Odegaard Library Website Navigation Tree Test Results

Executive Summary

Odegaard Undergraduate Library (OUGL) is still assessing the organization of its website and is interested in collecting user focused data to help determine what changes are needed. After a card sorting exercise in early June analysed the site's basic information architecture, it was suggested that OUGL conduct a Navigation Tree test to evaluate findability. One Libraries ITS facilitator and two OUGL Libraries staff members then conducted a tree navigation test of four main OUGL website sections.

Recommendations include addressing Libraries jargon such as "Course Reserves" and terms like "Learning Commons" that were confusing to users in the card sorting tests and are still problematic as menu items.

Test Objective

The goal of this UX Cafe session was to determine if people could find what they needed on the OUGL website by testing the information architecture that had been recommended by card sorting tests conducted in early June. The test participants were given tasks frequently performed by users of the OUGL website and asked to tell us where they would look for that particular information.

Participants

The total number of individuals who attempted the navigation tree test was nine, all of whom were UW students.
- Eight of the participants said they have used the Odegaard Library website
- The participants included 4 Seniors, 3 Juniors, 1 Sophomore, and 1 Graduate student
- Their areas of study included Business, Psychology, Chemistry, Early Childhood, Informatics, Electrical Engineering, History, and Medicine.

Methodology

Navigation Tree testing is a usability technique for evaluating the findability of topics on a website. The testing was done on a simplified text version of the site structure – without the influence of navigation aids and visual design. Each task was read to participants and they were shown a list of words that may end up being navigation on the site. They were asked to tell us where they would look first as they progressed level-by-level to finding the information requested by the task.

The test consisted of six tasks:
1. Finding course reserve materials

2. Finding the Library hours
3. Reserving a group study room
4. Locating a specific non fiction book
5. Booking an appointment with a tutor for help writing a research paper
6. Confirming availability of video editing software to use for class

As one staff member facilitated, the other took notes on the paths chosen by participants for each task.

Results

- Major observations
  - For Task #1, all but two of the students went directly to Collections & Guides → Course Textbooks → Course Reserves. A couple did comment that the terminology was confusing, one not knowing whether "course reserves" was for books, another being confused by the initial selection of "Collections & Guides" expecting that to be more about book collections or guides for student help, and two others not understanding what was meant by "student directed".
  - None of the participants had any trouble finding the Library hours for Task #2. Several did comment that they do not use the website to find this information, instead just "Googling" Odegaard hours.
  - Task #3 was also completed easily by students going directly to Services & Equipment → Spaces → Reserve a room. Some participants did comment that they may look at "Find a room (Scout)" first to see what equipment was available in certain spaces. Those students knew this option was purely informational and did not provide the option to actually reserve.
  - For Task #4, a couple participants were thrown off by the term "collections" and did not immediately associate the term with books. Two went to "Free Library Resources" and two others considered it first before selecting "collections" at the second level of navigation. Another went to "Good Reads", while another participant said she would just use the search box, and another said he would book an appointment with a librarian for help finding a book.
  - None of the participants had trouble completing Task #5 for booking an appointment with the writing center although one said she has it bookmarked because it is hard to find because it is hidden on the undergrads tab. A couple participants associated the term "tutor" with a subject matter expert and not for general writing help even though they had no trouble finding the information.
  - Task #6 was difficult for participants because the term "Learning Commons" did not correspond to computing equipment for any of them. Three participants said they would go to "Computer Vet" before "Learning Commons" simply because it contains the word computer. Most eventually found what they were seeking through the process of elimination.
  - After completing the last task, we asked participants if they could find the policy on using library equipment. This was added during testing and had not been in the original script. Five of the nine participants looked under the "About" section first for either an FAQ or policy documents.

- Lessons Learned / Next Steps:
    - Overall, the reorganized navigation of the OUGL website seems to work well. There were some instances where Libraries jargon/terminology slowed participants in completing some tasks but most were able to eventually find what they needed. Learning Commons was the most problematic as it is too abstract and provides no indication that it is for computing equipment.
    - The next step is for OUGL staff to take the results of these tests under consideration in finalizing the website navigation.

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