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Interviews with Experienced Users

Screening Survey Report

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PROJECT	Interviews with Experienced Users Screening Survey Report <i>Library Website – Winter-Summer 2012</i>
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SHORT DESCRIPTION	Findings from screening survey used to identify graduate and undergraduate students as “experienced” library users.
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Interviews with Experienced Users

Screening Survey Report

Revised September 2012

Project Background

The intent of this survey was to identify graduate and undergraduate students who are proficient library website users and would be suitable candidates for “experienced users” interviews (for the results of the experienced user interviews, please see “Interviews with Experienced Users” here: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/usability-library/usability-report/interviews-experienced-users>). This report explores respondents’ reported comfort with and use of online library services by area of study.

Methodology

The survey questions were devised by the MLibrary Usability Group. The survey was sent to subject librarians who are liaisons to various academic departments on campus, who in turn distributed it to students within their liaison departments. The surveys were completed between January 9th and February 20th 2012 in two phases. The first time the survey was made available, a majority of respondents were from the humanities and social sciences, so the survey was released a second time primarily to students in the sciences and engineering.

Survey Instrument

The survey consisted of six questions:

1. “What is your UM unickname?” [free response]
2. “What is your student status?” (graduate or undergraduate) [radio button]
3. “How many years have you been at UM?” [free response]
4. “What is your major or area of study?” [free response]
5. “How comfortable are you using the library website?” [free response]
6. “What do you use the library website for?” [free response]

Responses were grouped by area of study and analyzed in order to determine whether any trends could be identified in library usage patterns.

Respondents

- 307 students completed the survey.
 - 160 undergraduates
 - 147 graduate students
- 48 undergraduates and 14 graduate students (20%) were dual-degree students, 3 undergraduates and 1 graduate student (1%) listed three areas of study. Survey responses from students pursuing multiple degrees were categorized according to the first department/school listed.

Respondents by Area of Study

Because Q4 “What is your major or area of study?” was a free response question, answers required some standardization in order to group results by areas of study. For example, both “cellular and molecular biology” and “ecology and evolutionary biology” were included in “Biology”. We grouped respondents’ answers by larger disciplinary categories (see below), loosely based on the library’s higher level browse categories.

Area of Study	# of respondents	undergrads	grads
Arts	20		
Art & Design	16	15	1
Screen Arts and Cultures	1	1	0
Music, Theater & Dance	3	2	1
Engineering	25		
Aerospace Eng.	1	1	0
Atmospheric, Oceanic & Space Sciences	1	1	0
Biomedical Eng.	4	3	1
Chemical Eng.	2	2	0
Civil Eng.			
Computer Science	5	5	0
Construction Eng. & Management	1	0	1
Electrical Eng.	1	0	1
Engineering	7	7	0
Environmental Eng.	1	0	1
Industrial & Operations Eng.	1	1	0
Mechanical Eng.	1	1	0
Health Sciences	3		
Nursing	1	1	0
Public Health	2	0	2

Humanities	106		
American Culture	1	0	1
Classical Studies	27	7	20
Comparative Literature	11	6	5
Creative Writing	2	0	2
English	40	19	21
German	1	1	0
History	6	5	1
Judaic Studies	1	1	0
Linguistics	3	2	1
Near Eastern Studies	1	0	1
Philosophy	4	1	3
Romance Languages & Literatures	8	4	4
South East Asian Studies	1	0	1
International Studies	2	2	0
Business	5	5	0
Sciences	20		
Biology	7	7	0
Chemistry	1	1	0
Earth & Environmental Science	1	1	0
Mathematics and Statistics	6	6	0
Natural Resources and Environment	1	0	1
Neuroscience	3	2	1
"sciences"	1	1	0

Social Sciences	120		
Anthropology	14	1	13
Communication Studies	8	1	7
Crime and Justice	1	1	0
Economics	31	22	9
Education	32	3	29
Kinesiology	3	1	2
Political Science	5	5	0
Program in the Environment	1	1	0
Psychology	11	5	6
Social Informatics	1	1	0
Sociology	8	1	7
Social Work	4	0	4
Women's Studies	1	1	0
Undeclared	6	6	0

Note that some disciplines were mentioned by respondents, but are not listed above because they were only included as the second or third discipline for dual or triple majors.

Findings by Area of Study

Findings included below are grouped into two general categories:

