

Alkek Library Web Usability Study Report

Conducted on June 2 & 6, 2005

Prepared by the Library Web Usability Study Taskforce Members:

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Goals & Rationale

The primary goals of this study were:

1. To gain information on the usability of the Alkek Library website in order to update, modify, or redesign the website.
2. To provide library user feedback to assist the Library and I.T. during the migration of our website into a content management system.

Methodology & Participants

A focus group consisting of 30 participants was used to test the website. The group contained undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff and public users.

Participants were volunteers solicited by email and public users approached in person. Eighty persons were randomly selected from the respondent group. The Library contacted volunteers to explain the study and secure their attendance and participation.

Participants were observed while they answered a test consisting of 13 questions. In order to answer the questions, participants had to navigate different aspects of the library web pages to locate resources and services. The questionnaire also required the use of features in the website such as main links, mouse-overs, and navigation bars.

A follow up discussion was administered to evaluate the overall experience and difficulty level.

The entire test including the discussion period was planned to require less than one hour, and it was hoped that the test would be completed in about 30 minutes.

Previous studies on website usability and design suggest that valid responses are gained from as few as 5 to 12 participants. Thus, multiple group testing is not required in order to gain beneficial data on usability. Additionally, on-site test administration offered the opportunity to observe test subjects, their questions, links visited, and other data that would not be as easily obtained from an online test administered over the web with no on-site component.

Incentives

Free Texas State University T-Shirts and light refreshment were presented to participants upon completion of the test.

Study Preparations and Guidelines

Room prep: Rooms and workstations were prepped prior to test.

Individual greetings and rooms: Participants signed in, were greeted and divided into one of the 2 rooms as they arrived.

Introductions & instructions: See Focus Group Script

Test began at 11:00 a.m.

Participants took exercise: Observers floated during exercise taking notes

Post-Exercise Question & Answer Session: Participants met in room 105 for food and post-exercise Q&A session while observers assisted with notes, capturing comments, issues, etc.

Focus Group Script

Introduction

Librarian

*My name is _____. I am _____ at Alkek Library. This is _____ who will be assisting me and also taking notes. I would like to thank everyone for volunteering to participate in this focus group study, and also to remind you that you have a right to withdraw from the session at **any** time.*

Confidentiality

We would also like to remind you that we consider your comments here to be confidential. I would appreciate it if each of you would also consider each other's comments to be confidential as well.

Methods

The study will be conducted in 2 parts:

1. Library Web Usability Exercise
2. Discussion & Comment (Session will be audio taped during the discussion session)

Feel free to ask questions about this study before we start. Once we start the exercises, we will not answer any questions from participants until during the Q & A period.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to find out what your viewpoint is about using our library web pages not your skills and performances. The primary goal is to gain information on the usability of the Alkek Library website which will in turn be used to update, redesign, or otherwise modify (or create) data or other features for the website.

This means that there are no wrong answers! When it comes to your opinion, you're the expert, so please keep all your comments until the end of the exercise and feel free to say whatever comments you may have during the discussion. It is perfectly acceptable to criticize any aspect of our web site. Our main reason in doing this study here is to see if we can get feedbacks on how easy or hard it is to use the library web site. We want to find some clues on how the library could improve the usability and the features of the web site to make it easy to locate all library resources and services.

Consent

Do you give your consent as a participant in this web usability study?

Yes_____ No_____

Does anyone have any questions about this study at this time?

Part I - Alkek Library Web Usability Exercise Questions

Answer all of the following questions through the Library website.

<http://www.library.txstate.edu>

1. What are Alkek Library hours on Fridays?
2. Who is the Government Documents Librarian?
3. What is the call number for this book?
Title of the book is: *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
Author of the book is: Ernest Hemingway
4. On what library floor is that book located?
5. What is the title of an article database covering topics in psychology?
 1. The library subscribes to a journal called Comparative Literature Studies.
 - a. What is the call number to the printed (bound) copies of this journal?
 - b. This same journal is also available electronically through the Library. In what year did full-text coverage begin?
6. Name at least 2 ways you can contact a Reference Librarian for help.
7. What phone number should students call in order to remove a library 'hold' from their student records?
8. What library service(s) would you use to borrow books from *another* library?
9. On the library website there are many library research guides on a wide variety of topics, such as education, business, and writing style guides, etc. What is the web address to a list of library research guides?
10. Professors place items in "Electronic Reserve" to share with an entire class. What is the web address for Electronic Reserves (which is also called E-res)?
2. The Library has a computer lab on the 4th floor. What are the hours on Fridays?
11. Which photographer did the Wittliff Gallery exhibit in Fall 2004?

