Title
Using Card-Sorting to Arrange Menu Items on an Academic Library Homepage

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7p06h7k5

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Publication Date
2012-10-29

Supplemental Material
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7p06h7k5#supplemental
INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

We conducted card-sorting exercises to learn user preferences for arrangement & naming of 7 menus at UCSD Library web page.

In ½ hour, one-on-one sessions, participants used speak-aloud protocol while arranging paper cards to represent their preferred organization of the information. An observer took notes & asked follow-up questions.

15 volunteer participants from 9 disciplines (9 undergrads & 6 grad students) received a $10 campus gift card as an incentive.

VALUE

• Low-tech way to get direct user feedback.
• Low-cost, and fairly quick & easy.
• User quotes can be compelling.
• Group or individual can analyze results.
• Use insight to establish library-wide standard language for website, signs, publications, etc.

CHALLENGES

• Results showed very different thinking between librarians & participants for catalogs, instruction, and searches.
• Hard to get action when user insights don’t align with librarian thinking.
• Action is most likely with advance buy-in from those responsible for website.

SELECTED OBSERVATIONS

Participants...

• Were very confused over meaning of Instruction & sometimes confused by Catalogs & Course Reserves.
• Thought “instruction” meant “how to use” the library, service, or website. They put it under Reserves thinking it would explain how to use reserves.
• Favored language to facilitate efficient, goal-oriented actions.
• Discarded or isolated items they didn’t understand, saying they wouldn’t click on something that was confusing. Used Services & Help as catch-alls.
• Did not create new menu solely for tech-related entries, as theorized.
• Were not concerned that some entries were duplicated on multiple menus.
• Had only mild preferences for the order of entries on each menu.
• Knew that Catalog entries for Search...UCSD, San Diego, UC, Worldwide searched library resources, not the Web.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ADD or DELETE

• Make new web pages & entries tailored to faculty and to those new to the library.
• Add About... entries or mouseovers to clarify what reserves, databases, and catalogs are and to better explain unclear entries like Get Started.
• Delete confusing Ask-a-Librarian entry under Ask-a-Librarian menu.
• Eliminate Catalogs as a menu heading.
• Consolidate Duplicate Catalogs as a menu heading.

RENAME or REARRANGE

• Reorganize entries into mega-menus to clarify & show relationships among entries.
• Move entries under Catalogs to Research Tools or to new menu called Search.
• Place renamed Course Guides entry on Reserves menu.
• Change Ask-a-Librarian menu to Contact Us.

Change entry names:

• Remote Access to Connect from Off-Campus.
• Instruction to Library Workshops.
• Course & Subject Guides to Course Guides.
• Requesting Books & Articles to Get Items not held at UCSD.
• Digital Collections to Digitized Collections.
• Get your Course Reserves to STUDENTS: Get Reserves.
• Put Materials on Course Reserve to INSTRUCTORS: Put Items on Reserve.
• Subjects A-Z to Resources by Subject.