

Web Usability 101:

Best Practices, Tips, and Tricks for Library Websites and Beyond

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Today's Workshop

- ★ Overview of Web Usability and Accessibility
- ★ All About Usability Testing
- ★ Pair and Share

Let's Talk Library Websites

Introduction to Basics

- ★ In essence, library websites are *portals* to connect users to information
 - Whether that information is resources provided by the library or information about services or the library itself
 - Our websites are essentially a tool

Common Site Elements

- ★ Library/Institution Branding
- ★ Navigation
- ★ Catalog/Discovery Search
- ★ Contact Information
- ★ Information about services/policies
- ★ Library Hours

And I realize...

- ★ Not every library has full control over their website
- ★ Sometimes you have to make due with what you can, so just as long as you try...

(This is something I remembered after looking at tons of sites in preparation for this talk...)

Quick Note on Examples

- ★ In preparing for this talk I randomly visited a ton of academic library websites
- ★ Many had a range of different things to highlight
- ★ They aren't meant to shame anyone
 - Some sites I used as examples for something bad do other things well, and vice versa

Let's Talk Usability...

“

Usability refers to the quality of a user's experience when interacting with products or systems, including websites, software, devices, or applications. Usability is about effectiveness, efficiency and the overall satisfaction of the user.

-Usability.gov

[“Usability Evaluation Basics”](#)

So What Does That Mean for Me?

- ★ **Websites with usability issues mean**
 - It's difficult to do simple, common tasks
 - Your users may get overwhelmed or frustrated
 - They don't want to visit or use your site (even if they need it)
- ★ **Usable websites get the content across clearly**
 - Users will be more likely to see them as useful

Web Usability Basics

- ★ Can content be easily understood
 - Is it readable?
 - Is it written clearly?
- ★ Easy to find information on the page
 - Is the structure and organization obvious?
- ★ Navigation is straightforward
 - Is it obvious where to go?

Readability

- ★ Clear, easy-to-read fonts
 - And not too many
- ★ Fonts sized appropriately
- ★ Good color contrast

Search All Resources

Use GALILEO @ [redacted] to find full-text articles, books, media, conference proceedings, and more

GALILEO [redacted]

Search

Full Text – Online or in Print

Peer Reviewed

Search a Single Resource Use the alphabetical bar to select a single resource for results targeted by subject or format

[All](#) | [A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [G](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [J](#) | [K](#) | [L](#) | [M](#) | [N](#) | [O](#) | [P](#) | [Q](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [U](#) | [V](#) | [W](#) | [X](#) | [Y](#) | [Z](#)

Search Popular Resources [Academic Search Complete](#) | [JSTOR](#) | [PsycARTICLES](#) | [CINAHL Complete](#) | [Business Source Complete](#)

Search Discovery

SEARCH

ADVANCED SEARCH

DATABASES

BOOKS

EBOOKS

GOOGLE SCHOLAR

ASK ATHENA

Problem: Tiny text or poor contrast!

Library Hours: 7:30am – 11:30pm

Research Desk: 9:00am – 8:00pm

 My Account

Library Search | Search for books, articles, and more



Advanced Search

Chat With Us

Databases & Articles

Find library databases with access to articles & more

QuickSearch

Journal Finder

Library Catalog



QuickSearch is a discovery tool that retrieves books, articles, media and more found in the Catalog, databases, and digital collections. Use the facets on the left side of the results screen to narrow your search by publication type, language, date, topic and more.