Part II - Post-Exercise Discussion Questions

1. Of the tasks you just completed in the web usability exercise....
 - a. Which was easiest?
 - b. Which was hardest?
2. What resources or services do you currently use on the Library website?
3. What resources or services have you looked for, but could NOT find, or could NOT easily use?
4. What suggestions do you have on how we can improve our website?
5. What other comments do you have?

Usability Study Analyses

Survey Sample Population: 170

Focus Study Sample	Invited	Responded
Faculty	10	7
Graduates	5	3
Undergraduates	22	12
Staff	10	5
Public Users	3	3
Total	80	30

Study Results - Part I - Alkek Library Web Usability Exercise Questions

Question 1				
What are Alkek Library hours on Fridays?				
Answers	7:30 - 10:00	7:30 or 8:00 - 5:00	Both Times	9:00 - 6:00
Respondents	13	5	11	1
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used site search – came up w/summer 2004 hours Went to services – went across top looking under each one Used site index 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolled over Library Info – didn't like that the pointer wasn't pointing to link Most hit enter when looking for a book, found in one click Went to Services, then found it under library information 		

Question 2				
Who is the Government Documents Librarian?				
Answers	Ralph Dalton	Didn't Find		
Respondents	29	1		
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Went to Site Search Used Site Index to get to Gov Docs page – scrolled down to find it 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used Gov Docs link at bottom After trying a few times, found Gov Docs link at bottom 		

Question 3				
What is the call number for: <i>For Whom the Bell Tolls</i> by Ernest Hemingway?				
Answers	Call Number			
Respondents	30			
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hit enter instead of title button – audio book comes up first • Found it easily – used KW to find the book • Used title button, then author search 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tried title search first, then Author search • Clicked on Lib Cat link, then Understanding Call Numbers, clicked author, all fields said “page is misleading”, found title and scrolled down to find call number 		

Question 4				
On what library floor is that book located?				
Answers	Floor 6	Floor 5	Floor 4	No Answer
Respondents	20	7	1	2
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a long time was able to find it – used site index 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Went to circulation 		

Question 5				
What is the title of an article database covering topics in psychology?				
Answers	Psychology DB	Academic SP	Article	
Respondents	28	1	1	
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used pull down menu instead of subject search • Used alpha drop down menu • Most got it in two clicks • Easily found 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used pull down menu instead of subject search • Tried search in catalog first, then found databases page and databases by subject 		

Question 6a				
The library subscribes to a journal called Comparative Literature Studies.				
Answers	Call # Comp. Lit	Blank	0010 – 4132	No idea
Respondents	26	2	1	1
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picked Full-text databases rather than e-journal using Locating Periodicals • Went directly to Locating Periodicals • Most went to catalog to see electronic record and followed link • Clicked more on lib cat page, chose locating periodicals 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used Locating Periodicals, found electronic version, stayed there a while • This confuses users when results come back after using Locating Periodicals – user unsure what to click on – a lot clicked databases • Used site search, finally went to catalog 		

Question 6b				
This journal is available electronically. In what year did full-text coverage begin?				
Answers	Electronic 1999	1993 – looked at db	1973	Blank/ Other
Respondents	21	5	1	3
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got it via catalog • Used Locating Periodicals link to online DB to find full-text • Also used link source to during browsing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used Locating Periodicals link and limited the search to EJ • Select a volume on e-journal page is tricky 		

Question 7				
Name at least 2 ways you can contact a Reference Librarian for help.				
Answers				
Ref Desk	Telephone	Email	Chat	No Answer
Respondents				
15	15	14	14	2
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Went to Ask-A-Librarian also went to need help FAQs Used Ask-A-Librarian Live 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used FAQs Went to Services and Library Information 		

Question 8				
What phone number should students call in order to remove a library 'hold'?				
Answers	Circulation Ph#	Blank or Other #		
Respondents	26	4		
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Went to site index Used site index unsuccessfully, maybe used Library Offices phone number list 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Went to site index, accidentally went to hold/recall page, went back, found clearing holds page 		

Question 9				
What library service(s) would you use to borrow books from another library?				
Answers	TexShare, Coral & ILL	2 of 3	1 of 3	Lending
Respondents	2	4	23	1
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Went to FAQs for ILL, found TxShare page Took many clicks to find 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used Site Index and Library Catalog page to answer "other library" request 		

Question 10				
What is the web address to a list of library research guides?				
Answers	Res. Guides URL	No URL		
Respondents	26	4		
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used Site Index Found them in the popup (rollover) Went to DB selector – got to it from there 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Found it from IL home page under left nav bar Two clicks – made another, wrote down URL 		

Question 11				
What is the web address for Electronic Reserves (which is also called E-res)?				
Answers	Eres URL	No URL		
Respondents	27	3		
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Got to eReserves 				

Question 12				
The Library has a computer lab on the 4th floor. What are the hours on Fridays?				
Answers	Comp. Lab Hours			
Respondents	30			
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used Hours link to find lab hours – followed link 				

Question 13				
Which photographer did the Wittliff Gallery exhibit in Fall 2004?				
Answers	Fall Exhibit	Not Ans or Other		
Respondents	28	2		
Facilitator/Observer Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under site search, got to Wittliff Gallery, tried to find again, looking for past exhibits 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used Site Index 		

Average time study questions were completed: 22.33 minutes

Written Comments on the Exercise Sheets:

Alkek hours:

“did not see at first that these are fall & spring...if don’t scroll down, miss summer hours...”

