

## **FGCU Library Website Usability Study (Pilot) - Spring 2009**

Submitted by: Danielle Rosenthal

### **Purpose**

To bring the users' perspective to the design process of the FGCU Library website and provide recommendations for possible areas of improvement based on results.

### **Procedure**

Five undergraduate students were recruited as volunteers to participate in this study (3 juniors, 1 sophomore, 1 freshman). Based on research conducted by usability experts, over 80% of design problems can be identified using just five participants in the initial assessment (Nielsen & Landauer, 1993). Two more assessments using groups of five will usually flush out most remaining issues and will be conducted at later dates. Each student was scheduled at a different day and time because there is only one station with the recording software and one webcam. After each student read and signed the IRB approved consent forms, short interviews were conducted primarily to gather demographic information (student status, major) and explain the "think-aloud" protocol (students are encouraged to "think-aloud" as they perform tasks or set about beginning them). Utilizing Morae software, audio, video and screen/mouse movements were recorded as they performed a total of 12 tasks. Participants also were given the option to provide written comments by answering five follow up questions. Sessions were observed on a separate computer by the observer (myself) and lasted about 30 minutes. All sessions took place in the Information Literacy Lab on the second floor of the library. After the session was completed, the file was imported into the Morae management module for analysis.

### **Overview**

All participants were able to find a way to request help for a research project, locate and use the course reserve system, find a subject librarian, and look up a book on a particular topic.

None of the participants were able to find recommended resources (Research Guides) and two participants specifically mentioned this lack of understanding in their written comments, "...maybe 'advertise' things like research guides a bit more by offering more explanation of what they do on the actual home page" and "the recommended books, databases, web resources was a little confusing only because I didn't know there was a specific webpage for that." Three users assumed items in the Catalog are "recommended" resources. Interestingly, two participants clicked on "Research Guides" in an effort to request help for a research project but turned away when they saw the main page. Overall, there is a disconnect between what the Research Guides are and [how] the term [is interpreted] as it appears on the homepage.

While four out of five participants found the Interlibrary Loan link, they reported being confused once they arrived at the ILLIAD login page. For example, "I don't know what the ILLAID is all about...I'm not sure where I would go at this point".

All but one participant used the Quick Search function to locate a book, find tutorials on how to use library resources, and connect to a specific database. These four were also able to find the ILL link, the library's hours and schedule, a full text article, and a phone number for help with remote access.

The Quick Search function was used quite a bit for locating books, but utilized only by one participant when looking for an article.

Not everyone used the database locator correctly, particularly the two participants who never used it before.

## **Narrative**

This usability study demonstrated that the homepage of our website does a good job providing many avenues for getting help, whether for a research project or for technical difficulties. In addition, participants found the website to have a clear and easy to use course reserve system and catalog. Participants found the homepage has identifiable links for databases and articles, the calendar, and interlibrary loan system.

This study also identified areas on the homepage that could be improved to enhance access to resources and clarity to the student conducting research; the research guides and possibly the quick search function.

Deeper into the site, the study identifies areas that could be improved: ILLiad login screen, database locator search box, calendar, and borrowing information, specifically the library card.

### *Getting Help for a Project*

All participants were able to find a way to request help for a research project, and were happy with the type of help they found. This clearly demonstrates that help is not hard to find on the site and the fact that it appears in different formats is appealing to different users. It is interesting to note that two out of five participants chose "Research Guides" when looking for help but turned away after they saw the main page. Comment: "Hmmm...I don't want this".

### *Finding a full text article on a specific topic*

Three participants, who have had prior experience using scientific databases, used the Database Locator (DBL) correctly to connect to a database and find a full text article. One participant (who has no experience), correctly clicked on the "Articles & Database" link, but typed her search term into the database locator search box. When faced with no results she headed to the *subject list of databases* and navigated to the correct subject area and eventually found an article. The last participant had no experience on our site and chose the Quick Search article tab and successfully found a full text article on the topic.

#### *Finding recommended resources*

Three participants went to the Library Catalog looking for *recommended* books, databases, web resources, etc. for an assignment on mental disorders. They each assumed that since “they are on our site” that they must be recommended. The other two participants clicked on 5-6 different links looking for a list, but gave up.

