

UX Cafe - Scholarly Publishing & Open Scholarship Project

Introduction

The Scholarly Publishing and Open Scholarship (SPO) project at the University of Washington Library aims to reorganize and enhance the digital presence and usability of its scholarly communication and open scholarship services. Recognizing the complexities within the academic publishing environment, the project seeks to clarify and augment the library's offerings, making them more accessible and understandable to the university community. By addressing the challenge of disparate user knowledge bases and the need for an educational component about open access and scholarly publishing, the project endeavors to create a more intuitive and supportive online ecosystem for researchers, faculty, and students alike.

Purpose

- **Evaluate Information Architecture:** To assess the current structure of the website and determine how effectively it supports user navigation and information discovery.
- **Understand User Needs and Behaviors:** To gain insights into the specific needs, preferences, and behaviors of the primary user groups, including faculty, students, and researchers.
- **Identify Vocabulary and Language Clarity:** To ensure the terminology used on the website is accessible and understandable across diverse academic disciplines.

Research Methods & Process

In a research study, 45 participants including 41 students (comprising 18 undergraduates, 2 master's, and 8 PhD candidates, among others from various professional and doctoral programs), 3 staff/faculty members, and 1 postdoctoral scholar were recruited across multiple disciplines. The study was conducted over four days at different locations within the university libraries, including the Health Science Library, Li Lu Library, and the Open Scholarship Common. We utilized Optimal Workshop's tree testing tool in this study. Participants navigated a text-based menu to find information relevant to publishing a thesis, visualizing research data, and archiving project datasets. The study aimed to evaluate the usability of the UW libraries

resources, gathering feedback on any confusing sections and the clarity of the terminology used.

Analysis and Findings

In the UX Cafe study, participants from a range of academic levels and disciplines, primarily in health sciences and engineering, utilized various library resources. Most participants utilized library online resources like scholarly articles, with one student also using physical resources like anatomy mannequins (in HSL).

- The analysis revealed issues with vague terminology such as "digital scholarship" and "data management," causing confusion among users unfamiliar with such terms.
- Navigational challenges were prominent; participants often misinterpreted category headings and relied heavily on keyword matching from the prompts, leading to frequent misdirection and a trial-and-error approach to finding the correct information.
- The study showed a 62% overall success rate with an average completion time of 2 minutes and 15 seconds per task, suggesting that while navigation and term clarity need improvement, the performance fell into the "good" category based on Bill Albert and Tom Tullis tree-testing studies on Nielsen Norman's website.
- Recommendations include revising language to improve clarity, simplifying navigation, making category headings more intuitive, and creating direct shortcuts from the homepage to enhance user experience and access efficiency.

Recommendations for Next Steps

- **Simplify navigation.** Simplify and clarify the categories and paths for information architecture.
- **Clearer category labels.** Improve labels or descriptions to align more closely with user terminologies and workflows.
- **Distinct categories.** To avoid confusion, use distinct category names that clearly differentiate content with no overlap. (need to clearly distinguish between "scholarly publishing" and "digital scholarship")
- **Targeted user testing.** Continue to collect user feedback through longer testing with targeted users (those who used SCP or OSC websites before.)
- **Visual testing.** Conduct another UX testing in the future so that users can actually navigate through the website (visual element) once the redesign is ready. In case seeing the actual website won't make them feel overwhelming.
- **Gain insight into terminology.** We couldn't learn a lot of users' language during UX cafe. It will be helpful to understand those in longer interview sessions.

- **Diverse recruitment.** Many of the participants who were graduate students in research were in fields like pharmacy, physical therapy, and public health. It would be helpful to get input from graduate students in more diverse fields of study.