# Usability Testing to Improve Search Results

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## Goals of Testing

**To test the usefulness of the search box layout used on the homepage.**
• On the library search box, do students use the drop-down to scope their search results? [Question 1, 3, 4, 6]
• Can students find the Subject Guides? [Question 2]
• Can students find databases? [Question 7]

**To test the effectiveness of the layout and results options on the search results page.**
• Can students differentiate between various sections of the search results? [Question 1, 3, 4, 6, 7]
• Can they navigate to more results when needed? [Question 1, 8]
• Do they use the navigation bar jump links? [Question 5]
• Do they prefer the look and feel of the NC Live bento results? [Question 8]

## Test Questions & Results

| | Completed Task | Perceived Comfort | Perceived Ease |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | Yes | Great | Easy |
| Q2 | Yes | Good | Moderate |
| Q3 | Yes | Good | Moderate |
| Q4 | Yes | Good | Moderate |
| Q5 | Yes | Great | Easy |
| Q6 | No | Poor | Difficult |
| Q7 | Yes | Great | Easy |
| Q8 | Yes | Good | Moderate |

**Question 1: Find articles on the topic of climate change.**
• All five users completed the task

**Question 2: You want to do research on the subject of nursing. How would you find resources?**
• Four users completed the task. One did not recognize "resources" and gave up.

**Question 3: Find *Little Bee.***
• Four users completed the task. One browsed the website and navigation, then gave up.

**Question 4: Find *Zoe's Tale*.**
• Three users completed the task. One found scholarly articles about *Zoe's Tale* and then indicated would ask a librarian for help. One browsed navigation, then gave up.

**Question 5: How would you get help?**
• All five users completed the task.

**Question 5: Find National Geographic.**
• Two users completed the task. While all users navigated to the catalog record, they were not always able to identify the correct link for full text access.

**Question 7: Find ProQuest.**
• All five users completed the task.

**Question 8: On nclive.org, find articles on the topic of climate change.**
• All five users completed the task. Four preferred the Randall Library search results page to NC LIVE.
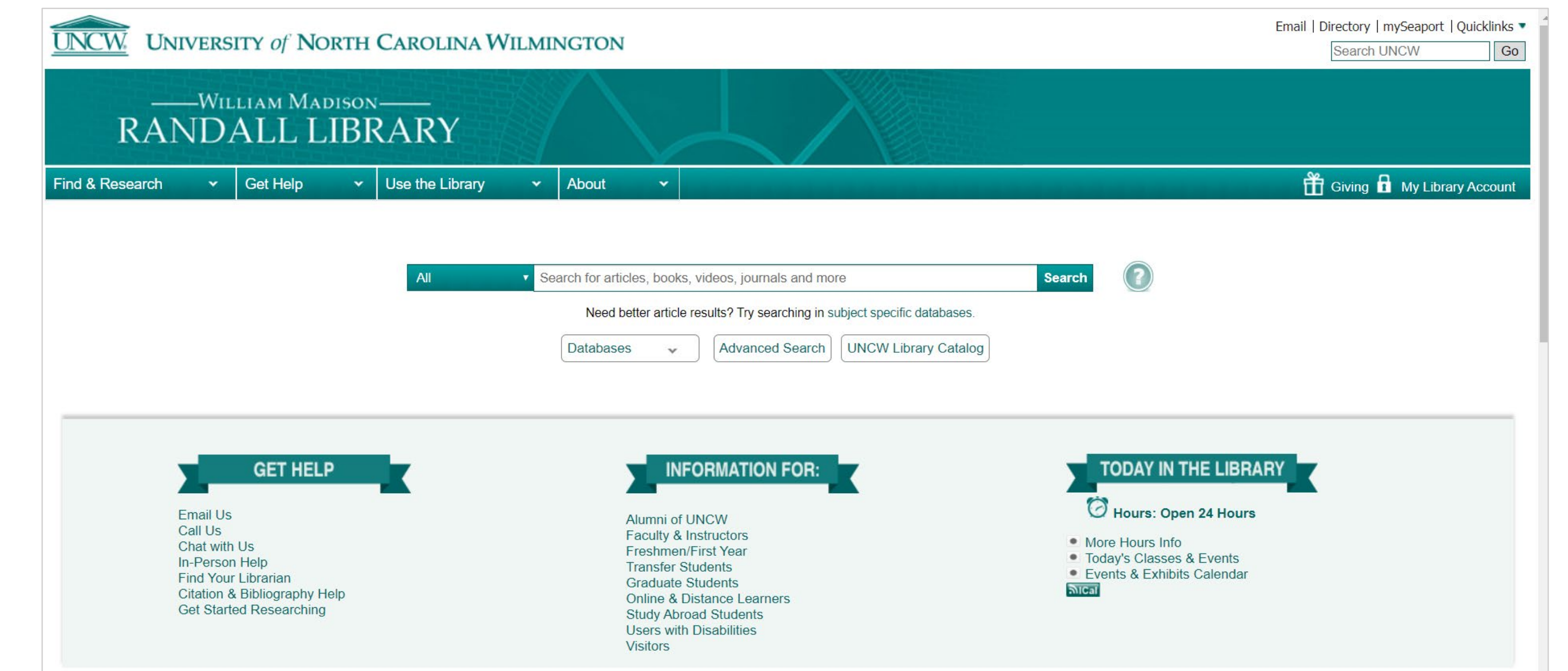
## Conclusions

