# Project Cover Sheet

## Project

**Library Outages**

*Library Outages – An Initial Study*

The Library Outages webpage lists the status of current problems with online resources. There is a link to this page from the university library gateway homepage.

## Committee & Members

Usability Working Group

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## Report Info

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## Objectives

The goal for this study is to identify major areas of improvement for the Library Outages page and lay the foundation for the plan to conduct a usability analysis of the page.

## Methodology

Method – Informal evaluation, Comparative Analysis
Dates of study: January 2008

## Recommendations

- Restructure organization of Library Outages page to include sections for type of outages (see examples found)
- Restrict use of technical language that users may not understand
- When possible, show only limited information about the outage (extensive information can be made available in the staff view)
- Consider search feature for navigating information on the page
- Make a Distinction between the Cause of the Issue and the Steps being taken to resolve it
- Conduct informal guerilla test to determine findability of outages page and possible replacement link & page title

## Introduction

The Library Outages page lists problems with electronic resources, maintenance issues etc; however, concern has been expressed about the usability of the page, for instance it is not clear if the label 'Library Outages' is an appropriate one. The aim of this study is to analyze the current library outages page and compare it to similar pages used by other academic libraries.

## Issues and Observations

### I. Target User Group: Students/Faculty

*1. Language*

i). The language used to describe the 'update' tends to involve terminology that might be unfamiliar to a student or faculty member. In the example below, for instance, the term 'Ovid' might not be self-explanatory by itself (it could say "problem reported to database administrator"):

| | |
|---|---|
| Title: | **Spine [**0362-2436**]** |
| Outage Date: | 10/29/2007 -- 15:00:40 (EDT) |
| Description: | Spine vol. 20(12) June 1995 is missing from the list of available issues. |
| Update: | 10/30/2007 -- 15:04:13 (EDT): Appears to be a Supplement issue missing; reported to **Ovid** |

ii). Students and faculty might not want detailed descriptions of the issue and resolution. They are more likely to want a brief statement indicating the status of the issue (in familiar language) and an alternative method, if any, to get the information they need.

### II. Target User Group: All

*1. Search Feature*

It is cumbersome for the user to navigate through the entire page when they are likely to be looking for information about a specific issue. The incorporation of a search feature would facilitate navigating the information on the page.

*2. Make a Distinction between the Cause of the Issue and the Steps being taken to resolve it*

For instance:

| | |
|---|---|
| Title: | **Journal of Gerontological Nursing, AAOHN journal : official journal of the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services, Ophthalmic Surgery, Lasers & Imaging, OTJR : occupation, participation and health.** |
| Outage Date: | 01/15/2008 -- 12:14:00 (EDT) |

Description: When you select the full text of an article, it asks for a subscription number. However, the subscription number provided by UM does not seem to work. The journals have this note "Effective January 1, 2008, SLACK Incorporated is discontinuing Electronic Access via user name and password for Institutional customers which is currently provided with print subscriptions" under their Change in Policy Update.

Update: 01/18/2008 -- 12:05:41 (EDT): We have discontinued electronic access to these titles. This has been forwarded to cataloging to update the records.

Jnl.of Continuing Education in Nursing
Jnl.of Nursing Education
**Jnl.of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health**
**Ophthalmic Surgery & Lasers**
**AAOHN**
**OTJR**
**Jnl.of Gerontological Nursing**
**Orthopedics ("orthosupersite" no longer associated with our subscription-it is gratis for individuals)**

*Suggestion*:
Separate the cause of the outage from steps for resolution. For instance:

**Status: 01/18/2008 -- 12:05:41 (EDT): We have discontinued electronic access to these titles.**

**Jnl.of Continuing Education in Nursing**
**Jnl.of Nursing Education**
**Jnl.of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental** Health
Ophthalmic Surgery & Lasers
AAOHN
OTJR
Jnl.of Gerontological Nursing
Orthopedics ("orthosupersite" no longer associated with our subscription-it is gratis for individuals)

**Follow-up: This has been forwarded to cataloging to update the records.**
**And possibly reword: Titles have been forwarded to cataloging to update records to reflect discontinued status**

