

Law Library of Congress Digital Collection Review:  
“A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional  
Documents and Debates 1774 to 1875”

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SI 633 - University of Michigan School of Information  
December 13, 2023



## Group Overview

To conduct this project, the Library of Congress Law Library, through client contact Jennifer Gonzalez, partnered with the University of Michigan School of Information's Engaged Learning Office to generate evaluative feedback on one of the Law Library's many digital collections. The team members selected to complete this assessment project were Shauna-Kay Harrison, Emma Heck, and Delaney Jorgensen, all second-year Master's students pursuing a Master of Science in Information at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

## Client Description

The Law Library of Congress, located in Washington, D.C., was founded in 1832 as a branch of the Library of Congress, serving as the official law library of the United States Congress. Our client's mission "is to provide authoritative legal research, reference and instruction services, and access to an unrivaled collection of U.S., foreign, comparative, and international law."<sup>1</sup> The Library's collections—which include 2.9 million volumes of primary legal sources, 102.18 million microforms, 99,000 reels of microfilm, 3.18 million pieces of microfiche, and 15,600 digital resources—are stored in the James Madison Memorial Building of the Library of Congress.<sup>2</sup> Although the library was created to serve Congress members, its materials have been available for viewing by the public since the end of the nineteenth century. The Library's ever-growing online collections are a critical part of legal research today and are used not only by members of Congress, but also legal scholars and researchers, student researchers, and even the Supreme Court.

## Problem Statement

The Law Library of Congress holds extensive digital collections, many of which are in the process of being migrated from an older website called *American Memory* to the new LOC.gov website. For this project, we were given the option to choose one digital collection to evaluate. With the help and guidance of our client contact Jennifer Gonzalez, our team decided to assess "A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates 1774 to 1875," a large and multifaceted digital collection still in the process of site migration. The documents in this collection are currently displayed on the older *American Memory* platform, and are available through an archived version of this site, though some materials have successfully moved to the LOC.gov website; for instance, "Maclay's Journal." Others still may

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<sup>1</sup> "About the Law Library | Law Library of Congress | Research Centers | Library of Congress". Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA.

<sup>2</sup> Tabb, Winston; Cole, John Y. Jr.; Kinney, Angela J.; Underdue, Fern (2003). "Library of Congress". In Drake, Miriam A. (ed.). Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science. Vol. 3 (2nd ed.). CRC Press. pp. 1593–1612. The Law Library of Congress is the world's largest and most comprehensive law library.

not migrate to the new site at all, rather being transferred to congress.gov; for example, the “House” and “Senate Journals.”

Because the site migration is active for this digital collection, it is important to consider that not all document types and website functions will seamlessly transfer to the newer site. Thus, our team set out to assess the availability of resources, as well as the descriptive information associated with accessing the digital collection as it begins presenting to the public on a new platform. Questions that our team addressed throughout this semester-long exploration and evaluation of the digital collection include:

1. How do the functionalities of the collection change across platforms, and how can we address these changes to enhance user experience?
2. How can we update the display of the collection to assist users in their search?
3. What solutions are feasible using available metadata?

## Project Timeline, Goals, and Deliverables

“A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation” is one of the Library of Congress’ Law Library’s larger and more complicated collections, with subsets of the collection being in different phases of migration and searchability. Based on our communication with the client, we decided to work with a subset of the collection as a case study on how the client can use metadata and physical website layout to enhance searchability.

We conducted assessment in the following areas:

- Benchmarking
- User interface functionality and testing

Our project largely followed the timeline below.

Start Date	End Date	Project Milestone
10-04-2023	10-22-2023	<p>Site indexing and mapping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Three sites:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ American Memory</li> <li>○ New LOC.gov site</li> <li>○ congress.gov</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
11-15-2023	12-01-2023	<p>Usability testing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Write testing protocol</li> <li>● Recruit 2 participants each</li> <li>● Conduct testing</li> </ul>
12-02-2023	12-13-2023	<p>Develop recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Qualitative coding for interview themes</li> <li>● Present findings</li> <li>● Final report</li> </ul>

# Methods

## Benchmarking

In order to familiarize ourselves with the landscape of digital collections, our team first compared the Library of Congress' "A Century of Lawmaking" collection with other platforms to investigate which features may be possible technically, as well as what users may expect from an institution as large as the Library of Congress. We examined in particular the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library digital resources, which, while not necessarily equivalent to the Library of Congress, represents a large research institution with similar user groups (including students, novice researchers, and more advanced researchers).<sup>3</sup> The digitized collections at the Bentley offer an alternative vision of site navigation and searchability that may prove a useful point of comparison for the Library of Congress as they continue to update the LOC.gov website through the digital collections' migration away from American Memory.

## Usability testing

The majority of our evaluative work was spent conducting usability testing with six participants. Our participants ranged in age from 18 to 34. All participants were sourced from groups without a background in library science or digital curation; this choice was made to ensure that our results were relevant to the user groups that may interact with the digital collection. Jargon that may seem straightforward to our team, for instance, could be the result of our shared background in information science; in order to identify accessibility and readability issues, therefore, it was important to reach groups that may be unfamiliar with terminology or organizational structures common to the field of librarianship.

Participants were assessed using one of three usability testing protocols. The first ([Appendix A](#)) tested user interaction with the American Memory site. The second ([Appendix B](#)) compared and contrasted usability between the older and newer websites, with a focus on the "Journals of Congress" subcollection. The third ([Appendix C](#)) tested the accessibility of the "Debates of Congress" subcollection between the two platforms. For each protocol, two participants completed the testing, for a total of six participants' data to draw from in the formulation of our recommendations.

## Limitations

While our methodological approach provided valuable insights, it is crucial to acknowledge certain limitations that may impact the generalizability of our findings. Firstly, the relatively small sample size of six participants may limit the broader applicability of our results. Although efforts were made to diversify the age range (18 to 34) and ensure participants lacked a background in library science or digital curation, the restricted number may not fully capture

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<sup>3</sup> Bentley Historical Library, "Digitized Collections," University of Michigan.  
<https://bentley.umich.edu/research/digitized-collections/>

the diverse perspectives and preferences of potential users. Additionally, focusing on specific subcollections, such as the "Journals of Congress" and "Debates of Congress," may limit the extrapolation of our recommendations to other sections of the digital collection. Furthermore, while testing different usability protocols allowed for a comprehensive evaluation, the scope of our study might not encompass all potential user scenarios. Recognizing these limitations is vital for interpreting our findings within the specified context. We encourage future research and usability testing in the future as the collection continues to migrate in order to build upon our project's groundwork, which we view as a starting point to a larger evaluation of the Library's digital collections.