**Search Box Layout**
• One user used the drop down menu on the search box to filter their results. Most did not use the advanced search or library catalog buttons. Some browsed to them, then returned to the homepage to search.
• Finding subject guides was difficult. Most were not aware of the resource and did not navigate to or search for a guide. One user seemed to know that they existed but did not use the terminology "subject guides" or "guides".
• Surprisingly, when asked to perform subject-based research, most knew to look for a database. Users were comfortable browsing to and opening the databases flyout on the homepage, although they did not often identify all of the options listed within in it. Two users identified the By Subject database list on the homepage.
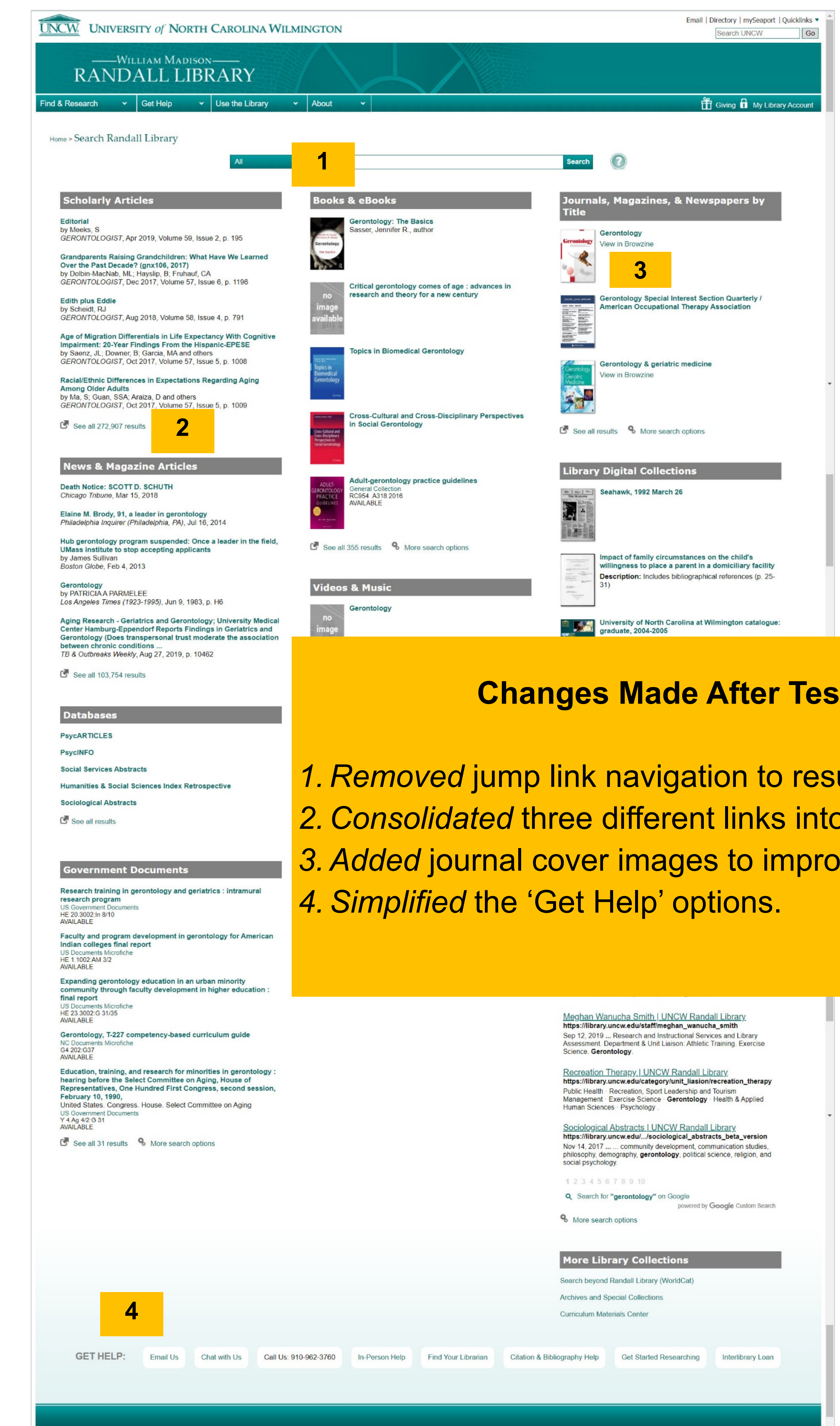
**Search Results Layout**
• Users were able to differentiate articles, books, databases, and journals in results. Cover images were described as useful.
• Users easily navigated to more results in the Scholarly Article box, although no user appeared to differentiate between the three different results link options. Many just clicked the first link listed.
• One user used the jump link navigation; for that user, the screen was scrolled down so that the jump links were at the top of the browser window. Other users primarily browsed search results by scrolling and were able to identify help options through the Get Help menu on the global navigation.
• Even though the NC Live site is more visually appealing, with good use of contrasting color and headings, most users preferred the search experience on Randall Library. This speaks to the comfort and security of known experiences. From their comments, users' familiarity with Randall Library search results influenced their choice.

## Search Box on Homepage



## Search Results Page



### Changes Made After Testing

1. *Removed* jump link navigation to results boxes.
2. *Consolidated* three different links into one.
3. *Added* journal cover images to improve findability.
4. *Simplified* the 'Get Help' options.