



UX CAFÉ AT THE LIBRARIES

Zoe Chao

User Experience Librarian

Assessment Department

Penn State University Libraries

PROPOSAL

RESEARCH PROBLEM

As the Penn State University Libraries (PSUL) migrate the web content to Drupal, many questions regarding how to improve the libraries' web presence are raised. Questions like: "Can users find this piece of information?", "Does the top menu fit into user's categories?", or "Does the terminology or labeling make sense to our students?" to name a few. By looking at the web site analytics, A/B testing, and heat maps, we are able to answer some of the questions. However, these types of data fail to record the personal context of individual users, for example, their background, information needs, perceptions of the web site, and satisfaction with the interaction with the site.

I have done several in-personal user studies throughout my career. In addition to conceiving and preparing effective approaches for research objectives, another main hurdle I have to overcome is recruiting participants. I have tried setting up a table in the libraries, talking to strangers, notifying library managers to inform their student workers, or asking acquaintances to spread the word, etc. Though I always manage to get enough participants, the size of my research sample is not something I can fully control.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RESEARCH

Several user studies and blog posts (see the references below) have observed that users generally prefer an agile and iterative process of web development to a complete web site re-design. For the current migration and for the future, the UL Web Implementation and Management Team (WIMT) makes it a goal that changes will happen progressively based on the results of regular user studies. Thus, the collection of user data, both remotely and in-person, needs to be a commitment from the libraries instead of sporadic events.

To facilitate user input channel, I would like to propose a "UX café" (UX short for user experience), a setting where the library users can come in and chat with me about their experience in exchange for a free cup of coffee and maybe some snacks (depending on the budget). The UX café will be held regularly, once or twice a week, on the same day(s), at the same time. As the UX librarian and the host of the café, I will either prepare some questions that WIMT needs to answer, or let users show me how they find resources online with no specific guideline. It will not be a setting for in-depth studies, such as completing usability tasks on the libraries web site, but rather, it is a chance for me to get to know our users and their experiences, thoughts, and ideas. Moreover, I envision UX café will pave the way for us to conduct more in-depth, time-consuming research for all types of user experience for the libraries, for example, the library spaces.

For a small cost, I can see extra benefits coming out of this. First, we can compile an e-mail list for students who are interested in participating in the user studies for the libraries. Second, students would know that we care about what they think and feel encouraged and appreciated when sharing their experiences. Third, through the UX café, the libraries can promote the concept of user experience and how it can be applied to the decision making process.

My regular deliverables for this project will be gathering inputs, sharing my findings during the weekly WIMT meetings, and following up with strategies for improvements. My ultimate goal is to help the PSUL website evolve into an easy-to-use, user-centered web environment for our users.

REFERENCES

Nielsen, J. (2007). **Does User Annoyance Matter?** *Nielsen Norman Group*. Retrieved from <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/does-user-annoyance-matter/>

Nielsen, J. (2007). **Fresh vs. Familiar: How Aggressively to Redesign.** *Nielsen Norman Group*. Retrieved from <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/fresh-vs-familiar-aggressive-redesign/>

Rosenfeld, L. (2012). **Stop Redesigning and Start Tuning Your Site Instead.** *Smashing Magazine*. Retrieved from: <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2012/05/stop-redesigning-start-tuning-your-site/>

Schmidt, A. (2010). **Resist That Redesign.** *Library Journal*, 136(4), 21. Retrieved from <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2010/03/opinion/aaron-schmidt/resist-that-redesign-the-user-experience/>

Wolf, T., & Johnson, M. (2014). **Get Agile: Kill the Website Redesign Project.** *Arizona State University Digital Repository*. Retrieved from: <https://repository.asu.edu/items/26607>

PROPOSED PLAN OF WORK

If the fund is granted, I plan to have the UX café launched in Fall 2016 and the program will be held regularly for both fall and spring semesters. The following is the tentative plan and timeline.

MARKETING

- Contact the Outreach Coordinator for the possibility of setting up a table to promote the UX café during the Open House week. (Summer 2016)
- Contact Public Relations and Marketing Department for signage and social media exposure. (Summer 2016)

- Contact the library operation managers to email the student worker about the program. (Two weeks before Fall 2016)

COFFEE & SNACKS

- Arrange with McKinnon's Café for one Coffee Traveler delivered on the day of the program, for example, every Wednesday morning. Inquire into the possible sponsorship or discount from McKinnon's Café. (Summer 2016)
- Possibly purchase granola bars in bulk to reduce cost and for long preserving time. Chocolate bars for students who are allergic to nuts.

LOCATION

If the proposal is accepted, I will submit my plan to the Administrative Office and work with the Facility Department to finalize the location of the UX café. Here are some of my ideas:

- The area by the revolving door entrance in Central Pattee.
- The area next to the Common Service desk.
- One of the instruction rooms inside the Knowledge Common.