## Findings and Recommendations

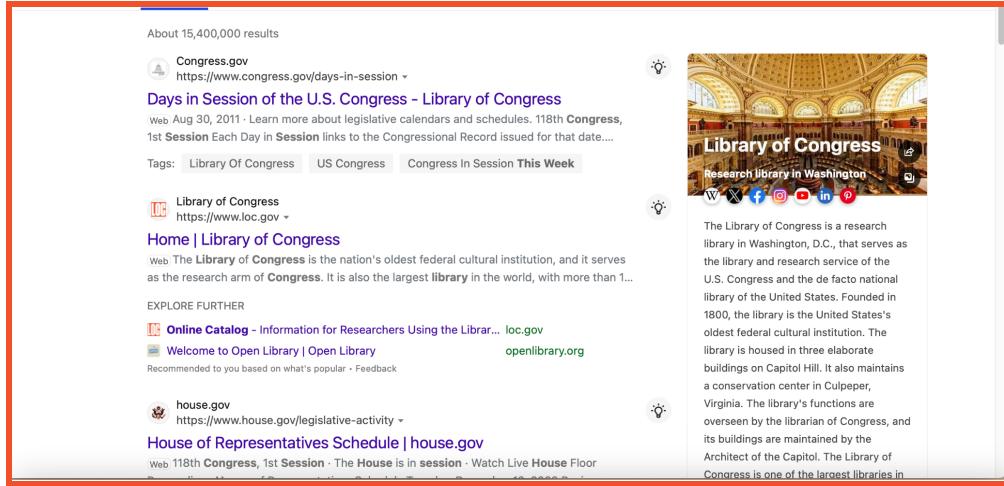
### Findings

Presented recommendations are dependent on our client understanding their target users. The client informed us that the Law Library's target users were (1) college students and (2) novice researchers. We took the liberty to interpret "college students" as including both undergraduate and graduate students. After conducting usability tests, we conclude that the functionality of the Law Library's website is counterintuitive to the research practices of this demographic ([Appendix D](#)). Our findings are grouped into three categories: (1) demographic behavior, (2) navigation, and (3) searchability.

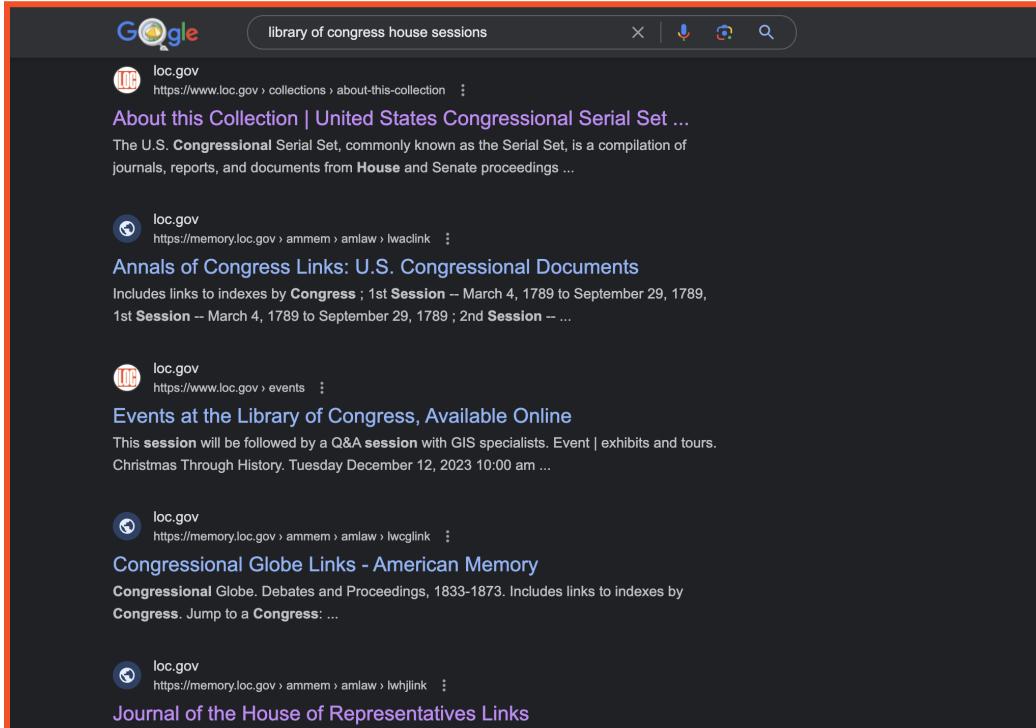
#### Demographic Behaviors

All six participants of the usability tests had the following habits:

- Participants did not scroll through *all* the search results.
- Participants use a range of browsers, search engines, and computer systems. These variables impact search results.
- Participants use search engines to locate the Law Library's collections. Search results varied as a result (Figure 1, 2).



*Figure 1: Less relevant search results are returned using Bing. One participant used Microsoft Edge which had Bing as the default search engine. Note: this has more to do with search engines than browsers. Using Safari as a test, Google Search yielded the same results as it did in its native Chrome Browser.*



*Figure 2: More relevant links show up for Google Search. However, these links tend to be to the legacy American Memory site (not the archived version). The Law Library's website is the 18th link. From observing our participants, they would not scroll long enough to come across this webpage.*

- Participants would use filters heavily when searching.

- Participants had limited knowledge of government collections, authorship practices, and terminology.
- Participants click the first link indicated in a record. If unsuccessful, they would try the next link.
- Participants viewed browsing as part of the research process.

## Navigation

Participants noted during usability testing that more attention should be given to (1) descriptive information and use of internal jargon, (2) inconsistency in directives, and (3) use and placement of links.

Participants noted that metadata is overutilized from a user perspective in areas such as the “Bibliographic Record” linked at the bottom of each collection (Figure 3, 4). The placement of this link before more relevant access instructions led participants to click this, then use the “link” column to find information (Figure 3a). This frustrated participants because multiple links often lead to different iterations of the same item. Furthermore, participants noted that without contextualized links (Figure 3b), they were confused as to whether or not they were on a Library of Congress website. (Participants noted inconsistency in design across Library of Congress domains.)

