UX Café Report

Conducted on **March 10, 2020**

Research Question: What sort of strategies do students use when dealing with citations?

Methodology

The methodology used was a short, open-ended interview.

The following interview questions were asked, with follow-ups where needed:

1) Have you ever had to write a research paper that involved citing sources? (If no, end interview)
2) Think about the last research paper you wrote that involved citing sources:
   a. What did you do to keep track of the sources you'd found?
   b. How did you go about creating the references page on your paper?
   c. (If they used a tool): What made you decide to use that tool? Was there anything you specifically liked or disliked about it?
   (If written manually): Is there a resource you rely on to ensure that you've written your citations correctly? If so, which tool is it?

A specific goal of this study was to see what methods users are relying on for citation management, and what they thought of the tools Western provides for writing citations.

Results

The task analysis had 4 participants.

Data gathered with this sample size is not statistically significant, and should not be used quantitatively, but can still provide some general ideas about thoughts and approaches users have to citation management.

Finding 1: Every participant we talked to used a word processor document to store citation information, which included citations, links to articles, and notes.

Finding 2: Participants tended to utilize citation guides provided by professors or automatic citation generator tools (such as EasyBib). None of our participants mentioned using a library-based citation guide.

Recommendations:

Recommendation: While the sample size is too small to demonstrate with any certainty that our citation resources aren't providing value to students, it's clear that many students don't have a complex citation management strategy and don't use Western Libraries resources to manage citations. Working with faculty to ensure course-based citation guides include important information, and specific instruction on the value that more robust citation management tools like Zotero seem likely to provide value in

improving the research skills of students. Additional research may also be warranted to determine if the Western Libraries citation resources are providing enough value to be worth maintaining.