Library Catalog Usability Testing

Background Summary & Goals

Based on previous UX research, the design of HOLLIS was updated. This user test is to test the validity of the changes that were done to HOLLIS to understand if any final changes need to be made. The goals of the test were to:

1. Understand if the change of language in the HOLLIS update maps to the user's mental model of library search terms.
2. Evaluate users' perceptions of updates to the homepage design of HOLLIS and the results displayed after a search.
3. Ensure users are able to accomplish search tasks using the updated interface.

Methodology

We tested 9 users of HOLLIS, with 4 from FAS/HC and 5 from Professional Schools. The tests were 30-minute think-aloud protocol user tests conducted via Zoom. Users were compensated with Amazon gift cards ($15) for their time.

Key Findings

- The majority of users were impressed by the modern sleek design of the HOLLIS search homepage.
- Most users expressed interest in the six Harvard searches at the bottom of the page, one example was a Historian happy to see the Archives search on this page, another was a Masters student excited to see DASH.
- 6/9 of users understood the language of the "catalog & article" search.
  - Despite the confusion around the label the other users didn't seem to have problems with the search at any point of the testing process
  - 8/9 users were able to successfully explain library catalog search after searching in catalog & articles
- The majority of users liked the search results, especially the "online access" and "view PDF" buttons.
- Users liked the ease of finding a location of a physical item in the search results with the Map it and Location features
- 8/9 users did not see the "Report a Broken" link option. Some expected to see it in the record instead of the navigation.

Recommendations

- Implement the updated "Catalog & Articles" language in the search box.
- Implement the new button treatment for the View PDF and View Online links.
- Make report a broken link option available in the catalog record rather than in the navigation.

Potential Future Research

- Research other ways to make location of physical items more obvious.
- A study around new areas to put in "Report a Broken Link"
- An Online only search scope