FORMAT

As mentioned earlier, I will be the host of UX café. Other librarians and staff are welcome to join me, but preferably one more co-host at a time. I can see that the members from the WIMT gain some insight from observing students on site. The plan is to have a conversation with one student at a time. A sign-up sheet will be available 15 minutes prior to the opening of the café. Each slot is 15 minutes. I can talk to eight students in one two-hour session. During the meeting with students I will explain the goal of this initiatives, and ask for the permission to record the interview and screen capture if needed. I will submit my proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

This is not a Usability Team's project. Currently, the team does not meet regularly and the team leader, Bonnie Imler, is on sabbatical. Nonetheless, the result will benefit all the campus libraries since we share most of our web presence and resources. I see this initiative as a proof of concept, which the format may be changed or refined based on the turnout and the feedback from the participants.

REPORT

In addition to submitting the final report to the LFO Research Committee, I would like to present my studies within the libraries as well as submit proposals to conferences about the idea of the UX café and the outcome.

BUDGET

The following budget is based on the café being scheduled once a week for two semesters.

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| Coffee Traveler from McKinnon's Café (serve 12): \$12.95 per box + tax | |
| \$14 x 18 (weeks in one semester) x 2 semesters ----- | \$504 |
| Granola bars / chocolate bars (288 bars needed if good attendance) | |
| Currently \$6 /12 bars in a box from Amazon Pantry ----- | \$200 |
| (additional fund sought in case of fluctuation) | |
| Total ----- | \$704 |



VITA

ZOE CHAO

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

User Experience Librarian

Aug. 2015 – Present

Penn State University Libraries

- Conduct user studies for libraries web site, including usability test, card-sorting exercise, and user interviews.
- Plan and implement exercises to gather student feedback about the library spaces, including setting up flip charts for comments and having students participating in photos survey.
- Design information architecture for the PUSL web site based on Google Analytics, heat map and user feedback.
- Chair Content Board for overseeing and reviewing web content.
- Involved in Web Implementation and Management Team, Discovery and Access Working Team, and Data Visualization Team.

Metadata and Discovery Services Librarian

Aug. 2010 – Aug. 2015

University Libraries, University of New Mexico (UNM)

- Designed and implemented overall web presence for University Libraries (UL) and College of University Libraries & Learning Sciences (UL&LS), based on usability studies and current best practices for web design. Tasks included: involved stakeholders in outlining information architecture, led and coordinated the Web Implementation Team, investigated and utilized emerging web applications, conducted usability tests, facilitated discussion on the institution's web policies, trained staff updating content in the CMS environment, and implemented tracking and search tools to monitor website traffic.
- Collaborated with Campus IT in SearchUNM. Analyzed query data, investigated user search behavior, and explored the functions of Google Search Appliance and Google Custom Search.
- Configured and managed e-Resources Discovery layer.
- Served in User Experience Working Group, Web Implementation Team, CONTENTdm Working Group, LEARN Working Group, and Learning Objects Working Group.

Portal Librarian, Illinois Harvest Portal

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Sept. 2006 – Aug. 2010

- Designed and implemented the web interface using HTML, CSS, ASP/VBScript and SQL.
- Harvested metadata using Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH); built and maintained OAI Providers for digitized content from UIUC Library.
- Developed applications and workflows; documented practices developed during the course.
- Investigated open-source applications to enhance user experience for accessing digitized content online. Analyzed web logs for Illinois Harvest and the digital collections in CONTENTdm.

- Established processes to batch upload digitized images and metadata to Flickr.com for the Digital Collections and Content project funded by Institute of Museum and Library Services (<http://imlsdcc.granger.uiuc.edu/> and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/imlsdcc/>).

PUBLICATIONS

Chao, Z. (2016). "From Query Analysis to User Information Needs: a Study of Campus Map Searches." *Library Hi Tech*, 34(1):104-129.

DOI: 10.1108/LHT-12-2014-0110

Chao, Z., & Lubas, R. (2013) "Collaborating with Information Technology: Implementing Web Search at the University of New Mexico." *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 51:251-264.

DOI: 10.1080/01639374.2012.722590

Chao, Z., & Jackson, A. (2013) "Chapter 2- XML." In *The Metadata Manual: A practical workbook* by Rebecca Lubas, Amy Jackson & Ingrid Schneider. Woodhead Publishing.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

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| The inside Users: How to Work with your Colleagues to Tame the Intranet Beast | April 2016 |
| Designing for Digital 2016 (upcoming) | |

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| Eat, Work and Sleep: How Students Use Library Spaces | April 2016 |
| Designing for Digital 2016 (upcoming) | |

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| Does Your Website Make Your Users Fat?: Reducing User's Cognitive Load with Easy to Ingest Web Design | Nov. 2014 |
| 2014 LITA National Forum | |

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| Where is the Duck Pond?: Looking into UNM Map Search | Oct. 2013 |
| Internet Librarian 2013 | |

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| Increase Your Website Ranking Through Search Engine Optimization (SEO) | May 2013 |
| UNM TechDay 2013 | |