UX Café Report

Conducted on March 30, 2023 – Matt Barry and David Fiander

Methodology

This study used guerilla task analysis as the methodology. Passersby in the library were tasked with trying to perform a subset of the tasks below. The specific goals of this study were:

- Test combined omni / website search bar prototype (https://www.lib.uwo.ca/tabs.html) to try to gauge if it helps users understand that there's a distinction between catalogue resources and library website pages
- Do users tend to find "My Library Account" if the link is in the top navigation bar? Do they tend to prefer it even on a page that has a "My Library Account" link at the bottom
- Can users find a map of library locations in its new location?
- Are users more likely to notice the "search help" link when it's the furthest link to the left under the search bar?
- Can users successfully locate the "request a purchase" button under the search bar?

The tasks we used to meet these goals were:

1. (From https://www.lib.uwo.ca/tabs.html) "Imagine that you're on the library website trying to find a guide on how to use the APA citation style. How would you go about searching for it?"
   Success criteria: user successful changes tab to "search website" before searching. Make note of users who succeed through navigation or through top right search bar as well.

2. (From https://xd.adobe.com/view/9568c7e7-2689-485c-9bee-90817c7daa98-c03b/?fullscreen&hints=off) "Imagine that you want to check whether you have any books checked out. Where would you go to do this?"
   Success criteria: user clicks "My Library Account" link on top navigation. Make note of users who find link on homepage instead

3. (From https://xd.adobe.com/view/877ea33f-bc29-4375-b283-e150b27e8dd3-d22d/?fullscreen&hints=off) "Imagine that you want to check whether you have any books checked out. Where would you go to do this?"
   *Success criteria: user clicks "My Library Account" link on top navigation.

4. (From https://www.lib.uwo.ca/) "Imagine you're going to be visiting the Rec Centre on Saturday, and you want to figure out where the nearest library to the Rec Centre is on campus. Where would you go to see where all of the libraries are located?"
   Success criteria: user finds map of library locations on locations page

5. (From https://www.lib.uwo.ca/) "You want to find a guide that explains tips and tricks for finding articles using the library search bar. Where do you look?"
   Success criteria: user locates "search help" link under search bar

6. (From https://www.lib.uwo.ca/) "Imagine you just tried to locate a book using the library search bar, and discovered the library doesn't have a copy of it, and you've heard that you can request

that the library buy materials. Where would you go to ask the library to buy something?"
Success criteria: user locates "Recommend a purchase" link under search bar

We recruited a total of 5 participants for each task. Data gathered with this sample size is not statistically significant, and shouldn't be used to make generalizable observations about the usability of our website. However, Nielsen and Landauer have demonstrated that 5 users can generally identify around 80% of the issues in a system, making small sample sizes a fast, cost-effective means of identifying problems through usability testing. (Nielsen & Landauer, 1993)

Results

Using combined search bar prototype

In general, an issue we face around site search is that for many users, it doesn't appear that they understand that there's a difference between searching for catalogue resources and website pages. Because of this, it doesn't occur to most users to search in different locations for different types of information. In our test, only 2 out of 5 users successfully noticed the "search website" tab above the search bar. However, none of the users noticed the top right search bar, so this still represents an incremental improvement over the previous layout. Because of this, our recommendation is to:

- Adopt the new tabbed search interface
- Remove the top right site search
- Continue to iterate on designs to improve how visible the tabbed search bar is. An example of this is https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/, where the tabbed search bar stands out strongly against a contrasting background.

Location of "My Library Account"

In both tasks 2 and 3, all of the users were able to find "My Library Account" when asked where they would go to check if they have books checked out. Additionally, in task 3, all but one user located "My Library Account" in the top navigation, rather than by scrolling down. None of the users had any issues with this. Because of this, our recommendation is:

- Add "My Library Account" to main navigation bar
- Remove "My Library Account" from homepage

New layout for Map of Library Locations

All of our users were successfully able to locate a map of library locations, and none had apparent difficulties finding it. It looks like the new layout has managed to resolve the usability issue caused by the previous banner-styled map link. Because of this, our recommendation is:

- Keep the new map of library locations link at the top of the list of libraries on the Visiting the Library page

Getting help using the search bar

When asking users to get help using the search bar, we encountered a broad range of user behaviours and much more uncertainty than in the rest of this session's tests. A lot of users expressed uncertainty and bemusement around the concept of what we were asking them to do here, with several users saying something like, "I would just search", rather than seeking help around how to use a search

engine. When prompted, multiple users often indicated that if they didn't feel like the search was successful, they would use a different search tool or ask a librarian in chat rather than looking for search tips. It's possible that this indicates that the utility of this page lies in its value to power users or library staff who are answering questions, rather than to the typical student user. While we had one user search in "Research Support" for information on how to search, we don't feel like there was enough consistency in user behaviours to indicate a need for specific change at this time, especially given the lack of interest among users.

Requesting a purchase

Multiple users seemed to think that the first step to requesting a purchase was to first successfully locate the resource you wanted to purchase in the catalogue, and that there would be a "request a purchase" option in the catalogue. As far as we know, resources that aren't available don't tend to appear in the catalogue, so it's interesting that this mental model exists among multiple users. However, multiple users were able to find the "Recommend a purchase" link, while several others indicated that they would probably just use the chat service to place a recommendation. It doesn't appear that a strong need exists to change the existing website interface, but we could look into adding "recommend a purchase" as an option to catalogue surrogates for resources we don't own (but have catalogue surrogates for).

Consolidated List of recommendations

- Adopt the new tabbed search interface
- Remove the top right site search
- Continue to iterate on designs to improve how visible the tabbed search bar is. An example of this is https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/, where the tabbed search bar stands out strongly against a contrasting background.
- Add "My Library Account" to main navigation bar
- Remove "My Library Account" from homepage
- Look into whether it's possible to add a "request a purchase" link to Omni search surrogates for resources that we don't have institutional ownership of.
- (no action needed) Keep the new map of library locations link at the top of the list of libraries on the Visiting the Library page

Bibliography

Nielsen, J., & Landauer, T. (1993). A mathematical model of the finding of usability problems. *INTERACT '93 and CHI '93 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, (pp. 206-213). doi:https://doi.org/10.1145/169059.169166