### Maclay's Journal

William Maclay was one of the first two senators from Pennsylvania. Within two months of the opening of the first session, he had begun to keep a diary, which he continued almost daily for the three sessions of the 1st Congress. Because Senate sessions were closed to the public until 1795, his is one of the few accounts of Senate floor activity in the early Congresses.

Journal of William Maclay, United States Senator from Pennsylvania, 1789-1791

William Maclay was one of the first two senators from Pennsylvania. He drew a two-year term in the allotment of term lengths for the 1st Congress and was not reelected. A man of strong, not to say acerbic, opinions, Maclay soon felt himself swimming against the stream. Within two months of the opening of the first session, he had begun to keep a diary, which he continued almost daily for the three sessions of the 1st Congress. Because Senate sessions were closed to the public until 1795, his is one of the few accounts of Senate floor activity in the early Congresses.

The edition of the diary offered here is that published in 1891, edited by Edgar S. Maclay, a descendant of the diarist. A scholarly edition, *The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates*, was published in 1988 by the Johns Hopkins University Press as part of the *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress*.

[Bibliographic Record](#)

This collection is [available here](#).

*Figure 3: “Bibliographic Record” is placed before “This collection is available here.” The linked collection goes to the archived American Memory site. This takes a much longer time to load. However, as stated, users would click “Bibliographic Record” which would show a series of links, each leading to a different iteration of that item. See Figure 3a for an example.*

Links	<a href="http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2564">http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2564 ↗</a> <a href="http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS485">http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS485 ↗</a> Electronic copy from HathiTrust <a href="http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007852693">http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007852693 ↗</a> <a href="http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS485">http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS485 ↗</a> <a href="http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwhj.html">http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwhj.html</a> <a href="http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2564">http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2564 ↗</a> <a href="http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/cong018.html">http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/cong018.html ↗</a>
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*Figure 3a: User preference and access should be prioritized. Users should be allowed to choose which interface to interact with. See Figure 3b for a more user-friendly layout.*

Available at:			
Link	Description	Source	
<a href="#">Search only (no full text)</a>		University of Michigan	
<a href="#">Flint Frances Willson Thompson Library Main Collection · 1 item</a>			
<u>About location</u>			
Action	Description	Status	Call Number
<a href="#">Get This</a>		On shelf	PS 3573 .A425 B45 1997
<a href="#">Hatcher Graduate · 1 item</a>			
<u>About location</u>			
3 South			
Action	Description	Status	Call Number
<a href="#">Get This</a>		Checked out: due May 03, 2024	828 W1770 A33

*Figure 3b: This location indicator is much more apparent. The user knows where they are and where they are going. A prominent user complaint was that they did not know if they were being redirected to other Library of Congress websites. More information on this can be found in our “Recommendations” section.*

## Statutes at Large

The United States Statutes at Large is the official source for the laws and resolutions passed by Congress.

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The *United States Statutes at Large*, commonly referred to as the *Statutes at Large*, is the official source for the laws and resolutions passed by Congress. Publication began in 1845 by the private firm of Little, Brown and Company under authority granted by a joint resolution of Congress. In 1874, Congress transferred the authority to publish the *Statutes at Large* to the Government Printing Office, which has been responsible for producing the set since that time.

Every law, public and private, ever enacted by the Congress is published in the *Statutes at Large* in order of the date of its passage. Until 1948, all treaties and international agreements approved by the Senate were also published in the set. In addition, the *Statutes at Large* includes the text of the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, amendments to the Constitution, treaties with Indians and foreign nations, and presidential proclamations.

Bibliographic Records:

- [Vol. 1-v.8](#)
- [Vol. 9-v. 11](#)
- [Vol. 12-v. 15](#)
- [Vol. 16-v.17](#)
- [Vol. 18, pt. 1](#)
- [Vol. 18, pt.2](#)
- [Vol. 18, pt. 3-v. 49, pt. 2](#)

This collection is [available here](#).

*Figure 4: The layout of “Bibliographic Records” here also makes the highlighted portions out to be directives. With such a layout, users may think that they should click each of these sections to access content.*

Conversely, participants noted that they wished for descriptive metadata while searching. Participants want to understand what the collection is about without having to click into it, especially since collection titles may not align with what they are looking for. Protocol 1 (Appendix A) utilized the Bentley Historical Library as a benchmark. Protocol 1 participants noted that they liked the Bentley’s feature of providing context for the collection and highlighting the participant’s search terms. This allowed the participant to determine if a collection was relevant to their research (Figure 5).

The screenshot shows a search results page for the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library. At the top, there are filters for 'All results' (selected), 'Grouped by collection', 'Sort by relevance' (selected), and '10 per page'. Below this, a collection titled 'Library (University of Michigan) Clipping file, circa 1920-1980 (majority within 1920/1970s)' is displayed. It includes a description: 'The Library Clipping File was a vertical file maintained by the University of Michigan Library Reference Department roughly from the early 1920s to the early 1980s. It largely consists of newspaper clippings on numerous topics relating to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the State of Michigan, but includes –' followed by a 'show more' link. A note indicates '76.5 linear feet'. Below the collection title, it says '2 results in this collection'. The first result is 'Muslim Students Association' with a sub-note '(see: Foreign Students-Societies-Africa and Near East.)' and a link 'In: University of Michigan » M'. The second result is 'Religion-Churches.' with a sub-note 'Hillel Foundation; Foreign Students-Societies-Africa (Muslim Student Association); Foreign Students-Societies-Asia (Hindu, Buddhist, etc.); Young Men's Christian Association (includes YWCA);' and a link 'In: University of Michigan » R'. A 'Box 47' label is visible next to the 'Religion-Churches.' entry.

*Figure 5: Example of search results on the Bentley Historical Library's site with descriptive metadata and highlighted search terms.*

Lastly, participants noted links that do not lead to a desired collection. For example, certain collections link to congress.gov but do not take users to the specified content on that site (Figure 6). Often, the content is not readily available and confuses users.