Databases & Articles

Research Guides

Interlibrary Loan



About the Library



Research Help



Support for Faculty



Ask a Librarian

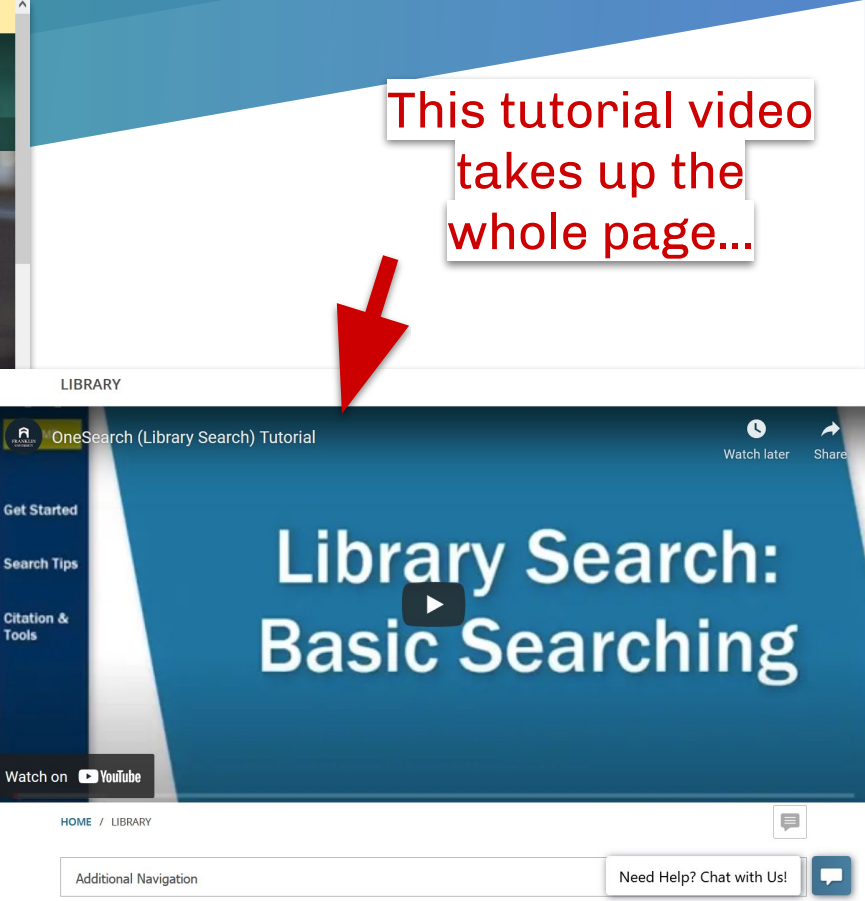
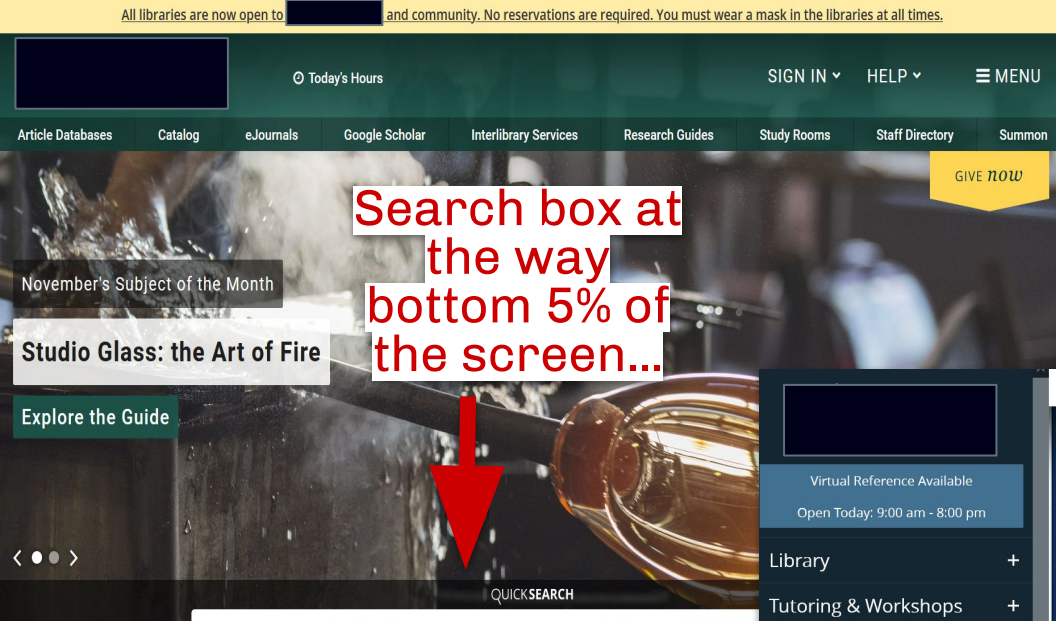
Better: High contrast, clear fonts

Writing for the Web

- ★ Plain language is best (No Jargon!)
 - Use common expressions/vernacular if possible
- ★ Users tend to skim...
 - Bullet points and clear headings are incredibly valuable
- ★ Keep things concise
 - Users want to know: What is this? How will it help me?