Call Number of book:

“first listing is very confusing- can’t tell which are books, some are notes, films, etc.”

What floor is book located question:

“hard to know if location is by call number or title.”

Concerning the library hold question:

“This should be more explicit on the web: relies on intuitive searching”

“Buried in fine for overdue books, lucky guess by me”

“Would not display that page”

“Could not find a location that specifically addressed “hold” choose to call admin services”

Borrow from other libraries:

“Would not have found it if I hadn’t heard of the service previously”

Bound copies:

“Is Muse part of LRC website?”

“Followed links to Springerlink....could not tell if this is what I was looking for...”

Research guides:

“Got to this via site index”

Computer lab question:

“Library home page link not working”

“Could not tell if hours were specifically for the 4th (is there more than one lab?)”

Other comments:

“Need a home button on all pages?”

Study Results - Part II – Post Exercise Discussion Questions

Question #1 - Of the tasks just completed:

a. Which was easiest?

- Eight people said finding the Call number was easiest.
- Seven said the Library hours were easiest.
- Three said using the catalog was easiest.
- One said finding the Gov Doc's librarian was easy.
- Finding book by using telnet catalog was thought to be easiest by one user.
- Computer lab hours, how to contact a librarian, and the location of books questions were said to be easiest by one person each.

b. Which was hardest?

- Five said library holds was hardest.
- Four said locating Comparative Literature Studies was difficult.
- Three said finding the electronic full-text beginning date was hardest.
- Two said finding the ways to ask a librarian for help was most difficult.
- Finding research guides, library hours, phone numbers, the database question, finding call number, finding the Gov Doc librarian, locating the Wittliff exhibit for last fall, locating specific media in the catalog and determining where to look when they didn't know an answer was said to be the hardest to answer by one person each.

Question #2 - What resources do you currently use on the library website?

- Eleven said they use the catalog to find call numbers, etc. the most.
- Ten said they use the databases.
- Six use the library website to determine the library hours.
- Two do not currently use any of the resources.
- Two also said they use the EReserves (Eres)
- One person each said they use Blackboard, ILL, research & writing style guides, SLAC, TexShare & Special Collections.

Question #3 - What resources have you looked for, but could not find, or could not easily use?

- Two people said none.
- One person each said they had trouble finding the following resources or made the following comments:

Databases

Textbooks

Find online in other libraries

Other libraries

- “Books and materials needed are not in library”
- “Can’t find books borrowed link.”
- “Some databases not user-friendly; couldn’t get full-text links to open- they linked to other databases.”
- “Mostly the catalog online; have trouble with periodicals.”
- “I have always found what I needed @ this website!”
- “Online catalog portal page is very intimidating to me. I expect to identify material searching for first.”
- “Citation Indices- I wasn’t sure to which index you subscribed.”

Question #4 – What suggestions do you have to improve our website?

- “Ability to reserve small study rooms.”
- “Showing the cursor arrow on the rollovers instead of just adding a color box.”
- “Don’t change as much.”
- “Can the information next to the media reflect the media? (book, cd, tape, online, etc.)
- “I fully enjoy and can easily use the Alkek Library’s Website.”
- “Include link to library homepage on every page.”
- “None, I like it the way it is – your reference desk is great about helping when I’m stuck in any area.”
- “The use of JavaScript with the “mouse over” on the main page is pointless since the link itself can be clicked for the same information.”
- “The “mouse over” is also difficult to use with a laptop touch pad.”
- “There are 4 types of searches on the main page. The internet search is not needed. Site Search is low priority.”

Question #5 – What other comments do you have?

- “FAQ link (Docutek’s) broken.”
- “Put hours on page immediately.”
- “Wasn’t sure what category to look under for Gov doc’s question.”
- “Would like online access to our records (books borrowed) “
- “Make the search terms a little more elementary and specific- don’t rely on the intuition and experience of new students or other user to locate.”
- “Does a student know the language “journal” or “periodical?”
- “How do they know its online or a book?”
- “For the most part, I think its well “designed.” (this word was not real clear)
- “Whenever I can’t find something, I go to the site index. “
- “I don’t think about interlibrary loans.”