The screenshot shows the CONGRESS.GOV homepage. At the top, there are links for 'Advanced Searches' and 'Browse', and a search bar with 'Examples: hr5, sres9, "health care"'. Below the search bar, there are links for 'Current Congress', 'MORE OPTIONS', and a magnifying glass icon. The main content area features 'Most-Viewed Bills | Top 10' with links to H.Res.894, H.Res.884, and H.R.2670. To the right, there are sections for 'Bill Searches and Lists' (Sponsor: House | Senate, Introduced | Public Laws | U.S. Code, Appropriations: Status Table | Search FY24) and 'Contact Your Member' (Find your member by address: Find address or place, Contact by email and telephone: Representatives | Senators). In the center, there is a 'Current Legislative Activities' section for the 118th Congress (2023-2024), divided into 'House of Representatives' and 'Senate'. The House section includes 'Not in Session - Video Archive' and a list of bills: H.R.5524, H.R.5119, H.B.4531, H.Res.922, S.788, and H.R.357. The Senate section includes 'Not in Session Video Archive', 'Next Meeting: Dec. 13, 2023 at 10:00 AM EST', 'Previous Meeting: Dec. 12, 2023', 'Senate Links' (On the Senate Floor, Communications to the Senate, Nominations, Treaty Documents), 'Recent' (Yesterday in Congress, Bill Texts [12], Committee Schedule, Floor Calendars, Committee Reports, Roll Call Votes, Presented to President [0], Get Email Alerts and Updates), 'The Congressional Record' (Daily Digest of latest legislative activity, Browse by Date), and 'News from the Law Library' (Committee, Sponsor, Co-sponsor, Title, Part of Session, and various document links).

*Figure 6: Result of clicking “congress.gov” for the “House Journal” sub-collection.*

## Searchability

This finding is more technological in nature and involves keyword mapping and searching techniques to ensure a more diverse range of relevant search results. Participants also stated their frustration with how specific you had to be to find information. One user stated that the search process was too “granular” and the other participants all stated that you could not effectively search on the site unless you were familiar with the available collections.

Participants found more relevant information from the Law Library by using a search engine. One participant found another legacy Law Library website that had a collection of links.<sup>4</sup> One of these links happened to lead to the American Memory webpage.

Searchability is also impacted by device choice. Users of MacOS could successfully utilize “cmd + f” to search the PDF viewer, while the ChromeOS user could not use “ctrl + find.”

## Recommendations

Based on the above findings, we recommend the following actions:

An item finder or locator that helps users locate where they are in the site and where links are taking them

Implementing an item finder or locator can help users understand page navigation and reduce time spent “clicking around” trying to find the desired resource (examples from other repositories in Figures 7 and 8).

Location	Call No.	Status
ProQuest eBook Central	T14.P455 2014eb E-Book	<a href="#">View Catalog Record</a>

Figure 7: [Mount Holyoke College Library Catalog](#).

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<sup>4</sup> Library of Congress Web Guides: <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/congress/congress-general.html>

The screenshot shows a library catalog interface. At the top, it says "Available at:" followed by a link to "Hatcher Graduate · 1 item". Below this is a section titled "About location" with the text "2A North". A table follows, with columns "Action", "Description", "Status", and "Call Number". Under "Action" is a link "Get This". Under "Description" is "On shelf". Under "Call Number" is "Z 688 .A68 C65 2021". A red box highlights the entire search result area.

Figure 8: [University of Michigan Library Catalog](#)

## Understandable Metadata and Definitions for Important Terms

Given the target user group, the client should not assume that users are familiar with internal jargon, metadata terms, or that they possess any prior knowledge of the collection. If an alternative term cannot be provided, the client should explain terms. For example, when the user hovers over “Bibliographic Record,” a pop-up box could define the term and how to use it for their research (Figure 9). Pop-up messages can be added two ways: 1) by using the :hover pseudo-class in your CSS, or 2) adding JavaScript Event Listeners for mouseover events.

### Congressional Globe

The Globe, as it is usually called, contains the congressional debates of the 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833-73).

The Globe, as it is usually called, contains the congressional debates of the 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833-73). There are 46 volumes in the series based on the table found in the Third Edition of *Checklist of United States Public Documents 1789-1909, Volume 1B* (pp. 1466-69).

The Globe is the third of the four series of publications containing the debates of Congress. It was preceded by the [Annals of Congress](#) and the [Register of Debates](#) and succeeded by the [Congressional Record](#). The first five volumes of the Globe (23rd Congress, 1st Session through 25th Congress, 1st Session, 1833-37) overlap with the Register of Debates. Initially the Globe contained a "condensed report" or abstract rather than a verbatim report of the debates and proceedings. With the 32nd Congress (1851), however, the Globe began to provide something approaching verbatim transcription.

The contents of the appendix of each volume vary from Congress to Congress, but appendixes typically contain presidential messages, reports of [What is a bibliographic record? Click here to learn more.](#) cabinet officers, texts of laws, and appropriations. Speeches not indexed or referenced on the page appear in the appendix as well.

[Bibliographic Record](#)

This collection will be available on [Congress.gov](#) in the future. An archived version is [available here](#).

Figure 9: Collection with pop-up box over “Bibliographic Record” to inform users of what the terminology means.

## Ability to Search Within Subcollections and Highlighting Search Terms

Currently, if a user is keyword searching within a subcollection of “A Century of Lawmaking,” the results returned come from the collection as a whole. For example, if a user keyword searches the “Register of Debates” subcollection, any item from the larger collection that matches the search terms will be returned. The inability to search specifically within subcollection means that users must scroll through sources that aren’t relevant to their query. Enabling subcollection search will also help to ensure that relevant sources are at the top of the page. Furthermore, highlighting exact matches within the search results could help improve search efficiency. For example, Google and other search engines bold, or sometimes highlight, exact keyword matches.



Figure 10: Current search filters for ‘Part Of.’ Users can search within the collection as a whole, but not within subcollections.

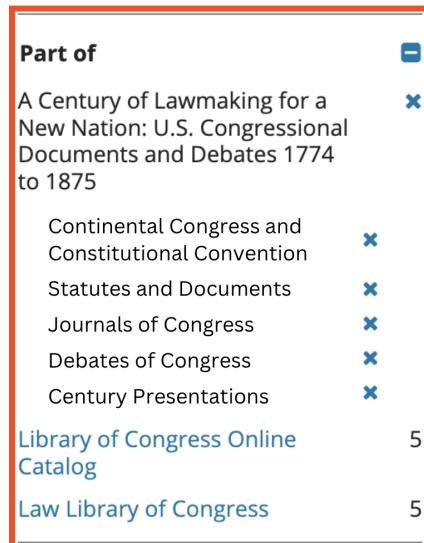


Figure 11: Proposed search filters for ‘Part Of’ at the subcollection level. This would allow users to filter by subcollection.

