emily Daly and Gordon Chadwick conducted a usability test of a new Research Databases page in the lobby of Perkins Library at Duke University. There were 6 participants. 4 were

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undergraduates, 1 was a graduate student, and 1 was a staff member. Academic backgrounds included biology, psychology, pharmacology, engineering, and romance studies. There was also 1 undergraduate student who participated in a pilot study on August 8, 2016. Several small changes were made to the test after the pilot test.

Key findings

1. How do users find databases for a self chosen topic through the new research databases page?

All 6 of 6 participants were able to find databases for self-selected topics. 4 of 6 participants interacted with the search bar during their seeking. 1 of 6 utilized the catalog search which was on the Duke Libraries header in the top right corner of the page. 3 of 6 also successfully used the subject filter to find a topic area, while 3 of 6 also used the database types filter. 1 participant interacted with the subject filter but was unable to find results they wanted.

3 of 6 users shared that they made their selection because they recognized the resource that they found.

1 participant and the pilot participant struggled briefly with search because their terms were too specific and returned no results.

2. How do users find a specific resource?

4 of 6 participants found a given specific resource by using the search bar in the research databases interface. 1 of 6 used the catalog search box on the Duke Libraries header in the top right corner of the page. 1 of 6 used the subject filter to select the "Engineering" subject.

The pilot participant opened the alphabetical drop down list and found the database.

Because the page was not reset after the first task, 3 of 6 participants experienced minor difficulties when they tried to begin this task without clearing the previous filters.

3. How do users interact with the types filter to find certain types of information (newspapers, book reviews, etc.)?

4 of 6 participants used the database types filter to find newspapers. 1 of 6 used the types filter but selected a database type that not optimal for the task. 1 of 6 was unable to complete the task.

4. How do users find and select a database for a given subject?

All 6 participants successfully completed the task. 5 of 6 participants used the database subjects filter to find databases. 1 of 6 used the database search box. 3 of 6 participants reported that they noticed the “Best Bets” and thought that they were helpful.

5. What do users like about the new interface?

3 of 6 participants noted that they liked the drop down filters. 1 participant and the pilot participant noted that they liked the Clear Filters button.

6. What do users dislike about the new interface?

2 of 6 participants noted that they disliked that the search box did not search for specific articles instead of entire databases.

Appendix A: *Test Name* test script

DUL usability test: Research Databases

[start on Duke Libraries homepage, URL: <http://library.duke.edu/>]

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

We're trying to improve our research databases portal and are interested in learning more about how users interact with the page.

I will be asking you to complete a couple of tasks involving finding databases and information using the research databases portal. 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:

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

- b) Have you ever used this Research Databases page? [point to old Research

Databases screen, URL: <http://library.duke.edu/find/databases>]

- a. If yes, would you say that you use this page every day, every week, every month, or less often?
- b. If no, do you ever use databases to help you do research?
- c. If yes, how do you get to those databases?

Now I'd like for you to complete four short tasks using this page [new research databases page, URL: guides.duke.edu/az.php]. It would be really helpful if you can 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

You're currently doing research on a topic of your choice. Can you tell us what topic you have selected and then, using this page, can you show me how you would find articles to learn more about that topic?

TASK TWO

For another class, your professor has asked you to find articles and reports from Engineering Village. Can you tell me if we have access to that?

TASK THREE

You are in a history class and you need to find old newspapers. How would you find resources

that have newspapers?

TASK FOUR

You need to pick a good database to do Global Health research. Show me how you would pick one for your research.

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

POST-TEST INTERVIEW

1. What two things do you like most about this page?
2. What two things do you like least about this page?
3. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience using this search page?