- “I didn’t know that I could ask a librarian online.”
- “Thanks for doing this study.”
- “Hours all in one screen”
- “Your library webpage is great the way it is. I think changing it will create havoc for those of us who use it for research!”

General Comments and Recommendations

Catalog/Call Number

- Likes Telnet version "t=" or what you are looking for
- Didn't like "reset search settings" - start search over
- Would like "search by" feature to be first
- Page makes no sense
- Duplicate titles on second page of search are confusing
- Catalog search - separate journals from books
- Confusing to have the "library has no holdings" result
- Library needs more books - how do we let library know - need link to request library purchase book
- Confusing to have all floors listed in the location field
- "In-process", "on order", "not in library", "library has no holdings" messages are confusing, frustrating when want it.

Collection Development

- OT wants to order books directly and bypass department liaison system
- More info on about collection development suggestion form and the rush cataloging form
Highlight both and make them more prominent/or accessible

Computer Lab Page

- Link to library home page doesn't work (from the computer lab page)
- Computer Lab web site needs updating

Gov Docs

- Didn't see Gov Docs link at the bottom, used site index

Instruction Services

- OT comments on Instruction program suggests using this questionnaire for instruction sessions
- An orientation of the website might be helpful to users (incoming freshmen)
- This survey would be good to use in library orientation

Library Holds

- Wanted: to be able to take care of holds without coming in
- To find "hold" information, assumed Circulation, used Site Index
- Assumed Circulation, used "Site Search" and found it on 2nd page of hits
- Site Search didn't really help much
- Would like to have automated way to deal with holds online

Library Home Page

- Don't like rollovers - would rather have pull down menu
- Remove rollovers
- Move FAQ to higher level page
- Seemed to have trouble with rollovers - keeping them open
- Expressed tendency not to notice things on bottom of page (especially if needing to scroll down) and also ignore things on the right side of the page
- Organize information better
- Banner with homepage link and other links
- Ask-A-Librarian link in the banner at top at all times (in every sub-page)

Library Hours

- Get all hours on a side-by-side table
- Maybe have building hours first, then service points
- People don't like to scroll to find something
- Hours - maybe have current hours on homepage

Links

- Some admitted to "click first, read later"
- Suggestion to have bright blue links to show that they are links
- Some of the deep web pages do not have a library home button
- Didn't see "Site Index" by scanning screens - may had a hot link
- Ask-A-Librarian FAQ link broken
- Links at bottom - move to top or side
- Change wording on first link Library Catalog to be more descriptive
- Link FAQs from Need Help page
- Would like a periodicals link from the services page
- Links to be red or blue and no or little change to followed link colors; not at all or just lighter shade - not different color all together

- Link to FAQs from Need Help page - make it more prominent, move the link up in the menu
- Every page should have a home button

Locating Periodicals and Databases page

- Most did not know about "locating periodicals"
- Locating Periodicals should be under "Help"
- Didn't see Locating Periodicals - or on wrong side of page
- "Help" is dissuading people from using Locating Periodicals
- Unsure that right side headings were links
- Locating Periodicals should be higher on the list - different maybe
- Illogical that journals are under databases

Other Comment

- When nothing looking for is obvious on the page, rely on the index "Index is very comprehensive"
- Too much info, too many ways of getting to it - need to find way to structure it
- Mouse-over function is not touch pad friendly
- Put "info cards" (library directories) on both sides of the elevator
- This has been very informative
- Would like electronic journals to be emphasized more

Research Guides

- Nothing obvious to point to where the guides are - used Site Index
- Make it a main link on the home page

Resources Used

- Telnet
- Databases

Services

- Mentioned they use TexShare, others said did not know about it
- Special Collections is not on Services page, maybe add it
- TexShare not well known

Committee Recommendations

- Redesign the Library Websites to be more user centered.
- Add library hours to the home page and also redesign the library hours page into a chart, grid or table in order to have all hours visible without scrolling. Also, have the current hours first.
- Change the Site Search to a Google powered site search and modify the search page to have links to a) catalog if they need books and b) databases if they are searching for articles.
- Links to ILL, subject guides, (change name to research subject guides).
- TexShare and Eres need to be on main page

Site Index:

- Move it to right side of the navigation bar consistently on all pages.
- Add more categories to the site index to help with problematic questions. For example: floor-locations of books, remove holds, in addition to the “library holds” so index will find these terms

Databases page:

- Remove narrative under links.
- Remove the word “help”
- Change “locating periodicals” to “list of periodicals”
- Change “periodical collection” to “periodicals floor”
- Move “Ask a Librarian Live” link to the top navigation Bar and make this a consistent link on each page.