Layout Considerations

- ★ What do your users see when they first load your page?
- ★ Is it obvious where the most important things are?
 - Do users have to scroll down for basic things?
- ★ Is it easy to distinguish between navigation and content?
 - Or between sections of content?



Issue: This picture took up most of the screen, the search was all the way at the bottom...

Home My Library Accounts

Home Using The Library Research & Writing Tools Help About The Library Chat

Books, videos, & more Articles Course reserves Library website

Search books, videos, & more

Search Library collection Search

Advanced search »
Sign in to request items »

Today's Hours

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

Library	10:00am - 3:00pm
Library	10:00am - 3:00pm
Library	10:00am - 3:00pm
Library	10:00am - 3:00pm

Shortcuts

Databases

SEARCH & FIND SERVICES & RESEARCH ABOUT THE LIBRARIES MATERIALS & BORROWING HELP & SUPPORT COVID GUIDELINES


OneSearch Articles Books Databases Website

Search Articles, Books & More... Search


Introducing the New OneSearch Discovery Tool

More Ways to Search


Advanced Search	Journal Search
FSU Theses and Dissertations	Special Collections Search




Library Hours




Course Materials




Equipment & Software




Study Rooms




Citation Guide



Research Guides



Tutoring Information

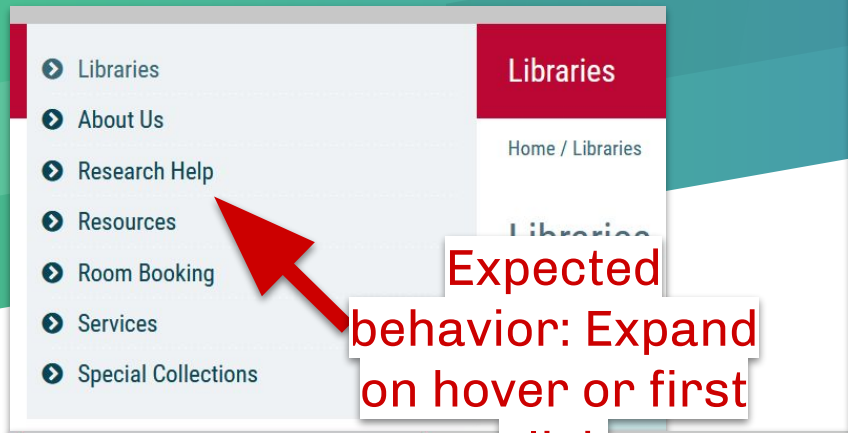


Contact Us

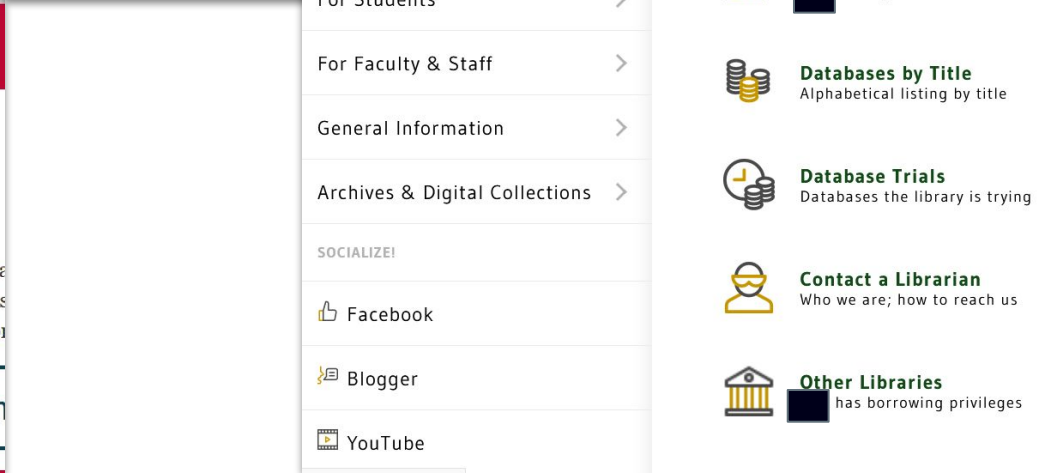
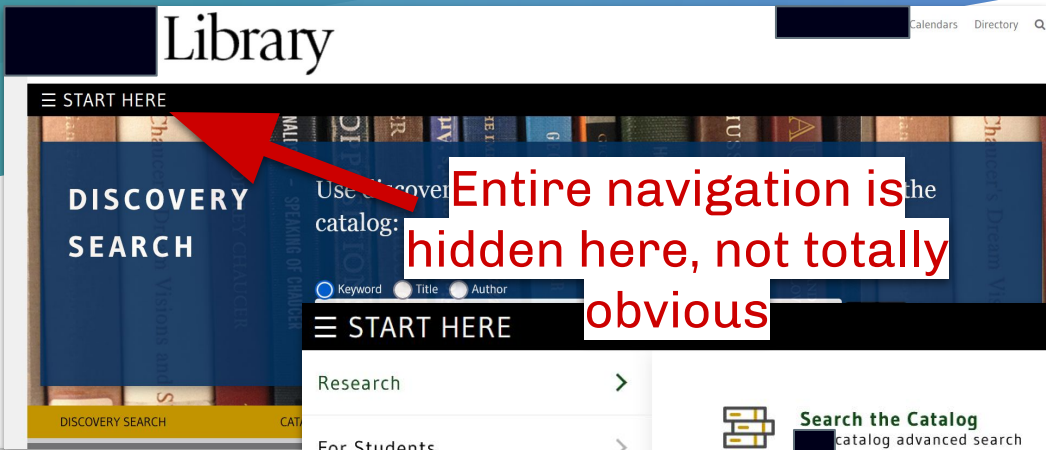
Better: Main things users might be looking for, front and center