#### *Locate Pages that teach how to use library resources*

Four participants honed in on the word “Tutorials” under Help & Instruction and successfully found the PDF’s and tutorials. The first participant got it on a second try.

#### *Finding a librarian based on subject area*

All five participants completed this with ease. There are a few ways to accomplish this on the site and participants used most of them.

#### *Find a book on a specific topic owned by FGCU*

Four participants used the Quick Search function on the homepage and left the dropdown at *keyword*, one of the four used the *title* field. One participant went to Books & Media link and then to library Catalog.

#### *Locating a database by name*

Four participants used the database locator correctly by entering the database name in the search field. One participant tried browsing the A-Z list. This isn’t the fastest way but you can do it this way. In this case she wasn’t successful because the database name she was searching for didn’t appear on the first screen, she would have to use the navigation button to go to the next page, which she didn’t.

#### *Getting a copy of a book FGCU Library doesn’t own*

Four users successfully chose the Interlibrary Loan link, however two of them were confused by the screen and verbiage when they got there. One participant didn’t “know what the Illiad is all about” and the other said that “it looks like a librarian needs to do this for me”.

#### *Determining if a certain course has any items on Course Reserve*

All participants were able to locate the course reserve system quickly and use the system to find out if a course had any items associated with it.

#### *Finding out about getting a library card*

All but one participant failed this task, and she had difficulty. One participant landed on the correct page, but could not find the information on it. The other three just couldn’t find the right link or information at all.

#### *Using the Library Calendar*

Four out of five participants found the calendar and were able to determine if the library was open on a specific day and what the hours were. However, all four participants were observed

having to interpret which table on the page to go to. One participant found the calendar but could not answer or determine the hours for the day stated in the task.

#### *E-resources Remote Access help phone numbers*

All participants were able to locate the correct phone number to get help with remote access to E-resources; only one participant had minor difficulty finding the correct link on the first try.

## **Recommendations**

Identify and present the Research Guides in a way that makes their purpose clear at the homepage level. The current main navigation section of the homepage doesn't allow for description of the links, so perhaps a separate section on the homepage for the guides that allows for better description and visibility. The Resource Spotlight image is large, so this area could be cut up, or other elements could be moved to make room.

Include the words "Interlibrary Loan" on the Illiad homepage.

Create an updated FAQ page and/or investigate LibAnswers product from Springshare (which will be in Beta May 2009).

Create a calendar that looks like a calendar and doesn't require so much scrolling or interpreting. While users located the calendar and were able to find out if the library was open on a certain day as indicated in the task, it is evident by watching the students scroll that the current layout makes it a bit cumbersome.

Break up the Borrowing Services page into more identifiable sections or sub pages. Students were observed scrolling up and down this page in an effort to find library card information and only one succeeded.

### **Recommendations for the next study:**

Increase assistance to the Web Librarian in order to:

- Recruit a diverse student group as possible.
- Investigate the usefulness in utilizing the Morae Observer module more fully (markers, comments, timing, reports, graphs).

Update tasks/questions to better incorporate questions we receive at the Reference Desk.

## Results (detailed results are shown in Table 1)

- 5/5 users were able to find a way to request help for a research project
- 5/5 users failed to complete the task of finding recommended books, databases, web resources
- 5/5 users were able to find a book on a specific topic
- 5/5 users were able to find a librarian who specialized in a specific subject area
- 5/5 users had no difficulties looking up a course and finding materials on Course Reserves
- 4/5 users used the Quick Search function to find a book on a specific topic
- 4/5 users were easily able to find pages that explain how to use library resources
- 4/5 users were able to connect to a specific database
- 4/5 correctly chose the Interlibrary Loan link
- 4/5 were able to find out if the library was open on a specific day and what the hours were
- 4/5 users were able to locate a phone number for help with remote access
- 3/5 users used the database locator to look up a database and find an article, but they had prior experience doing so
- 2/5 users were confused when they got to the Illiad login page after clicking on Interlibrary Loan
- 1/5 users were able to find information about obtaining a library card
- 1/5 users typed her search terms in the database locator box. She proceeded to use the database subject list and eventually did find an article.
- 1/5 users used the Articles tab on the Quick Search function to find a full text article.