SEARCH RESULTS

YOU ARE SEARCHING THE BENTLEY WEBSITE. TO SEARCH THE BENTLEY MATERIALS, [VISIT THE SEARCH THE COLLECTIONS PAGE.](#)

frank murphy

Web Image

About 1,080 results (0.16 seconds) Sort by: Relevance

**The Dissenter | Bentley Historical Library**  
bentley.umich.edu > news-events > magazine > the-dissenter  
 **Frank Murphy** was born and raised in Harbor Beach, Michigan, within a close-knit Irish American family. The Murphy household was religious, but Frank's father, ...

**The Politician and the Traitor | Bentley Historical Library**  
bentley.umich.edu > magazine > the-politician-and-the-traitor  
 Closest in his circle of influence was Michigan Governor **Frank Murphy**. But by the start of World War II, Murphy would cut ties with the priest, who would find ...

Figure 12: *Example of keyword searching on the Bentley Historical Library website*. A keyword search for former Michigan governor and US Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy returns results with Murphy's name in boldface type.

## Instructions and Pop-Up Boxes for Image/PDF Viewer Interface

The client should include instructions or pop-up boxes for navigating the embedded item viewer. The user's available tools and search functions should be clearly explained (for example, what are the functionalities of the Image view, versus the Image with text view, versus the PDF view?).

BOOK/PRINTED MATERIAL

**Journal of William Maclay, United States senator from Pennsylvania, 1789-1791**

**How to Search this Item**

**Image Viewer**  
Keyword searching unavailable for images. Users can navigate via the dropdown menu or arrows.

**Image with Text Viewer**  
Keyword searching available for text only. Use ctrl + f to keyword search. Users can navigate via the dropdown menu or arrows.

**PDF Viewer**  
Keyword searching available for PDF. Use ctrl + f to keyword search. Users can navigate via the dropdown menu or input box.

[« Back to Search Results](#)

[« About this item](#)

Image Image w/Text PDF Image 1 of 448 Go Pages < > View Grid Go

JOURNAL OF  
WILLIAM MACLAY

Back to top

Figure 13: *Proposed changes to one Image/PDF viewer page*. Adding `<h2>` and `<h3>` headings helps clarify the available view + search options.

## Using HTML Input Type Number for Item Image/PDF Viewer Interface

On the loc.gov pages, the PDF viewer does not allow the user to type in a page number if they are using the ‘Image’ or ‘Image w/ Text’ options; the user must scroll through a list to find the page number they want to view. The ‘PDF’ option, however, allows the user to quickly navigate the PDF by typing in a page number. Adding in an HTML form for a numeric input field with `<input type="number">` would make searching more efficient across all PDF views (Figure 10). This view is optimal because it uses a form of `<input type="number">`, which allows the user to quickly view the page they need.



Figure 14: [PDF view navigation](#).

Both the Image and Image w/ Text options use the `<select>` element to create a dropdown list. While this still allows the user to access the desired page, it is not as efficient as using `<input type="number">`. Furthermore, as shown below, `<select>` requires hard coding each page value; with hundreds of pages per PDF, the HTML code would be more efficient using the input number form. However, if the client feels the dropdown menu is valuable to the user, they could include both the number input box and the drop down list for all three views, to allow the user to choose the search option that works best for them.

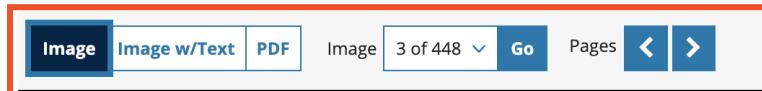


Figure 15: [Image and Image w/ Text view navigation](#).



```

<label for="page" class="label-small">Image</label>
▼<select id="page" name="sp"> == $0
  <option value="1">1</option> [R slot]
  <option value="2">2</option> [R slot]
  <option value="3" selected>3 of 448</option> [R slot]
  <option value="4">4</option> [R slot]
  <option value="5">5</option> [R slot]
  <option value="6">6</option> [R slot]
  <option value="7">7</option> [R slot]
  <option value="8">8</option> [R slot]
  <option value="9">9</option> [R slot]
  <option value="10">10</option> [R slot]
  <option value="11">11</option> [R slot]
  <option value="12">12</option> [R slot]
  <option value="13">13</option> [R slot]
  <option value="14">14</option> [R slot]
  <option value="15">15</option> [R slot]
  <option value="16">16</option> [R slot]
  <option value="17">17</option> [R slot]
  <option value="18">18</option> [R slot]
  <option value="19">19</option> [R slot]
  <option value="20">20</option> [R slot]
  <option value="21">21</option> [R slot]
  <option value="22">22</option> [R slot]

```

*Figure 16: Current HTML code for the dropdown menu on [Maclay's Journal](#).*

The <option> tags continue on until value="448." While the drop down menu allows the user to navigate to the page they need, these types of menus are better for lists with fewer values. Most users do not want to scroll through hundreds of values to find what they are looking for.



```

<input type="number" id="pageNumber" class="toolbarField"
  pageNumber title="Page" value="1" size="4" min="1"
  tabIndex="15" data-l10n-id="page" autocomplete="off" max=
  "448"> == $0

```

*Figure 17: Current HTML Code for Form Input Type Number (Recommended for all views).*

This code is much more concise than using 448 <option> tags. Clean, concise HTML code will make it easier in the future to implement changes, and in general improves the readability to users.

## Limit Number of Clicks to get to Item

The client should reduce the number of clicks it takes a user to access their desired resource. This includes multiple changes, such as: **1)** eliminating, or clarifying, some existing hyperlinks (Figure 19) and **2)** inserting headings that direct the user's eye to important sections of the page (Figure 22).

## Congressional Globe

The Globe, as it is usually called, contains the congressional debates of the 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833-73).

The Globe, as it is usually called, contains the congressional debates of the 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833-73). There are 46 volumes in the series based on the table found in the Third Edition of *Checklist of United States Public Documents 1789-1909, Volume 1B* (pp. 1466-69).

The Globe is the third of the four series of publications containing the debates of Congress. It was preceded by the *Annals of Congress* and the *Register of Debates* and succeeded by the *Congressional Record*. The first five volumes of the Globe (23rd Congress, 1st Session through 25th Congress, 1st Session, 1833-37) overlap with the Register of Debates. Initially the Globe contained a "condensed report" or abstract rather than a verbatim report of the debates and proceedings. With the 32nd Congress (1851), however, the Globe began to provide something approaching verbatim transcription.