Navigation

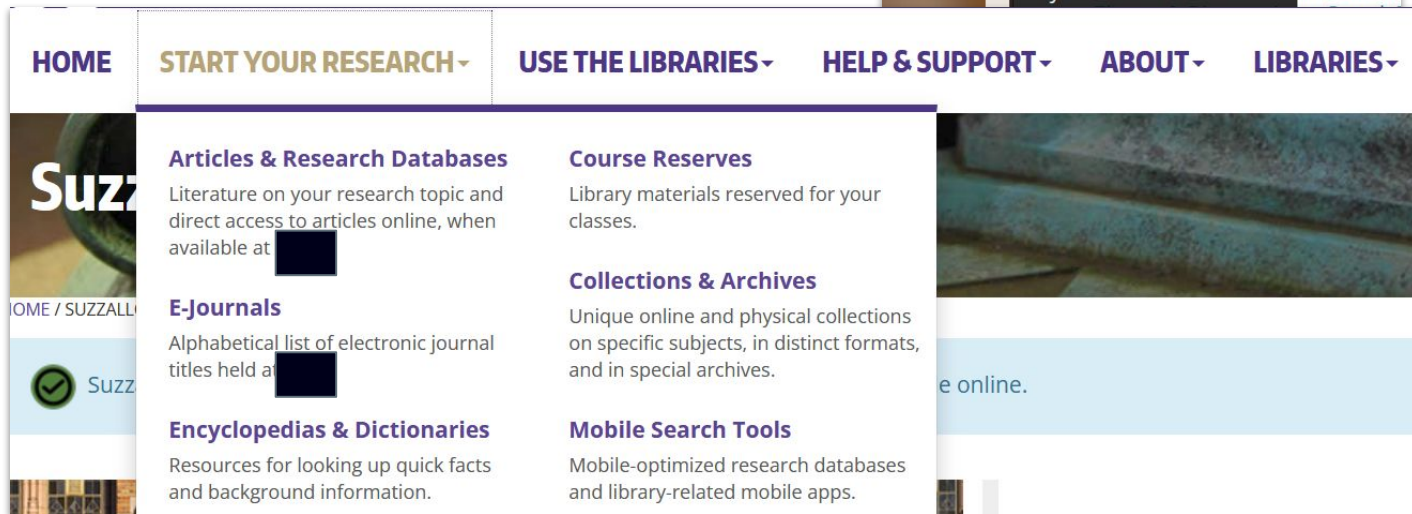
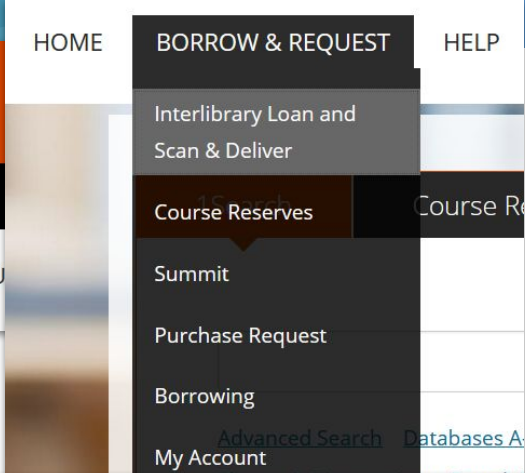
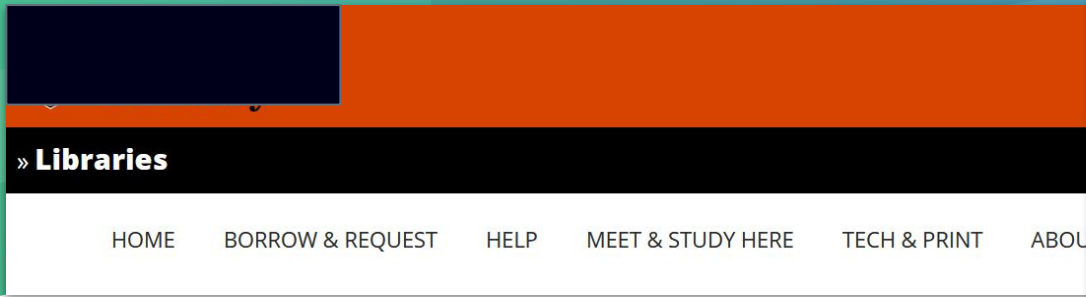
- ★ Developing site navigation means thinking about expected user behavior
 - Where do you expect them to look?
 - How do you expect them to interact?
- ★ Are things labeled and organized in a user-centric way?
- ★ Can you easily go back or change direction?



Issue: Only top-level navigation is visible before clicking



Issue: Menu is hidden when you load the page, even on desktop



Better: Clear and present navigation, works as users expect

Websites for Everyone

- ★ We can't talk usability without ensuring our websites are usable by **everyone**
- ★ It's more than making sure your images have alt-text
- ★ Current web usability best practices include considerations for accessibility
 - Universal Design!!!

Visual Content for Everyone

- ★ Charts, graphs, or images **must** be accompanied by alt-text for users that might not be able to see them
- ★ Decorative little flourishes don't need it, but everything else should have a *meaningful* text description

More Than the Mouse

- ★ Some users may try to get around without a mouse/cursor
 - Screen reader users
 - Various motor/physical reasons
 - Personal preference
- ★ But how easy is it to get around with just the keyboard?
- ★ CSS pseudo-class **:focus** will show a user what they're currently selecting so they know before they "click"



DATABASES



GUIDES



BOOKS / MEDIA



GET HELP

Services

Visiting

About

My Library

Hours



ASK A LIBRARIAN



HOURS & SPACES



RESERVE A STUDY ROOM

Use keywords to search for articles, e-books, dissertations, and more

Advanced Search

Find Journals

Databases A-Z



Find an Article



Find Your Textbook



APA Citation



Research Guide



Ask a Librarian

Good: Try tabbing through and seeing if you know where you are

Accessible Interactivity

- ★ Interactive elements (yes, your catalog search widget counts) need proper descriptions in the code too
- ★ Screen reader users need to know what they're selecting/entering so they can use them properly
- ★ Make sure interactivity doesn't make it difficult for users to use your site
- ★ Remember some users find animations distracting

One Size (Doesn't) Fit All

- ★ Some users may zoom in to reduce eye strain or see better
- ★ Make sure your site is *responsive* and the page doesn't break if they do that
 - Also good practice because of differences in screen resolution, etc.