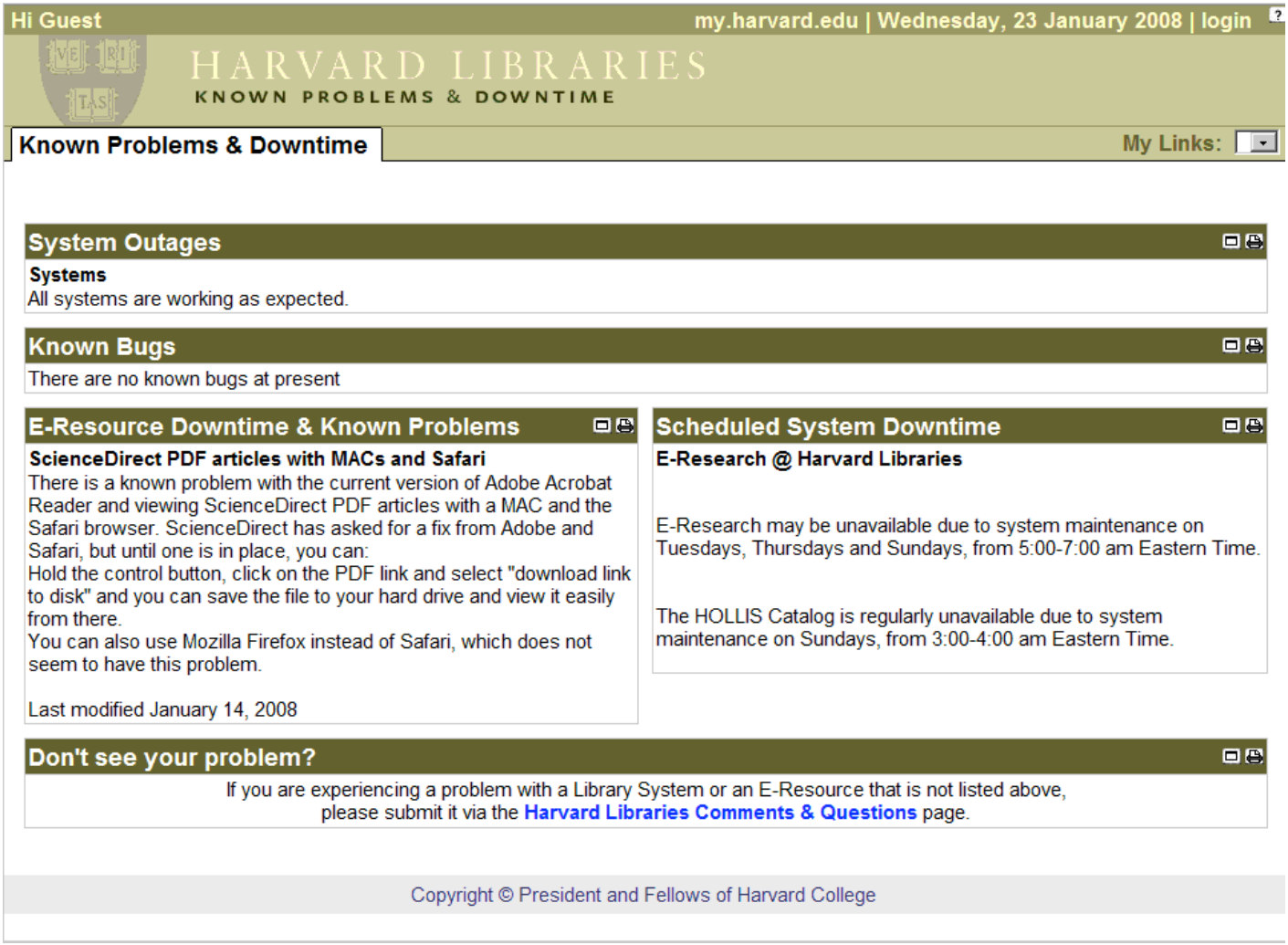
Edit content for a less technical audience (or one that is not familiar with the functions of the library system and may require more explicit language to avoid ambiguity and aid understanding).