The contents of the appendix of each volume vary from Congress to Congress, but appendixes typically contain presidential messages, reports of the heads of departments and cabinet officers, texts of laws, and appropriations. Speeches not indexed or referenced on the pages reprinting the debates appear in the appendix as well.

[Bibliographic Record](#)

This collection will be available on [Congress.gov](#) in the future. An archived version is [available here](#).

Figure 18: Current page for the [Congressional Globe](#) on loc.gov.

## Congressional Globe

The Globe, as it is usually called, contains the congressional debates of the 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833-73).

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The contents of the appendix of each volume vary from Congress to Congress, but appendixes typically contain presidential messages, reports of the heads of departments and cabinet officers, texts of laws, and appropriations. Speeches not indexed or referenced on the pages reprinting the debates appear in the appendix as well.

The library is in the process of transferring this collection to an external site. In the meantime, an archived version of the collection is [available here](#).

[Bibliographic Record](#)

[Back to top](#)

Figure 19: Proposed changes to hyperlinks for the [Congressional Globe](#) page. We recommend that the client implements this change for all subcollection pages.

- 1) Removed the hyperlink to congress.gov. Since the collection has not been moved there yet, the hyperlink does not contain any useful information for the user and adds visual clutter to the page.

- 2) Moved the hyperlink for the Bibliographic Record to end of the .managed-content-content  
<div>

```

▼ <p>
    "The library is in the process of transferring this collection to an external
    site. In the meantime, an archived version of the collection is "
    <a href="https://webarchive.loc.gov/all/2021111045023/https://memory.loc.go
    v/ammem/amlaw/lwcg.html">available here.</a>
</p>
<br>
▼ <p>
    <a href="https://lccn.loc.gov/12036437">Bibliographic Record</a>
</p>
<a href="https://webarchive.loc.gov/all/2021111045023/https://memory.loc.go
v/ammem/amlaw/lwcg.html"> </a>
</article>

```

*Figure 20: Edited HTML for proposed change to hyperlinks. This can be applied to all subcollection pages.*

## Congressional Globe

The Globe, as it is usually called, contains the congressional debates of the 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833-73).

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### About the Congressional Globe

The Globe, as it is usually called, contains the congressional debates of the 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833-73). There are 46 volumes in the series based on the table found in the Third Edition of *Checklist of United States Public Documents 1789-1909, Volume 1B* (pp. 1466-69).

The Globe is the third of the four series of publications containing the debates of Congress. It was preceded by the *Annals of Congress* and the *Register of Debates* and succeeded by the *Congressional Record*. The first five volumes of the Globe (23rd Congress, 1st Session through 25th Congress, 1st Session, 1833-37) overlap with the Register of Debates. Initially the Globe contained a "condensed report" or abstract rather than a verbatim report of the debates and proceedings. With the 32nd Congress (1851), however, the Globe began to provide something approaching verbatim transcription.

The contents of the appendix of each volume vary from Congress to Congress, but appendixes typically contain presidential messages, reports of the heads of departments and cabinet officers, texts of laws, and appropriations. Speeches not indexed or referenced on the pages reprinting the debates appear in the appendix as well.

---

### Access the Congressional Globe

The Library is currently in the process of transferring this collection to an external site. An archived version is [available here](#).

[Bibliographic Record](#)
↑Back to top

*Figure 21: Proposed changes to headings for subcollection pages. Inserting <h2> headings directs the user's eye to important sections of the page.*

- 1) Added two <h2> elements that visually divide the page into two sections: About and Access. This way, users with prior knowledge of the topic can easily navigate to the collection and avoid unnecessary background information.

```

▼ <article id="article" class="century-of-lawmaking-article-container">
  <h1 data-title="collections">Congressional Globe</h1>
  ▶ <section class="abstract">...</section>
  <h2>About the Congressional Globe</h2>
  ▶ <p>...</p>
  ▶ <p>...</p>
  ▶ <p>...</p>
  ▶ <p class="__web-inspector-hide-shortcut__">...</p>
  <h2>Access the Congressional Globe</h2>
  ▶ <p>...</p>
  <br>
  ▶ <p>...</p>
  <a href="https://webarchive.loc.gov/all/2021111045023/https://memory.lo
    c.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwcg.html"> </a>
</article>

```

*Figure 22: Edited HTML for proposed changes to headings. This can be applied to all subcollection pages.*

## Conclusion

In conclusion, our assessment of the Law Library of Congress' "A Century of Lawmaking" collection has revealed significant but not insurmountable challenges to the presentation of information on the LOC.gov website. The issues identified, particularly in relation to the target user base of students and novice researchers, have prompted the formulation of practical recommendations aimed at enhancing the overall user experience. For future projects and future work on the site, we recommend maintaining a strong sense of the site's intended user groups to guide the direction of the new LOC.gov platform's structure and descriptive language. Our findings underscore the particular importance of navigation and searchability in ensuring that the digital collection's functionality aligns with the needs of its target audience. The recommended actions aim to enhance accessibility, usability, and overall satisfaction, fostering a more effective engagement with the invaluable resources housed within the "Century of Lawmaking" collection.

We would like to thank Jennifer Gonzalez for her knowledge, openness, and trust throughout this project. We aspire for our work and deliverables to not only fulfill the present project requirements but also serve as a reference for the Library's future development and progress in the area of digital collections. The opportunity to work with the Law Library of Congress throughout the semester was an invaluable and enriching experience for our team. Thank you!

## Appendices

- [Appendix A: Usability Testing Protocol #1 \(American Memory\)](#)
- [Appendix B: Usability Testing Protocol #2 \(Journals of Congress\)](#)
- [Appendix C: Usability Testing Protocol #3 \(Debates of Congress\)](#)
- [Appendix D: Participant Profiles](#)

# Appendix A: Usability Testing Protocol #1 (American Memory)

## On the collection and participants:

- ❖ Collection website: [American Memory](#)
- ❖ Subcollection: A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation > Journals of Congress > House Journals > 1st - 6th Congress (1789-1801)
- ❖ Specific testing:
  - Search feature
  - 6th Congress and format navigation
  - Comparable website: [Bentley Historical Library](#)

## Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today to explore the Library of Congress website! During this call I will walk you through a scenario in order to test the accessibility and usability of the Library of Congress' "American Memory" website.