If You Have Videos...

- ★ Videos **must** have captions made by an actual person
- ★ Automatic captions can be wonky/unhelpful
- ★ Remember: users may have all sorts of reasons for turning those captions on

Handy Tools

- ★ Hemingway
 - Paste in text and it'll tell you if it's too wordy
- ★ WAVE Evaluation Tool
 - Looks for proper alt tags and labels, heading hierarchies, etc.
- ★ WCAG Color Contrast Checker
 - Will tell you if contrast is good

The Best Library Websites...

- ★ Have a clear purpose and stick to it
- ★ Are easy-to-read and concise
- ★ Keep their audience in mind
- ★ Give users what they need
 - And doesn't bog users down with *too* much
- ★ (It doesn't hurt if they look nice too)

Basic Usability Testing

So You Have a Site...

- ★ But while you may try your best to make the site usable, how do you know if it *really is*?
- ★ Usability testing can help shine a light on issues you may have missed
 - So that you can make your site better!
- ★ Again, if the site isn't usable it's not *useful*

Different Types of Testing

- ★ There are multiple ways to do testing
 - Wireframe/Prototype
 - Card Sorting
 - A/B Testing
 - In-Person Testing
 - etc...
- ★ Different things work better at different parts of the design process and with different situations

In-Person Testing

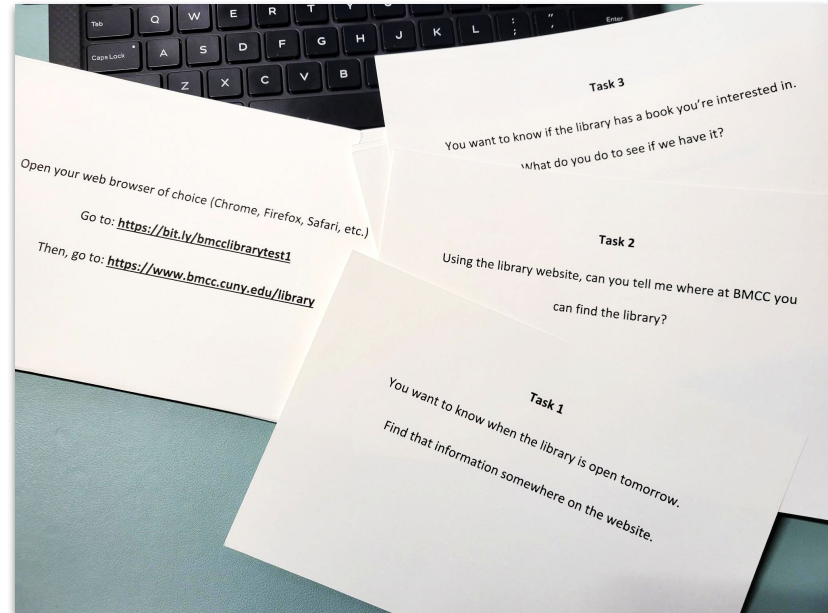
- ★ Testers are given sample tasks representative of the types of things users may typically do on your site
- ★ Give them one task at a time and ask them to narrate their thought process
 - Take note of how they navigate through the site and what the sticking points are
- ★ Discuss each task after for additional feedback

Testers

- ★ To get a sense of how well your users can use the site, you'll have to recruit some for testing
 - Representative users if possible
- ★ You don't need a lot of testers, as the same issues will repeat
- ★ You may have to go through IRB
 - (Even if it's ultimately exempt)
- ★ Testers won't sign up unless they get something for their time...

