NCSU Libraries Usability Testing

Focus Group Pre-Test

Access Tools and Integrated Instruction
Next Generation MyLibrary
Summary

The purpose of this focus group is two-fold. First it attempts to assess the utility of two focus group discussion guides, for Access Tools and Integrated Instruction as well as Next Generation MyLibrary. It also attempts to provide insight into the behavior and preferences of the libraries undergraduate student workers. Questions considered fall under two categories:

1. Access Tools and Integrated Instruction:
   a. Reasons library website is used
   b. Categories of information needs
   c. Problems encountered with current site
   d. Use of and attitudes toward help functionality

2. Next Generation MyLibrary:
   a. Familiarity with portal concept
   b. Use of and attitudes toward personalization and customization functionality
   c. Usefulness of currently proposed functionality

One female and two male undergraduate subjects with majors in Economics, Computer Science, and Industrial Engineering participated. All rated themselves as expert Internet users. Time spent as a student at NCSU ranged from between two and a half to more than five years. All three estimate their library website use at once a month.

Summary of Participant’s Comments:

- Participants use the library website largely for research and e-reserves.
- With regard to portals, the participants seemed to gravitate toward functionality that augmented their student experience, not necessarily their library experience.
- E-reserves are generally viewed favorably, though participants reported having difficulty making use of e-reserves functionality.
- There is interest in more functionality to track books and requests. This might be because participants were student workers in the library.
- Finding links on the home page is problematic.
- General dissatisfaction stated by the participants on the home page’s “wordy” design.
- Two out of the three students expressed hesitance toward the portal concept. They thought they might “miss out on information” due to customization.

Recommendations:

1. To cut down on time spent referencing both the guide and the exercise worksheets, convert the discussion guide into a facilitator’s version of the participant’s worksheet.
2. When referring to the reserves portion of the website, the term “e-reserves” should be used, as this is what students seem to recognize.
3. For ATII: Remove the question about websites with good help functionality and replace it with something designed to probe the participant’s attitudes toward online help.
4. Probe to see if non-student worker participants would like additional functionality to track books and requests.
5. Ask participants if they think that the design of their stated favorite websites would work for a libraries’ website.
6. For NGML: Probe further into participants concerns regarding personalized sites and the fears of “missing out” on important information.

Data: See ATII-NGML-pretest_focusgroup_data.xls