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Executive Summary: Western Libraries Beta Website Usability

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Executive Summary:

Beta Website Usability

Introduction

This brief report provides an overview of the Fall 2016 Usability Sessions on the Western Libraries beta website. No patron information was compromised or revealed. The purpose of this report is to inform Libraries and Learning Commons personnel of our next steps with the beta website. Questions? Please contact the UDWG at x4493 or udwg@wwu.edu.

Methodology

This section briefly describes the procedures used, and data gathered, while conducting the usability sessions. The Usability & Design Working Group conducted five usability sessions over the course of two weeks, using four series of usability tasks. Each usability participant completed four tasks per session, and was recorded via [Morae usability software](#).

Each usability task had the following elements:

Task & Title: Intended for UDWG personnel, these tasks (and corresponding titles) identified what information we sought through this activity. For example, “Find Course Reserves” meant the following: “Can the user find information about course reserves using the beta website?”

User Instructions: These instructions were written for UDWG personnel, and spoken to participants, in order to prompt them to complete an activity on the beta website. They were intentionally written in an attempt to avoid jargon and /or confusion.

Possible Success Measures: The possible success measures outlined the paths by which a participant could be successful in completing a task while using the beta website.

Note: There are often several success scenarios per task.

Results / Percentages: This information indicates a) how many participants completed this activity, and b) the average success rate for task completion.

Results

Here are the results of the usability sessions:

- **Participant Data:** There were a total of 36 usability participants. Due to some technical issues with the laptop battery pack, we have data for 33 participants (1 Freshman, 12 Sophomores, 6 Juniors, 9 Seniors, 5 Faculty & Staff, 0 Graduate Students). Of these participants, only five students were transfer students.
- **Frequency of Website Use:** The UDWG asked participants to self-report their current use of the library website. The results are...
 - Daily: 9 (i.e., 27 % of participants used the library website on a daily basis. *Note:* All faculty participants fell into this category).
 - Several Times per Week: 8 (24%)
 - Several Times per Month: 8 (24%)
 - Less than Once a Month: 4 (12%)
 - Never: 4 (12%)
- **Successful Completion Rates:** There were four sets of usability tasks. Each of these tasks has a corresponding successful completion percentage (i.e., how many participants completed that task successfully?). Partial attempts were given partial percentages for completion. To see further details about the usability tasks, please visit this Intranet post.
 - Variant A (10 Participants; Avg Rate – 72%)
 - Task 1: 45% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 2: 75% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 3: 78% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 4: 88% Successful Completion Rate
 - Variant B (8 Participants; Avg Rate – 86%)
 - Task 1: 63% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 2: 100% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 3: 88% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 4: 91% Successful Completion Rate
 - Variant C (9 Participants; Avg Rate – 76%)
 - Task 1: 69% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 2: 83% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 3: 67% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 4: 83% Successful Completion Rate
 - Variant D (7 Participants; Avg Rate – 90%)
 - Task 1: 69% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 2: 100% Successful Completion Rate

- Task 3: 96% Successful Completion Rate
 - Task 4: 96% Successful Completion Rate
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- **General Feedback from Participants:** At the end of each usability session, several of the participants had general feedback about the beta website for the UDWG personnel. Please see below for this feedback:
 - “Pretty easy to use once you know how.”
 - Liked the minimalist design and the layout of the page (Four participants reported this).
 - Likes the news & events page (Three participants reported this).
 - Liked the Most Popular feature and hopes we’ll carry it forward to the new site; liked the current one, too (Two participants reported this).
 - Expressed a desire for a clearer map of the Libraries (Two participants reported this).
 - Liked the Contact Us menu on the homepage.
 - Requested a very clear search bar for the Libraries website.
 - Clearer communication about borrowing policies.
 - Requested that we put hours by Contact Us.
 - Requested a video tour of Libraries.
 - Requested a better contrast for some of the dropdown menus.

Conclusions

The results of the usability sessions demonstrate that the majority of users were able to complete most tasks with a 70% success rate or higher. The results also indicated some problem areas (most of which revolved around how to clearly communicate about library services without using jargon). We will continue to work on this issue. The data we gathered, paired with the website design driven by the card sort data in Winter 2016 and the Libraries personnel survey data in Spring 2016, tells the Resource Discovery Unit that the new website design and functionality is on the right path.

Thus, we will release the beta website, the publication timeline, and supporting communication materials very soon. Please understand that the beta website is still under development, and thus, certain features are not quite finished. However, the Resource Discovery Unit feels it is important to share the news of an upcoming change to the Libraries website with University stakeholders as quickly as possible. Furthermore, we welcome any further feedback on the site.