Operations Updates & UW Library Search (Primo) Filters - UX Cafe

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Introduction

In this project, we solicited feedback via "UX Cafe'' to understand user needs related to the operations updates page and the search filtering feature of the [UW Libraries website](). UX Cafe is a research methodology that UW Libraries uses to get quick user feedback via drop-ins in exchange for sweet treats. This takes out the hassle of scheduling and extensive planning that usually comes with UX research, and allows us to obtain user feedback iteratively.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UW Libraries had to adapt their communication strategies to manage rapid changes in building hours and service availability, resulting in the creation of a "UW Operations Updates" page (previously a banner) accessible via the homepage. Now, as operations gradually return to their pre-pandemic norms, there is a debate about the continued need for this page due to evolving user requirements. This project reevaluates the Libraries Operation page and its homepage banner, focusing on refining its presentation and positioning. The concept of a "one-stop shop" for vital updates has proven valuable; however, issues such as banner fatigue and accessibility concerns have risen.

The other feature that we tested was the UW Library Search (Primo) filtering. This new feature aims to streamline the search process, allowing users to refine and categorize their queries right from the outset. By integrating these filters, the library seeks to provide a more efficient and targeted search experience, ensuring that users can quickly and easily access the specific information they require.

Purpose

- Evaluate the need for and the discoverability of the operations page
- Evaluate the redesign of the UW Operations Page button on the UW Libraries homepage
- Assess if the filters for Primo search are intuitive, useful, and efficient for users

Research Methods & Process

Initially, 37 participants including 33 UW students, 1 staff/faculty, and 3 members of the public were asked to complete a form to gather demographic information and

their typical usage patterns. The study was structured around two main tasks designed to evaluate specific features of the library's homepage.

- Task 1 focused on the visibility and utility of the "UW Operation Updates" button. Participants were instructed to locate the operating hours for the Odegaard Library, providing insights into whether the button was optimally positioned and whether it effectively met user needs. Our team solicited feedback on whether participants had previously used the button, if it delivered the required information, and suggestions for its improvement or relocation.
- Task 2 tested the new added icon filters intended to enhance search efficiency. Participants were asked to locate a specified e-book, with subsequent questions aimed at evaluating the perceived usefulness and intuitive nature of the search icons. This task provided critical data on how enhancements to search functionality were received by users and whether these changes facilitated easier access to library resources.

Analysis and Findings

The usability study on the UW Libraries homepage redesign and conversations with staff members revealed significant insights into user interactions and preferences.

- Task 1: Operations Updates
  - Many participants overlooked the "Operations Updates" button and tended to gravitate toward the top menu when tasked to find information about changes in services and operating hours, indicating a lack of use among students
  - Many advocated for integrating critical updates more prominently on the homepage, possibly through a banner or within the top navigation, to reduce the need for multiple clicks and facilitate quicker access to information.
  - Staff members are the primary users of the operations updates button.
- Task 2: Search Filtering
  - During the task, half of participants utilized the filter icons while the other half did not. The large majority of participants expressed a willingness to use these filters in the future, particularly the "e-book" filter.
  - Automatic filtering caused confusion, as some didn't expect immediate search upon selecting a filter. This was especially apparent among users who clicked the filters before typing in their search, which they expressed through verbal and non-verbal feedback. Clearer communication on filter functionality is needed for better user experience.