## Written Comments

“I like that you can find most information on the main webpage and its fairly easy to find where to navigate for more information.”

“Making how to get a library card easier since a lot of high school students that I know need our library to do projects.”

“When I first started using the website I was really confused about the difference between articles/databases and journals so better clarification between those would be good for someone who doesn't use those frequently.”

“The recommended books, databases, web resources was a little confusing only because I didn't know there was a specific webpage for that.”

“There are certain tools that I wouldn't know existed unless I was told. Maybe 'advertise' things like research guides a bit more by offering more explanation of what they do on the actual home page”.

“Overall the website is easy to navigate but only after using it frequently. At first it is confusing and not intuitive but I think its better now then when I first came to school here.”

“The website had four different specific headers like 'help and instruction' with options underneath that I used quite a bit when I wasn't sure where else to go.”

“I like the sections on the library home page such as Find, etc. because it made it easier to know in which general area I should look to answer my question. I also liked the tabbed search at the top with Library Catalogue, Journals, Articles, etc because it made searching easier.”

“The search tool on the right side of the website, I wasn't really sure what exactly I was searching for.”

“I usually only use the library website to access scientific databases that we subscribe to. I didn't know all of the features the website had”.

“The website has a very organized layout. You can chat with a librarian! (although I didn't know that before today)”

“I think there is more room on the homepage to put subheadings under links so it is more clear as to where they will take you.”

“I can't think of anything I would change. I didn't have trouble finding most things, and if I couldn't find something, there were other places I could look. “

“There weren't any unclear terms. All of the links had very brief titles which said exactly where they lead.”

“I think the website is pretty user-friendly overall, and it is quite easy to navigate. I was able to find a number of different things relatively quickly without outside assistance.”

**Table 1:** Results in more detail

<b>Question 1:</b>					
If you are in your dorm or at home and are having trouble finding information for a research project, how would you request help through the library website?					
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Research Guides	Yes	When prompted, chose Research Consultation	Yes	Completed with Ease
<b>User 2</b>	Contact Us	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 3</b>	Research Guides	No	Ask a Librarian	Yes	Completed with some Difficulty
<b>User 4</b>	Make a Request, More	No	Ask a Librarian	Yes	Completed with some Difficulty
<b>User 5</b>	Ask a Librarian	Yes	Research Guides	Yes	Completed with Ease
<b>Question 2:</b>					
Find an online, full text article on bone density.					
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Articles & Databases, Science Direct	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with ease, prior experience
<b>User 2</b>	Journals, e-journals	No	Articles & Databases	yes	Completed with some difficulty/typed CSA into e-journal portal but quickly realized and remedied
<b>User 3</b>	Articles & Databases, CSA	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease/prior experience
<b>User 4</b>	Articles & Databases, typed bone density into searchox	No	Articles & Databases, used Subject List	Yes	Completed with Difficulty/typed search term in db title search. Found article but difficulty full-text
<b>User 5</b>	Quick Search Article Tab	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease

**Question 3:** Where would you find recommended books, databases, web resources, etc. for an assignment on mental disorders?

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Library Catalog Quick Search tab	Not fully	n/a	n/a	Failed to Complete/Thought maybe because they came up that they are recommended
<b>User 2</b>	Library Catalog Quick Search tab	No	n/a	n/a	Failed to Complete
<b>User 3</b>	Find, More	No	With prompting, Research Guides	Yes	Completed with Difficulty
<b>User 4</b>	Articles & databases	No	Many others	No	Failed to Complete
<b>User 5</b>	Articles & databases	No	Library Catalog	Yes	Failed to Complete but thinks she completed task

**Question 4:** Find the pages that teach you how to use library resources.

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Help & Instruction, More	No	Tutorials & handouts	Yes	Completed with Some Difficulty
<b>User 2</b>	Tutorials & handouts	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 3</b>	Tutorials & handouts	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 4</b>	Tutorials & Handouts	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 5</b>	Tutorials & Handouts	Yes	About the Library More, Ref Services	Yes	Completed with Ease

