

Media Browsing Collection Usability Project, Summer 2017

Purpose

One of the Libraries strategic goals is to [“Strengthen users’ ability to efficiently find and use necessary information by improving the discoverability and access to collections.”](#)

When the media browsing collection moved to the first floor of Suzzallo Library in Summer 2016, anecdotal feedback from users and Access Services staff indicated that the organization of the collection created significant barriers for browsing and locating items. In addition, users and staff reported challenges when finding media items in the catalog. This project was designed to learn more about the holistic user experience around the media collection, from finding materials online to locating them on the shelves of the browsing collection.

Methods

- The Assessment team held user experience sessions with 11 participants (6 undergraduates, 3 UW staff members, and 2 graduate students). Participants were asked to complete one of six tasks that involved an initial catalog search followed by an attempt to locate an item on the shelves of the media browsing collection. Most were also asked to participate in browsing tasks without using UW Libraries Search. A short reflective interview followed the tasks. During the online searching and browsing activities, participants were asked by the facilitator to “think aloud” to describe their actions and rationale for making decisions about locating media items.
- In keeping with the iterative service design/design thinking approach to this project, Access Services prototyped initial changes and gathered additional user feedback before rolling out the changes to the entire collection.

Results

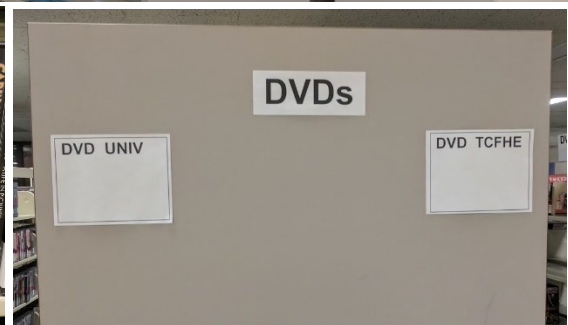
- *Online experience:* Participants who were asked to find individual films that are bundled with multi-disc sets in the catalog faced some challenges in finding the individual title using UW Libraries Search.
- *Moving from online to physical collection:* Most participants were able to navigate to the media collection without asking for help and all participants with a call

number in hand were able to locate the item on the shelves. Assessment staff observed that in at least one case, there was an inconsistency between the catalog and endcap signs in the collection.

- *Browsing the collection:* Feedback from most participants indicated that the organization was confusing: as one participant noted, “I don’t think of media in that way -- I think about TV or video, then alphabetically, if I was going by common sense shelving.” Participants who did not have specific call numbers struggled to find items on the shelves in the collection. Participants asked to find items such as a TV series or the *Harry Potter* films also noted that it was confusing not to have all related items grouped together.

Actions & Improvements

- With consistent feedback from users, the collection was significantly reorganized to make it easier to use without the need for the catalog. Originally, items were shelved by distributor; now they are organized by genre and title.
- Changes to the collection were rolled out iteratively - after initial feedback, Access Services piloted a “TV Shows” section organized alphabetically by title. Positive feedback and higher use led Access Services to separate Movies, TV Shows, Documentaries and Foreign Language films into separate sections, all organized alphabetically by title.
- Access Services and Cataloguing are continuing to explore technical features and make changes that improve the user experience when searching for media.



(Above) Snapshot of the Media Browsing collection with new signage, organized by type of media and title. (Below) Images from user testing. On the left, largely-empty shelves visible from the hallway; in the middle, items shelved by date of accession, and on the right, original signage categories.