The activity we'll be participating in today is called "usability testing." Usability testing refers to evaluating a service by testing it with representative users. During a test, participants will try to complete typical tasks while facilitators watch, listen and take notes. The goal is to identify any usability problems and determine the participant's satisfaction with the service.<sup>5</sup>

I want to emphasize that it doesn't matter how well you perform the tasks I ask you to complete. There is no judgment on how well you can navigate, or how technically savvy you are. I am simply interested in how typical users are able to work through the site. There is also no expectation that you can complete each task. Some things may not work, and others may seem overly simple. Any experience you have with the websites is completely OK.

Do you have any questions or concerns about the previously given information?

Before we get started, would you be okay with sharing your screen and having this meeting recorded? You and any information relating to you will remain confidential and anonymous. The recording is only for the purpose of reviewing any findings to ensure that we give our client appropriate data. It is okay if you are uncomfortable with this and it is in no way necessary for this usability test.

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<sup>5</sup> Modified, but taken almost directly from  
<https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/usability-testing.html>

I will present the scenario to you now. Try to place yourself in the scenario as much as possible. Think of what you would do if you were in the situation. Just to reiterate, there is no right or wrong way to approach the task.

A copy of the scenario should have been emailed to you prior to this meeting. If you would like time to reread the scenario after we go through it together, please let me know.

### **Scenario:**

You are heading into your last year of university as a History major and need to choose a topic for your thesis. You recently completed a course on the French Revolution (1789-1799) and its impact on slavery in France's colonies in the Americas. After taking this class, you become more interested in whether the French Revolution had any effects on other slave-based societies in the Americas outside of France's control.

You need to turn in a thesis proposal to your thesis advisor in the coming weeks. Feeling a bit overwhelmed by this geographical scope, you decide to choose one place in the Americas as a case study. You settle on the United States and intend to look at a variety of documents between 1789 and 1799. You take this idea to your thesis advisor, hoping that they can help you narrow your focus and choose a set of documents to work with. Your thesis advisor suggests starting with government documents, informs you that Congress should have formal records of what took place during House sessions, and states that these documents should be free and accessible on the Library of Congress website. They cannot remember the name of the collection or how to find it.<sup>6</sup>

### **Walkthrough:**

#### Step 1:

I will now give you a series of instructions and ask reflections questions to gauge your experience. Remember, the goal is to find the resource hinted at in the scenario.

1. Open a search engine/browser of your choice.
2. Think of any terms you would use to find the resource your thesis advisor is recommending. Jot these down.
3. Note: If there are a couple of suitable options, explore them to see if you can find resources related to your thesis proposal.

#### Reflection

- Were your selected keywords sufficient to find any useful resources on the topic? Which keywords yielded the best results for you?
  - What options did your search terms pull up?

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<sup>6</sup> Note: Tester will only use the older Library of Congress website.

- Go back to the search result that most matches your research needs. Show me how you would go about accessing the information you want.
- In as much detail as possible, tell me what the search experience was like for you.

\*\*\*

#### Step 2:

We're going to switch gears a bit. Go to the landing page for the archived Library of Congress' "American Memory" website. [[Send Link](#).] For this portion of the experiment, we're going to cheat a little and I'm going to give you a bit more information. [[Assuming that they did not come across this resource in Step 1.](#)] The name of the collection that your advisor could not remember is: "A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates 1774 to 1875: "

4. The website presents quite a few ways to navigate through available resources. What are your initial reactions?
  - a. Which option would you choose? Could you explain why?
  - b. What is the name of the sub-collection that you chose?
  - c. Could you describe what you see when you select the option?
5. Once in the sub-collection, what steps would you take to be able to peruse the individual government documents?
  - a. What was this experience like? (Think of any moments of confusion, discomfort, annoyance, or relief).
  - b. Explain your experience toggling between format options.
  - c. Explain your thoughts on the layout of the site. What layout changes would make this portion of the site more accessible to you?
6. Go back to the "House Journals" landing page. Peruse the page and examine some of the other informational options presented.
  - a. What are your initial thoughts?
  - b. What use cases can you think of for these options?
  - c. What are your thoughts about their placement?

#### Step 3:

For this portion of the activity, we're going to look at the website's search feature. Think of the information you want to find based on the scenario presented earlier.

7. Show me how you would limit in-text searching to the 6th Congress.
8. What keywords would you use to find only relevant House records? These can be as complex or as simple as you like and constructed in any way.
9. Explain to me what results you got versus what you expected and your thoughts on how effective the search tool was.
10. Are there any changes to this search feature that you would have liked to see?

#### Step 4:

Congratulations! You've made it to the last portion of this activity. For this portion, I'd like you to compare your experience with the previous website to another. Please go to [<send link>](#).

The scenario for this portion is different than the first and much simpler. It is as follows:

*You are a PhD student in charge of your school's Muslim Student Association. You want to put together an exhibit on the history Muslim Student Associations in public universities and when some of these associations got their start. You are in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and have heard that they keep pretty detailed records of their schools history. You initially contact a librarian at the University of Michigan Library, who refers you to the Bentley Historical Library. The librarian tells you that you can request items but that they can only be viewed in person. You set out to look through their catalog to see which items you'd like to view.*

1. How would you go about finding the resources you want to request on their site?
2. What features made your search easier/more intuitive or harder?
3. Are there any features you feel that the LOC could benefit from?
4. Are there any features you feel that the Bentley could benefit from?

# Appendix B: Usability Testing Protocol #2 (Journals of Congress)

## **Relevant URLs:**

- [Current digital collection](#)
- [American Memory \(old home of the collection\)](#)

## **Introduction:**

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today to explore the Library of Congress website! During this call I will walk through a few scenarios with you to test the accessibility and usability of the Library of Congress website (loc.gov), as well as an older website managed by the Library of Congress called “American Memory.”

The activities I'll have you participate in today are called usability tests. Usability testing refers to evaluating a service by testing it with representative users. During a test, participants will try to complete typical tasks while facilitators watch, listen and take notes. The goal is to identify any usability problems and determine the participant's satisfaction with the service.<sup>7</sup>

I want to emphasize that it doesn't matter how well you perform the tasks we ask you to complete. There is no judgment on how well you can navigate, or how technically savvy you are. We are simply interested in how typical users are able to work through the site. There is also no expectation that you can complete each task. Some things may not work, and others may seem overly simple. Any experience you have with the websites is completely OK.