**Question 5:** Find which librarian specializes in Education resources.

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Contact Us	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 2</b>	Used Top Nav bar, Help & Instruction, Subject Librarians	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 3</b>	Faculty Support	no	About the Library, Contact Us	yes	Completed with some difficulty
<b>User 4</b>	Contact Us	Yes			Completed with Ease
<b>User 5</b>	Ask a Librarian	Not really	Help & Instruc, More		Completed with some difficulty

**Question 6:** Find a book on homelessness owned by FGCU.

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Quick Search (anywhere)	Yes	n/a	n/s	Completed with Ease
<b>User 2</b>	Quick Search (anywhere)	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 3</b>	Quick Search (Title)	Yes			Completed with Ease
<b>User 4</b>	Books & Media, Catalog	Yes			Completed with Ease
<b>User 5</b>	Quick Search (anywhere)	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease

**Question 7:** Locate the database CQ-Researcher

	1 <sup>st</sup> choice link	User Satisfied?	2 <sup>nd</sup> choice link	User Satisfied?	Observers Score/Comments
<b>User 1</b>	Articles & Databases	Yes	n/a	n/s	Completed with Ease
<b>User 2</b>	Articles & Databases	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 3</b>	Articles & Databases	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 4</b>	Articles & Databases	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with some difficulty, didn't understand question
<b>User 5</b>	Articles & Databases, Browse	No	Articles & Databases, search box	yes	Completed

**Question 8:** You found a book for your research, but the library doesn't own it. Where would you go to request a copy of it?

	1 <sup>st</sup> choice link	User Satisfied?	2 <sup>nd</sup> choice link	User Satisfied?	Observers Score/Comments
<b>User 1</b>	ILL	No	Tutorials & Handouts	No	Failed, didn't know what ILLIAD was on login and turned away
<b>User 2</b>	ILL	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 3</b>	ILL	Yes			Completed with Ease
<b>User 4</b>	Books & Media, Catalog	no	ILL	Yes	Failed to Complete without prompting
<b>User 5</b>	ILL	Yes			Login screen confusing, thought needed a librarian to continue

**Question 9:** Does course number CHM221C have any items on course reserve?

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Course Reserves	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 2</b>	Course Reserves	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 3</b>	Course Reserves	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 4</b>	Course Reserves	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 5</b>	Course Reserves	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease

**Question 10:** Where can you find information on how you can get a library card?

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	About the Library, More	No			Failed to Complete
<b>User 2</b>	Help & Inst, More	No	About the Library, More, Borrowing	Yes	Completed with some difficulty (only one who read top line)
<b>User 3</b>	About the Library, Borrowing Services	No	Many	No	Failed to Complete
<b>User 4</b>	Ask a Librarian	No	Make a Request, More. Policies, Many others	No	Failed to Complete
<b>User 5</b>	Help & Instr, More, Tuts	No	About, More	No	Failed to Complete, would use AAL and send an email/call

**Question 11:** Find out if the library will be open on Monday April 19th and what the hours are.

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Calendar /Hours				Completed
<b>User 2</b>	Calendar/Hours	Yes			Completed
<b>User 3</b>	Calendar/Hours	No			Failed to Complete
<b>User 4</b>	Calendar/Hours	Yes			Completed
<b>User 5</b>	Calendar/Hours	Yes			Completed

**Question 12:** If you were having problems with remote access to the electronic resources, whom might you call and what are their phone numbers?

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> choice link</b>	<b>User Satisfied?</b>	<b>Observers Score/Comments</b>
<b>User 1</b>	Contact Us	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 2</b>	Help & Instru, More, AAL	No	Contact Us	Yes	Completed with some difficulty
<b>User 3</b>	Contact Us	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 4</b>	Remote Access	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease
<b>User 5</b>	Remote Access	Yes	n/a	n/a	Completed with Ease

Reference

Nielsen, Jakob, and Landauer, Thomas K.: "A mathematical model of the finding of usability problems," *Proceedings of ACM INTERCHI'93 Conference* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 24-29 April 1993), pp. 206-213.