Designing from the user’s perspective

Thomas Rutter
Dana McKay
Guide to finding information

Finding information

Q. How do I search for information, and what sort of information do I need?
A. That depends! It is good to answer some questions before you search.

Q. Where should I look for information?
A. That depends! Different sources of information are good for different kinds of questions. You might need more than one source.

It will help your search for information if you can answer these questions. Start with the dictionary question.

- Q. When would I look in a dictionary?
- Q. When would I look in an encyclopedia?
- Q. When would I look for a book?
- Q. When would I look for an article in a newspaper, magazine or journal?
- Q. When would I look for a video?
- Q. When would I look for a web page?

Still can’t find what you’re looking for?
If you need more help, talk to a librarian.
Visit any campus library, or contact us.

Author: Rosalind Wallis
LibQual 2006 Findings

- What the users think of our services
  - People want more access to journals on our website
  - But we have tons!
  - Can they find them?
Statistics

- Tell you what people are using on your website
- And what path they take once they're there
Why we wanted a change

- Make information more discoverable
- More organised structure
- Less jargon users don’t understand
- More consistency in presentation
- Less text heavy
  - But use graphics wisely
- In other words, make the site more usable!
What is usability?

- “Simple objects shouldn’t need signs”
Physical Signs in the Library

Light switch

MASTER
OFF
Physical Signs in the Library

ACQUISITIONS – DO NOT REMOVE FROM THIS AREA
Physical Signs in the Library

After Hours Access Only
- Swipe LateLab card across glass plate
- Press 1 or 2 on panel above

After Hours Access Only
- Swipe LateLab card across glass plate
- Press 1 of 2 on panel above
Sometimes signs are unnecessary

In case of emergency
break glass to open door

An alarm will sound
Complex objects do need signs

- But they should still be designed to minimise signs
- Signs should be designed to be simple
- Users should only see signs when they need them
- If in doubt, ask your users
What about library websites?

- “Simple objects shouldn’t need signs”
- Design to minimise signs
- Only show signs when users need them
- Ask your users
Example: Navigation

[Image of a navigation interface with a highlighted section labeled "computer bags"]
Example: Navigation

- Use standard navigation
- Have the same navigation bar on every page
- Put things where users expect to find them
  - We are doing a card sorting exercise with students
  - Putting “like things” together
  - Naming piles of cards
Example: Library glossaries

Glossary of Library Terms

Abstract
An abstract is a short summary describing the main idea or content of a work such as an article, book, or dissertation.

Annotation
Unlike an abstract, which is a short summary of a work, an annotation briefly describes, evaluates, or comments on a work.

Archives
A special collection of documents, such as manuscripts, newspaper clippings, etc. Archives usually house materials of an historical nature. See also University Archives.

Article
Sometimes referred to as a paper, an article is a brief composition on a subject, usually appearing in a magazine or journal.

Audio-Visual Materials
Audio-visual materials convey information mainly via sound and image instead of by text. An example of audio-visual material on the Library Gateway is U.S. Agency for International Development's Artworks.

Bear Access
A suite of network service applications designed to provide services specific to the needs of the Cornell community, such as Coursera, Faculty Advisor, and the online timecard system (COLTS II), as well as general Internet services such as electronic mail and browsers for navigating the World Wide Web. The CU Library Catalog and Library Gateway are available through Bear Access.

Bibliography

Boolean Operator or Boolean Logic
Boolean operators, often known as logical operators, are used to construct complex searches in a database. They help make a search more accurate. There are 3 logical operators: AND, OR and NOT.
Example: Library Glossaries

- Some good library glossaries available
- Better not to use a glossary at all
- Ask the user:
  - We are surveying our users for their understanding of library terms
  - Some descriptions asking for names
  - Some words asking for definitions
Example: Library guides

Guides to Library Services

- Essential Library Guide for Students
- Library Guide for Postgraduate Students
- Library Guide for Academic Staff
- Researchers' Handbook
- Access and Authentication - Electronic Resources
- Brief guide for Library Users with Disabilities
- Guidelines for Library Representatives
- Offprints - a guide for academic staff
- Electronic Delivery (Inter-Library Loan articles)
- Electronic Delivery Troubleshooting Guide
- SCONUL Research Extra

How to log in and find your password

Troubleshooting guide: expect things to go wrong
Example: Library guides

- Rather than having guides, try to make things easier to use
- If guides are necessary, make them suitable for online (no PDFs)
- Write guides in the user’s language
Usability for Libraries

■ Every time you are tempted to hang a sign, write a guide, or otherwise create user training materials, think:

  “Can I change the system to make these materials unnecessary?”

■ If you can’t change the system when you create the training materials think about what the user needs from them

■ Remember, library users and librarians are very different

■ If in doubt, ask your users
New website front page
Next?

- Greater reorganisation of website structure
- Address use of jargon
- Build new navigation
  - □ Categorising all our information is a big task
  - □ How do we categorise and prioritise information?
What about help materials?

- Often they are unnecessary
- Asking the user helps redesign
- When they are necessary, make them:
  - Easy to understand
  - Easy to find when needed
  - Fit with how users expect to use them