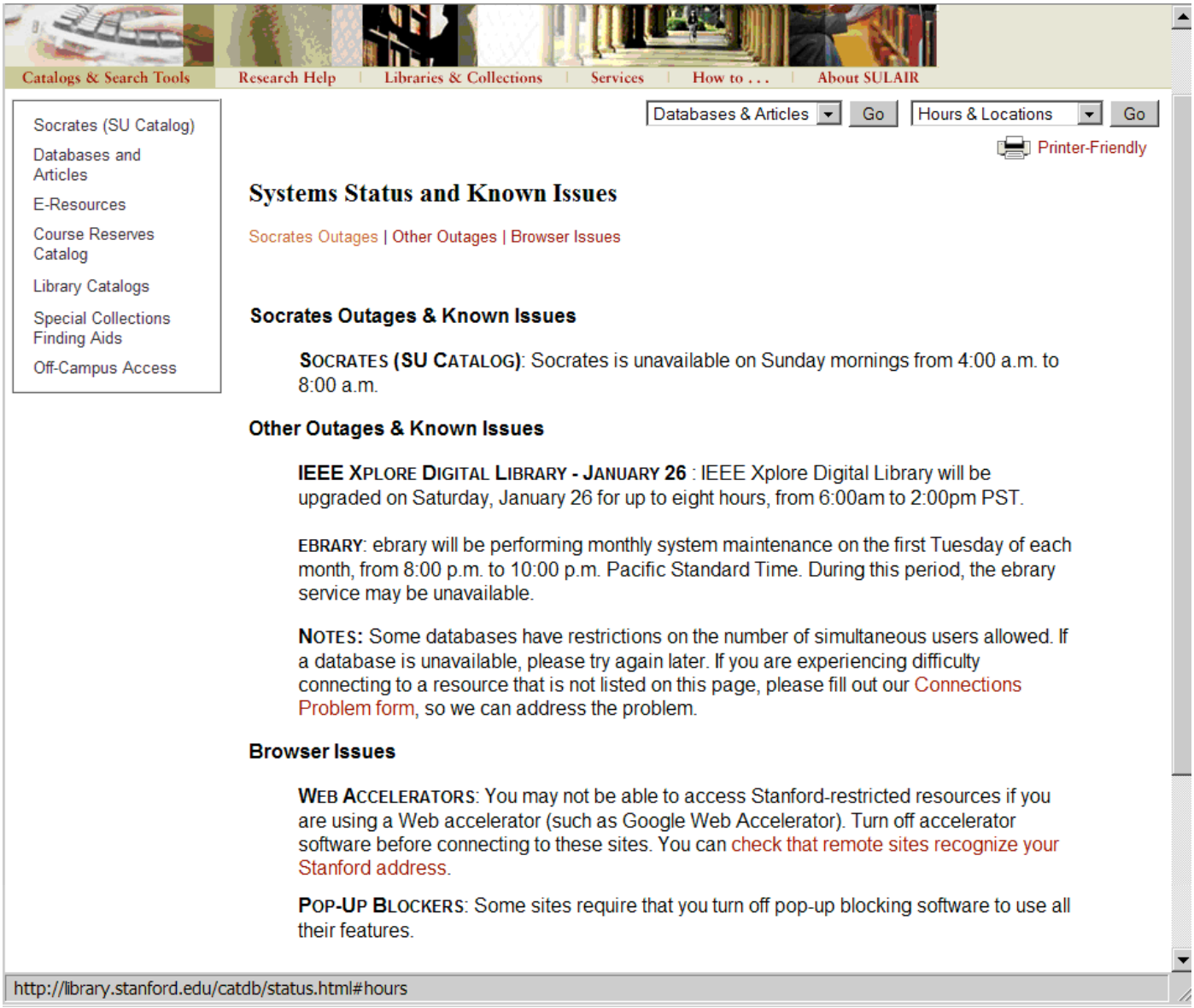
## Comparative Analysis

Of the other library websites studied, none had links to outage information on the homepage, as is the case with the U-M library website. Several libraries provided outage information on their blogs; most dealt with scheduled outages and maintenance.

**1. Harvard.edu - Library Outages Page:** http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k5486

As opposed to “Library Outages”, the label used is "Known problems and downtime." However, section labels include “System Outages” and “Known Bugs.”



**2. Stanford.edu - Library Outages:** http://library.stanford.edu/catdb/status.html

The main label used is "System Status and Known Issues," though the term "outages" appears in the labels for sub-sections on the page.