Do you have any questions about this before we get started?

For this task, I am going to present you with a scenario, and with that scenario in mind I'd like you to try and find some materials using the Library of Congress website. You can use any tools on your computer while you do so; there is no right or wrong way to find the information. While you're working through this task, feel free to think aloud and communicate your reasoning for clicking links, going back, etc. I will ask you questions, and I can provide some help, but for the most part you should be finding the information on your own. Do you have any questions before I read you the scenario?

## **Scenario:**

You are an historian interested in the Civil War period of U.S. history, and you hear that the journal of the U.S. Senate has some useful information for your project. You learn that the

---

<sup>7</sup> Modified, but taken almost directly from  
<https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/usability-testing.html>

Senate Journal is digitized through the Library of Congress and is available online as part of the “Century of Lawmaking” digital collection. You are interested particularly in the early years of the war, from 1861 to 1863.

**Questions:**

1. Starting from a clear browser, this task asks you to find the Senate Journal for the years 1861 to 1863. You will start by finding the Library of Congress’s “Century of Lawmaking” digital collection. Can you show me how you would go about doing that?
2. Now that you’re on the website, can you find your way to the Senate Journal?
  - a. What do you notice about the website’s setup as you look around?
  - b. Are there any things you like about this organization?
  - c. Are there any things you wish could be improved?
3. OK, you’ve found the Senate Journal! Now you will need to find a way to access the text. Remember: we are looking for the 1861 to 1863 edition. How will you find the full text?
  - a. [IF CORRECT LINK] How did you choose this link from the options provided?
  - b. [IF INCORRECT LINK] You may have to go back to the previous screen in order to find the full text.
    - i. [AFTER “BROWSE” IDENTIFIED] Why did the other link draw your attention first?
    - ii. What made the “Browse” link difficult to find?

Congratulations on completing the task! Now that you’ve found the information, I have some follow-up questions to ask about your process.

4. How would you describe the process of finding the Library of Congress website? Was it easy or difficult to find?
  5.
    - a. Once you were on the website, how did you find information related to the Senate Journal?
    - b. How clear was that information?
  6. Were you able to find your way to the text of the Senate Journal from the information provided?
  7. Do you have any other thoughts regarding your experience of this website? This can be in regard to layout, style, the description of items, or anything else.
- Now, I would like to see if you’re able to find another item from the Journals of Congress. Can you navigate back to the main page for the digital collection and find the page dedicated to Maclay’s Journal?
8. How would you access Maclay’s Journal from this page?

9. [AFTER FINDING FULL-TEXT] Can you describe what you're seeing on this page?
  - a. How is it different from the website you used to find the Senate Journal?
10. An important part of searching is being able to find specific terms. Can you show me how you would go about finding the phrase "Penn family" in Maclay's Journal?
11. Do you have further comments on this website's layout?
12. Do you have any other thoughts regarding your experience of this website? This can be in regard to layout, style, the description of items, or anything else.
13. Any last thoughts or questions before we wrap up?

# Appendix C: Usability Testing Protocol #3 (Debates of Congress)

## Task 3: Debates of Congress

<https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html>

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today to explore the Library of Congress website. During this call, I will walk through a few scenarios with you to test the accessibility and usability of the Library of Congress website (loc.gov), as well as an older website managed by the Library of Congress called “American Memory.”

The activities I’ll have you participate in today are called usability tests. Usability testing refers to evaluating a service by testing it with representative users. During a test, participants will try to complete typical tasks while facilitators watch, listen and take notes. The goal is to identify any usability problems and determine the participant’s satisfaction with the service.

I want to emphasize that it doesn’t matter how well you perform the tasks we ask you to complete. There is no judgment on how well you can navigate, or how technically savvy you are. We are simply interested in how typical users are able to work through the site. There is also no expectation that you can complete each task. Some things may not work, and others may seem overly simple. Any experience you have with the websites is completely OK. Do not feel discouraged if you cannot complete a task.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

---

Scenario: You are a first-year college student using loc.gov to do research for an American history class on the Civil War. You will be exploring statements made by Congress pertaining to events and relations during the Civil War.

### ***I - Testing to see if user can navigate to debates of congress page without url***

To begin, please open a new tab or window and navigate to the Law Library of Congress’ “Debates of Congress” subcollection. For more context, “Debates of Congress” is part of a larger collection called “A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation.” Please show how you’d approach finding this page.

### ***II - Testing user’s initial perception/understanding of the collection based on page structure and text***

Please look over the page for a minute or two, and then describe to me in as much detail as possible the content and structure. (e.g. What kinds of resources are included in Debates of Congress?, What are the 4 different subcollections?)

***III - Testing user's ability to find information within records***

IIIa. Which sub collection(s) would you look in for information on the Civil War? (For background context, the Civil War occurred between April 12, 1861 – April 9, 1865)

IIIb. Great job, you navigated to the Congressional Globe, which recorded debates between the years of 1833-1873. Now that you have identified the correct subcollection, can you find information in the Congressional Globe for the 37th congress about Senate Bill No. 38? Can you tell me anything about this bill? What were the appropriations for?

IIIc. Congratulations on identifying the correct bill. Now, please navigate to the section for the 38th Congress. On what page(s) Congressional Globe for the 38th Congress could you find various senators' comments on the Reconstruction bill? You do not need to list every page where the bill is mentioned, just a few page numbers.

IIId. What did House Resolution (H. R.) No. 178 authorize the Joint Committee on Commerce to do? What topic related to the Civil War was the committee writing a report on?

This is the end of our task. Before we finish, I have some questions for you about the experience:

1. What was the process of navigating to the webpage like?
2. Once you were on the Debates of Congress page, how did you decide which subcollection to view?
3. Discuss how you felt about the process of searching for information within the Congressional Globe.
4. Do you have any other comments or remarks on the layout and/or design of the pages you viewed?

## Appendix D: Participant Profiles

Protocol	Age	Educational Background	Profession
1	25	Masters, Information Science – User Experience	User Experience Researcher
1	34	Bachelors (in process), Communication	State Government – Claims Processing
2	19	Bachelors (in process), Digital Media Production & Advertising	Retail/Customer Service
2	18	Associates (in process), Art & Design	Retail/Customer Service
3	24	Bachelors, Economics & Math	Associate, Executive Search Firm
3	24	Bachelors, Retail & Consumer Science	Product Development, Fashion Rental company