Usability Testing to Improve Search Results

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Completed Task</th>
<th>Perceived Comfort</th>
<th>Perceived Ease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 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.
• 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.