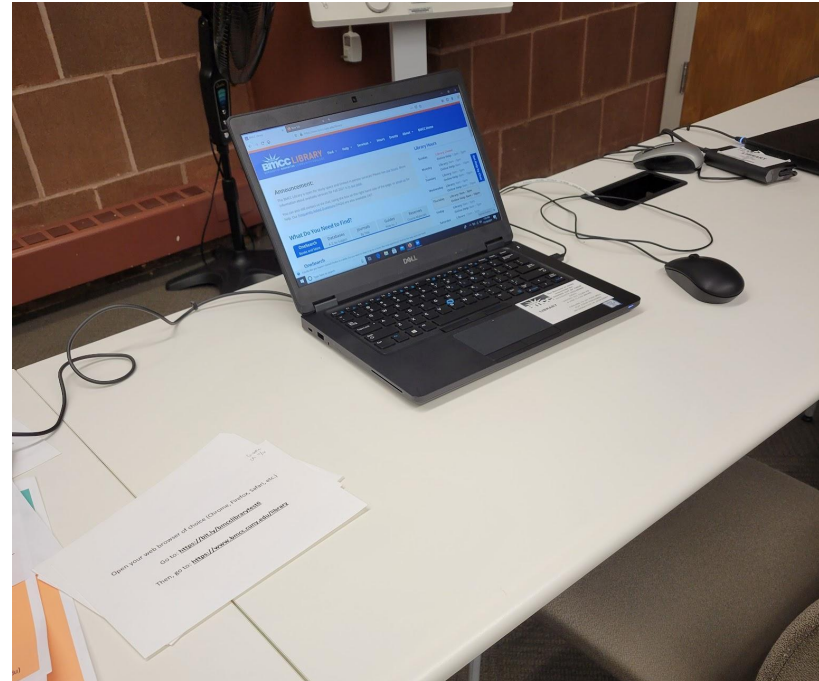
Developing Tasks

- ★ Given one at a time on cards
- ★ Tried to not interfere
- ★ Tried to not use words found in the interface to bias testers
- ★ Covered basic library tasks like finding our hours and locating the catalog



About My Testing

- ★ 7 short tasks
- ★ Testing done in-person
 - Which meant students had to be able to come to campus
- ★ Recorded over Zoom
 - So I could review the sessions later
- ★ Students got a monthly Metrocard when they were done



The Tasks Given

- ★ You want to know when the library is open tomorrow. Find that information somewhere on the website.
- ★ Using the library website, can you tell me where at BMCC you can find the library?
- ★ You want to know if the library has a book you're interested in. What do you do to see if we have it?
- ★ You need assistance finding research articles for a project you're doing. How do you get in touch with a librarian?
- ★ Your professor told you there was a video you could stream through the library but only told you it was "in SWANK" and the name of the video. Can you find a link to get to SWANK so you can look for it?
- ★ You were told to contact Kathleen Dreyer in the library. Where can you find her contact information?
- ★ You have to write a paper but need help with the citations. Find something that will help.

So, How'd It Go?

- ★ Thanks to the participation incentive I had over 30 people express interest in participation
 - I only needed 6 but it was good to have a pool of backups...
- ★ A few participants were unfamiliar with library terminology which was a challenge for them
- ★ Did identify some issues to address
 - Finding specific databases and our location seemed to be the most challenging

Small Issues

- ★ Was hoping to test the site with screen reader users, but asked students to self-identify
 - A lot of people who don't use them don't know what they are...
- ★ Rescheduling and ghosting
- ★ Wifi issues
- ★ Had to launch the Zoom session for them to record

Pair and Share

- ★ We're going to use Zoom breakout rooms to split into small groups
- ★ You'll be able to share screens and chat amongst yourselves
- ★ There's an "Ask for Help" button if you need anything
- ★ You'll get a warning when it's time to come back

Group Activity

- ★ Feel free to share your own sites or use from the list
- ★ Ask yourselves:
 - What does this site do well?
 - What could use improvement?
 - Is there anything that you'd want to “borrow”?
- ★ Constructive criticism is good!
 - But please, be collegial!

Sharing is Caring

- ★ Did you see anything you really liked?
 - Put the link the Chat Box
- ★ Any interesting conversations that popped up around anything that was shared?
- ★ Do you have your own recommendations you'd like to share?

Thank
You!!

Any Questions?

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