One Site to Rule Them All: Usability Testing of a Responsively Designed Library Website

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Usability is a way to measure user satisfaction that can then be incorporated into a library website's design. This on-going research summarizes the findings of the first round of usability testing of the New York City College of Technology's Ursula C. Schwerin library website responsive redesign: http://54.165.130.5.

Objective & Methodology

This usability study examined how a responsive redesigned site support students' research needs as well as support device independent of a unified user experience.

Usability tests are broken into two rounds of heuristic evaluation. Users are asked to conduct a task while a test proctor observes their attempt to complete it. Using the "think-aloud" protocol (TAP), users express their thought processes as they use the website. TAP helps identify the challenges in a website from the user's perspective. Not only does this acknowledge their perspective, but it can create empathy with the user.

This first round of usability testing consisted of 20 participants using laptop workstations, tablets, and Smartphones, as they attempted to complete 12 task-scenarios on the redesigned site. The site will be updated to correct usability obstacles and will be tested again to determine usability.

Findings

- Overall, there wasn't that much difference between mobile user and desktop users in completing tasks on the responsive website. Despite the success or failure tasks, most participants rated the responsive site easy to use.

- There were some tasks that some users were able to successfully complete than others; workstation users were able to find films than smartphone users and smartphone users were able to find research guides.

- Student participants were able to complete a number of tasks, including finding library hours, borrowing policies, contacting a librarian, finding an eBook and finding books.

- A post-testing survey collecting further data that rated visual design, navigation, ease of finding information, use of headings, and ease of use.