

Study Proposal Outline:
User Experience and the Online Academic Library

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Brief Description of the Study

The academic library presence in a higher education ecosystem is losing its presence both physically and virtually (Croxtton, 2016). The goal of this study is to explore the placement of the academic library within the academic institution's online Learning Management System (LMS). The study will incorporate elements of human-computer interaction (HCI) design as it relates to information seeking behavior, and user experience. At the core of this study is the significance of the online visibility of the academic library and first-year undergraduate students' awareness of the variety of library resources. Students have more choices to retrieve information for their classes, and unless instructed by the professor to use library resources, students will opt for more attractive resources via the Internet (Bandyopadhyay & Boyd-Byrnes, 2016).

Participants

The population for the study is the purposeful sampling of first-year undergraduate students as the participants are starting their academic careers and are new to the college experience is the reason for the selection. As referenced is Croxtton (2016) according to the 2014 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), undergraduates from 18 to 24 increasingly get their information via Google and are satisfied with mediocre, easily accessible sources which are less credible than the information from library databases. The participants will be from 4-year public universities and colleges in the United States. The element of the complex understanding of HCI (Peer, 2017) necessitates the sample from geographically distributed institutions.

The first phase of the study will involve a letter to academic library deans and directors. The letter will be a request for participation in the study. Additional data collection for this study

will include semi-structured interviews with librarians and undergraduate students at each institution. Students will then complete an information seeking task and an online survey.

Following approval from the dean, students will receive an invitation to sit for a 60-minute semi-structured session to answer brief questions, complete a task, then complete an online survey.

The final phase of the study will be an evaluative study of academic library websites within the LMS. Evaluation of the websites will involve both the public view and the authentication view.

The goal is to view the placement of the library website access points and marketing of its services in relation to the LMS.

Limitations and Potential Problems

Ideally, the study would cover libraries on a global level though not the scope of the study. There are many phases to the study and time may be a constraint. Following the semi-structured interviews, the students will also be asked to complete a task to locate a research guide on the library website. The institutions permitting use will be allowing student observations following questions after using the institutional LMS. One of the major problems is by the completion of the study there is the probability of changes to the LMS and library website—this is an expectation. However, learning about the user experience and navigation is still relevant to determining user behavior and preferences.

Research Questions

1. How do first-year undergraduate students navigate the institutional LMS to access the library website?
 - a. Is the placement of the library information visible and visually appealing to students?
 - b. Is the placement such that students will visit regardless of need? Is the link to the site attractive and does it pique the curiosity of users?

- c. Will the library need to make changes to the library website placement within the institution's LMS?
2. What role does the library play in the student's journey on the website?
 - a. How many access points are there to reach the library website?
 - b. Once at the site, are the students able to locate and identify the purpose of the library catalog, the databases, and research guides?
3. How will the library promote or adapt ease use of its online interactive services such as chat with a librarian and resources such as librarian created research guides?
 - a. What is the student's motivation in using the library website?

Need of the Study

Though the goal of library services is to guide users to the resources they need, the modalities have changed—technology has popularized remote services such as chat, texting, and use of librarian content creations such as tutorials and curations such as research guides (Bandyopadhyay & Boyd-Byrnes, 2016). Libraries continue to subscribe to high-cost database research products. Interoperability is a consideration when working within the confines of an LMS—just as physical spaces, real estate on the institutional website may not be an element under control by the library. If getting to the library website is difficult and once there, if the users cannot match the resources with their needs, then the students may use the freely available resources via the Internet. The goal is to provide the optimal user experience by understanding how users interact with the institutional and library website.

Type of Research

Various research designs could address the research questions, and this study will employ

a qualitative dominant three-phase sequential mixed method design. Mixed methods research allows for flexibility in design which will support answering the research questions. (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011)

Phase I of the study includes semi-structured interviews with librarians and students to understand the information needs of each population subset at the four different institutions.

Phase II involves more data where the student will complete a task and survey following task completion via an online survey. The final phase is an evaluative study of the placement of library websites within the each institutional LMS—the goal is to evaluate the four websites of the institutions in the study in addition to comparable academic websites.

Description of Questions / Research Questions

- Please tell me a little about your educational background before you enrolled at this school?
- How would you describe your confidence level in finding information on the school website?
- How and what type of information do you look for in a typical day (movie reviews, directions, health information)?
- Have you accessed the library website? If so, was this a class requirement? How would you compare finding the information on the library website to finding information in Google?
- Why do you think students may go to Google before searching the library website?

Students will then be asked to complete the following task:

Go to the LMS, locate and access the library website, then locate and review a Research Guide

- Describe each step of the process.

- Rate your success in completing each step on a scale of 1–5:

1 = unsuccessful

2 = not very successful

3 = somewhat successful

4 = almost successful

5 = successful

(Clunie, & Parrish, 2018; Samson, Granath, & Alger, 2017)

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