User Experience Strategies for Every Library: Yes, Even Yours!

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Hennepin County Library

HCL is a public library system serving the city of Minneapolis and surrounding communities:

- forty-one libraries
- online resources
- outreach service.

Our patrons and users are comprised of a diverse population of 1.2 million Hennepin County residents in an area of 611 square miles.

www.hclib.org
Metropolitan State University

11,505 total students
6,220 full-year equivalent (2015–2016)
90% undergraduate students
43% students of color
2% international students
32 = average age of students
15–83 = age range of students
9 librarians + 2 lib administrators
Normandale Community College

14,632 credit students

6,837 student full-year equivalents

58% part-time students

38% students of color

74% age 24 or younger

6 librarians (5.6 full-time equivalents)
## User Experience (UX)

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Qualitative and Quantitative, often inform each other
“User experience” encompasses all aspects of the end-user's interaction with the company, its services, and its products.”

- Don Norman and Jakob Nielsen

“Most of our users' experience of the library occurs online and through software regardless of whether the user is physically present in the library.”

- Libraries are Software by Cody Hanson
A LANDSCAPE OF USER RESEARCH METHODS

BEHAVIORAL

- Eyetracking
- Clickstream Analysis
- A/B Testing
- Usability Benchmarking (in lab)
- Ethnographic Field Studies
- Unmoderated Remote Panel Studies
- Unmoderated UX Studies
- True Intent Studies
- Moderated Remote Usability Studies

ATTITUDINAL

- Participatory Design
- Concept Testing
- Diary/Camera Studies
- Customer Feedback
- Focus Groups
- Desirability Studies
- Card Sorting
- Intercept Surveys
- Email Surveys
- Interviews

QUALITATIVE (DIRECT)  QUANTITATIVE (INDIRECT)

KEY FOR CONTEXT OF PRODUCT USE DURING DATA COLLECTION

- Natural use of product
- De-contextualized / not using product
- Scripted (often lab-based) use of product
- Combination / hybrid

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And You?
Usability Testing

- One of a variety of tools and measures to evaluate your website (including analytics)
- Methods vary but at the core is observing users as they use your website
- Tests yield a mix of qualitative and quantitative data
Why Do Usability Testing?

- Test new features or areas in development
- Increase awareness of issues or possible areas of development, as well as to help prioritize known issues or features
- Understand your website from the perspective of the user
Monthly (mostly) Testing at HCL

Since May 2015 we have conducted 61 individual tests (3 tests per testing day)

Tests usually last 30-45 minutes and we ask participants to complete 4-5 tasks
Observation Room at HCL
After each round of HCL testing the testing team submits a report that is posted on the staff web. Report includes:

- Participants’ perceived task success
- Participants’ actual task success
- Participants’ feedback and comments
- Issues identified by observers
- Recommendations to address usability issues
Testing for Mobile at Metro

Mobile Usage

- Desktop: 90.4%
- Mobile: 7.4%
- Tablet: 2.2%
Flash Usability Testing at Normandale

Do you have 5 minutes to help the library?
Help us improve our website!

FREE CANDY
Fast and Cheap Usability Testing

What We Did

3-5 minute tests
1 task per test
5-6 user tests per task

High foot-traffic times = 6-7 tests/hour

Resources Needed

- 2 people (one to run and observe test, one to recruit)
- Laptop
- Task cards
- Clipboard, pen, and paper
- Large sign and candy
Usability Testing Limitations

It’s important to keep in mind:

- Usability testing is not indicative of how all users behave, only the particular users that participate.

- Usability testing is one important source of user experience data that also includes website analytics, patron comments and questions received through multiple channels, and general usability research and best practices.

- Usability testing shows you what is not working, but figuring out how to fix it is another matter.
User Personas & User Journey Mapping at Metro

![Diagram showing user personas and journey mapping for a library system. The diagram includes various sections such as mobile, desktop searches, research tools, library updates/news, and user personas with associated scenarios.]

Photo by Rich Harrison
Drawing by Diane DeRosier
Focus Groups and Surveys at Metro
Q4 What is the most common reason you use the Library website?

Answered: 250  Skipped: 7

- Finding resources... 70%
- Checking my library... 10%
- Getting directions... 10%
- Seeking assistance... 5%
- Getting information... 3%
- Obtaining e-reserves... 2%
- Other (please specify) 2%

Link to survey results
A/B Testing Wireframes at Metro

[Images of two mobile screens showing wireframes for the Metropolitan State University library application, highlighting different layout options for search functionality and library services.]
Recruitment & Incentives

At Metro

At Normandale
Recruitment & Incentives at HCL

HCL recruits volunteers from friends and family, regular volunteers and Library Friends’ members, and through public website. Try to have staff backup.

Participate in a web usability session

Help us make the Hennepin County Library website better by participating in a usability session. Volunteers complete several tasks while sharing their thoughts, reactions and processes. No advanced computer skills necessary. Regular library website users and people unfamiliar with the library website are welcome.

Upcoming sessions

- Ridgedale Library, March 8 at 10:00 a.m.

Apply to participate in a web usability session
Implementation Considerations

We don’t run right back to our desks to start making changes after UX work.

Team assesses findings from all participants and other data and changes are–

● discussed
● prioritized
● implemented
Implementation Considerations

Ability to immediately enact changes may be limited

Factors include:

- Resources (staff time, money)
- Technical considerations and limitations
- Governance
- Impact on other library services
Sharing, Collaborating & Getting Support
Institutional Involvement

Invite staff to observe usability tests

And remember, IT staff can be your friends

Where there’s a will donut, there’s a way
Some user testing is better than none.

- Commit to small, frequent, iterative changes
- You will learn from every test and get better and better
Our users are **not** broken.
“We need to exercise a disciplined empathy.”

Feminist authors in particular have often called for changes in the way in which the social and human impact of technology is evaluated. They have stressed the need to base such evaluation on the experience of those who are at the receiving end of the technology.

- Ursula Franklin, *The Real World of Technology*
Tools and Resources

Axure (free educational licenses)
Optimal Workshop
SurveyMonkey
UXPA MN (monthly trainings)
IAI (Information Architecture Institute)
LibUX
Bibliography


Image attributions

Post-It wall: https://www.flickr.com/photos/dolske/9029594967

Donuts: https://pixabay.com/p-1988584/

Square peg round hole: https://www.flickr.com/photos/epublicist/3546059144

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We are happy to share scripts, tips, and pool our resources. Access some here: http://bit.ly/UXLTC