



“Instruction...that just bugs me!”

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

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INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

We conducted card-sorting exercises to learn user preferences for arrangement & naming of 7 menus (*at right*) & 37 menu entries under them which appear at the top of each 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.



Participant arranges menu entries under preferred menu headings



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 duplicative *Wireless* and *Wi-Fi* entries.

Add entries for:

- *GIS & Data* to *Services* menu.
- *Reserve a Group Study Room* to *Services* menu.
- *Individual Research Help* to *Help* menu.
- *Locations of Library Materials* (floor plans & directories) to *Help* menu.
- *Subject Librarians* to renamed *Contact Us* menu.

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*.