The Access to the Collection subgroup coordinated a focus group session with faculty. Four faculty attended the first session listed above and two no-shows insisted on sending in written comments the next week. The four attendees were from Computer Science, Psychology, History, and Training & Development respectively. The two written submissions were from Horticulture and Training & Development. We are planning an additional focus group in May to broaden the sample a bit and assure that we are getting a variety of subject backgrounds included. We hope to have a faculty member from PAMS and an additional faculty member from the CoE in the next group.

The session was moderated quite well by Steve McCann while James Jackson-Sanborn and Greg Raschke took notes and observed.

Some Conclusions

1. Faculty appreciate flexible access mechanisms, clearly offered and defined. They were concerned that a simple search box not preclude them from easily using the catalog, locating known databases and journals by format, and browsing. They also expressed concern that we not “dumb down” the research process too much for students. Make it easier to find good content yes, but still promote resource discovery. They want students to know they are using the library.
   a. Two respondents felt that the search box in the mock-up had an unknown quality. “What will I find?”
   b. However, the liked the categorization of results – i.e. Database Results, Journals, Books, etc.

2. Resource discovery and research is by far the primary concern for faculty. They understood the Libraries has other constituencies, but recommended trimming the current left navigation bar or getting rid of it entirely. They want the web site to be chiefly concerned with facilitating their access to information.

3. Faculty chiefly use the Libraries site for databases, ejournals, and the Catalog. One faculty member, when asked what they would tell the Director of Libraries, said, “The content at the end of the rainbow is getting better and better – keep that progress going. Help get me to citations and content and help me keep up with the available literature in my field.”
   a. They cited content, ereserves, and access to services/librarians as their chief concerns in that order.

4. All faculty members cited reference linking as a positive step forward and requested more electronic journals. They specifically asked that we make the SFX menu options – i.e. when we present users with options for full-text – easier to use by clearly presenting the best choice for full-text.

5. All respondents requested we keep the “feel of virtually being in the Libraries until we clearly choose to leave”. They also requested a consistent look and feel to the site.
6. Faculty rely heavily on other sources of information in addition to the Libraries. The Computer Science faculty member suggested that for his discipline, “The Web is the Library”. He pointed to CiteSeer as an example. All faculty commented that they rely on colleagues for papers.

7. Two respondents were quite excited by the potential for subject clusters where they could search or browse sets of resources for their discipline. They would like to skip some of the noise on the site but do not want to bother with logging in or creating accounts. Two were more excited by the possibility for creating personalized metasearches, saving searches, and getting alerts. They felt their disciplines defy categorization and they would be better off choosing the three or four databases they rely on and setting up their own preferences.

8. Things they did not like about the current site included: 1) Left side navigation; 2) Alphabetical organization of resources; 3) Eyes are being drawn to wrong places – left and bottom; 4) Allow more redundancy and ability to jump around – feel like it is difficulty if they choose databases and they want an ejournal to navigate over; and 5) Ebooks are terribly difficult to use.

9. Faculty primarily come to the Libraries for books (once a semester), for community building type activities such as meetings, presentations, and exhibits, and services such as the LRCDA. However, they prefer to do research from there offices and appreciate online availability of scholarly content.

10. Scholars do at times rely on broader Web tools to accomplish what are traditionally library-supported activities. For example, they mentioned using Google to find ETD’s, even NCSU ETD’s, and using Amazon to search for new books in their field.

Recommendations

1. Maintain access points to the collection via searching (both general and Catalog), by format (i.e. journals, databases), and subject browsing. Perform usability tests to trial the organization and layout of these three access mechanisms on the redesigned site.

2. Maintain efforts to simultaneously promote resource discovery via easy access to databases while making it easier to get to content via links to full-text. They still want to Libraries to provide scholarly content, but support methods for making it more straightforward.

3. Continue the Libraries focus on providing scholarly information. While seemingly obvious, the faculty continued to remind us of the importance of this core function.

4. Continue exploring metasearch tools, both by pre-defined subject clusters and customizable options that allow for custom sets and saved searches.

5. Web pages – whether they are the homepage or not – designed to help scholars access content must be clearly and cleanly laid out without too many distraction points.

6. Continue work to segregate results by format and providing users with clues as to what they may find. For example, Agricola returns 50 articles including these…or the Catalog returns 40 items including these. Users appreciated the concept of results broken out by database records, journals/ejournals, and books.
7. New Books features are popular among MyLibrary enthusiasts and those who do not use it, they should be enhanced for the redesign.