

LMC Website: User Research Memo

Introduction:

The goal of this user research was to examine how LMC and Liberal Arts students use and find information on the LMC website. Using this information, I aim to determine how to structure the website's content more effectively, in order to maximize the user experience and benefit.

Methods:

In order to test how LMC students structure the LMC Website, I first used Optimal Sort to create a card sort. I created a 28 card, open sort, which contained items from various tabs from the LMC Website. These items include names such as "Degrees Available", "Undergrad Admissions", and "Faculty Information". The participants of the card sort had the ability to create an unlimited number of categories and were required to sort all items. They were also required to answer 3 pre-sort questions—their age, major, and academic year—and 2 post-sort questions, which ranked the ease of sorting the items. In addition to the card sort, I conducted a contextual interview with one participant, in order to gain a more detailed insight into how a user may structure the site. During this interview, I asked questions such "What kinds of information do you expect to see on the LMC Website?" and "What in are you looking for that you can't find on this website?".

Results:

The results of the 5-person card-sort show that certain items were categorized together 100% of the time. Those items are as follows: 1 – Degrees Available, Degree Minors, Course Lists; 2 – Career Origination Lab Info and Communication Center Info; 3 – DramaTech Theater Group Info, Poetry@Tech Events Info, LMCFilms Group Info; 4 – Undergraduate Admissions and Graduate Admissions; 5 – Faculty, Staff, and Administrator Info. For these groups of items, there were a variety of names created for each of these categories: 1 – Academic Information, Degrees and Course Lists, Degrees and Programs; 2 – For Current Students, Labs and Centers, Places; 3 – Campus Involvement, Extracurricular, LMC Events and News; 4 – Admissions, Major Overview, School-Wide Information; 5 – Faculty and Facilities, Faculty and Staff, Faculty and Staff Information.

It can also be seen that certain items, while not categorized together by all participants, were grouped together 80% of the time. Those items are as follows: Comm Center Info and Career Origination Lab Info; Comm Center Info and Research Center and Lab Info; SciFi Lab Info and DramaTech; SciFi Lab Info and Poetry@Tech; SciFi Lab Info and LMCFilms; Alumni Resources and Articles About Alumni; Alumni Resources and Alumni Information; Statement on Diversity and Mission Statement of LMC; News and Events about LMC and Articles about Students; News and Events about LMC and News Articles about the School.

After participating in the card sort, the participants evaluated their level of agreement on 2 statements on a Likert scale. In response to the first, – "These items were difficult to organize into categories (i.e. they seemed too dissimilar to create defined groups with" – 2 participants

answered that they “Strongly disagree”, 2 participants answered they “Moderately disagree” and 1 participant stated that they “Moderately agree”. In response to the second statement, – There were a few items that seemed to stick out, but for the most part, the items were fairly easy to organize into categories – 100% of participants agreed that most of the items seemed to easily fit into manageable categories.

During the contextual interview, 6 questions were asked of the interviewee. Their responses are as follows:

Question	Response (paraphrased)
“What is your year, major, and reason for becoming an LMC student?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th year LMC student • Concentration in Communication and STAC • Switched in LMC after 2.5 years of Environmental Engineering • Passion for writing led to switch in major
“What kinds of information do you expect to see on the LMC website and why?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application guidelines, information for current students, links to faculty contact, advertisement about what students/faculty are doing, distinctions and awards • Expected the website to act as a place to receive academic resources and view accolades of the program
“Do you think you could find that information easily; why or why not?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information like accolades and prospective student information is easy to find, but information for current or transfer students is more difficult to find
“What info are you looking for that you cannot find on this website; what would you add?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is difficult to find info on threads and major concentrations • There is little to no information for transfer students
“When would you go to this website for information, and is there another source you might go to first to find similar information?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would use Google to search for information on LMC site before using the search tab on the website itself • Would use website before going to advisor or faculty for information
“Do you have any additional comments about the site?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The diversity tab seemed underdeveloped

Analysis:

From the card sort data, it can be seen that certain items found on the LMC website are expected to be categorized together, such as degree information, faculty contact information, and admissions resources. Among these groupings, the named categories are semantically similar, which seems to indicate that these pieces of information are ones that LMC majors are familiar with and may use a frequent amount of time. Other items – such as resource labs, involvement opportunities, and alumni resource and information – though still categorized together frequently, contain information that cater to different audiences. This seems to indicate certain discrepancies between the content of the item and the name it is labeled as. For example, 80% of participants grouped “Alumni Resources” and “Articles about Alumni” together; however, these two items display very different information; the former provides career resources for alumni,

while the latter provides insights into the work field for current students. These item names could be adjusted to reflect their content more accurately.

From the contextual interview, it can be said that generally, the website proves difficult to use in a variety of ways. The participant reports that specified information about threads and transfer student information, arguably 2 key resources needed for current students, are difficult to find or unavailable through the LMC website. This indicates an area of the site that requires improvement and restructuring is the information for current students at Georgia Tech.

Conclusion:

The data collected provides valuable insight into the structuring of the LMC website for current students. By applying this knowledge, it is possible to create a more effective information architecture, in order to provide users with a greater ease of access and usability.