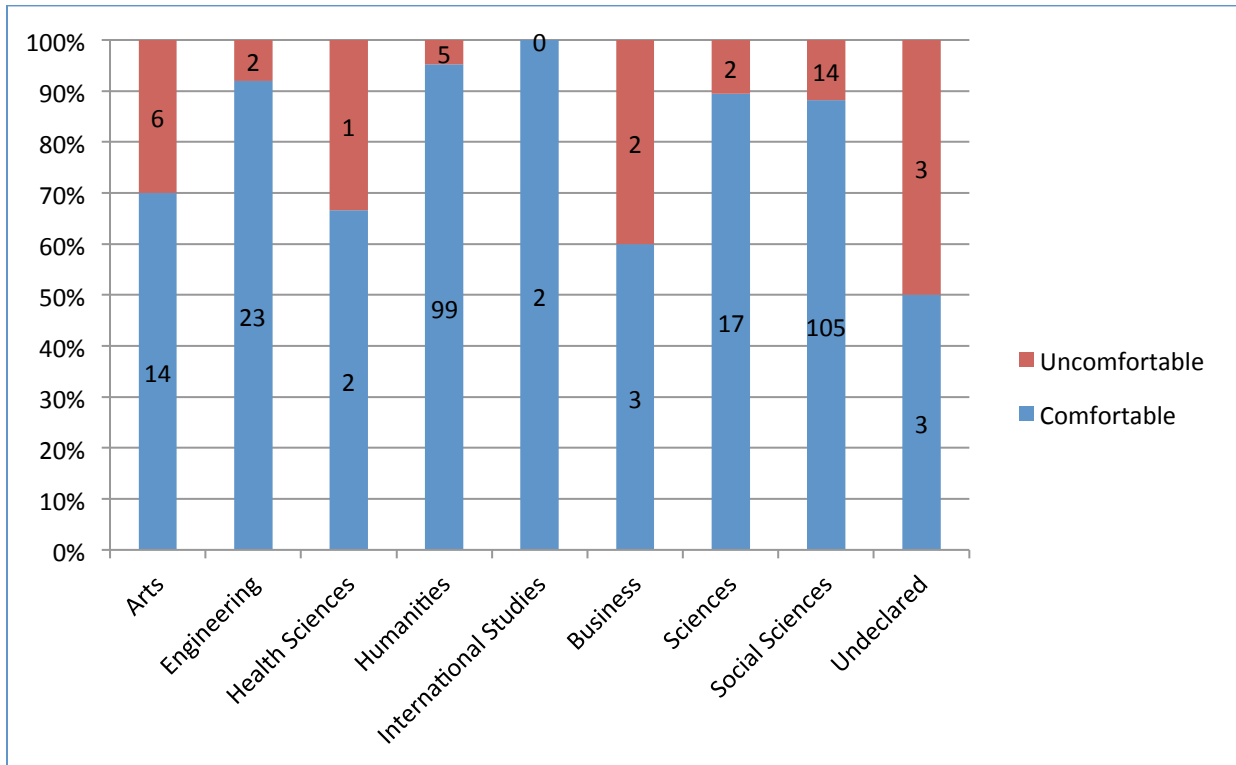
- “Comfort Level” (Q5 “How comfortable are you using the library website?”)
- “Usage of Library Website” (Q6 “What do you use the library website for?”)

We have also included a selection of notable comments offered in response to those questions.

Comfort Level

We took certain terms used in the responses to Question 5 to mean a moderate to high level of comfort.¹ Some answers, however, did not actually address the user’s level of comfort but instead discussed the quality or ease of use of the website, with no indication of the respondent’s level of comfort, and these responses were not counted.

¹ The following terms were considered a moderate to high level of comfort: very, fairly, pretty, somewhat, moderately, decent, quite, relatively.



Comfort level by area of study, with number of respondents

Area of Study (total #)	% Comfortable (#)	% Uncomfortable (#)
Arts (20)	70% (14)	30% (6)
Art & Design (16)	75% (12)	25% (4)
Screen Arts and Cultures (1)	0	100% (1)
Music, Theater & Dance (3)	67% (2)	33% (1)

Engineering (25)	92% (23)	8% (2)
Aerospace Eng. (1)	0	100% (1)
Atmospheric, Oceanic & Space Sciences (1)	100% (1)	0
Biomedical Eng. (4)	100% (4)	0
Chemical Eng. (2)	100% (2)	0
Computer Science (5)	100% (5)	0
Construction Eng. & Management (1)	0	100% (1)
Electrical Eng. (1)	100% (1)	0
Engineering (7)	100% (7)	0
Environmental Eng. (1)	100% (1)	0
Industrial & Operations Eng. (1)	100% (1)	0
Mechanical Eng. (1)	100% (1)	0
Health Sciences (3)	67% (2)	33% (1)
Nursing (1)	0	100% (1)
Public Health (2)	100% (2)	0
* Humanities (106)	93% (99)	5% (5)
American Culture (1)	100% (1)	0
Classical Studies (27)	96% (26)	4%(1)
*Comparative Literature (11)	82% (9)	9% (1)
Creative Writing (2)	100% (2)	0
* English (40)	90% (36)	7.5% (3)
German (1)	100% (1)	0
History (6)	100% (6)	0
Judaic Studies (1)	100% (1)	0
Linguistics (3)	100% (3)	0
Near Eastern Studies (1)	100% (1)	0
Philosophy (4)	100% (4)	0
Romance Languages & Literatures (8)	100% (8)	0
South East Asian Studies (1)	100% (1)	0

International Studies (2)	100% (2)	0
Business (5)	60% (3)	40% (2)
*Sciences (20)	85% (17)	10% (2)
Biology (7)	86% (6)	(1)
Chemistry (1)	0	(1)
Earth & Environmental Science (1)	100% (1)	0
*Mathematics and Statistics (6)	83% (5)	0
Natural Resources and Environment (1)	100% (1)	0
Neuroscience (3)	100% (3)	0
"sciences" (1)	100% (1)	0
Social Sciences (120)	88% (105)	12% (14)
Anthropology (14)	(13)	(1)
Communication Studies (8)	(8)	0
Crime and Justice (1)	0	(1)
Economics (31)	(28)	(3)
Education (32)	(30)	(2)
Kinesiology (3)	(1)	(2)
Political Science (5)	(3)	(2)
Program in the Environment (1)	(1)	0
*Psychology (11)	(8)	(2)
Social Informatics (1)	100% (1)	0
Sociology (8)	100% (8)	0
Social Work (4)	(3)	(1)
Women's Studies (1)	100% (1)	0
Undeclared (6)	50% (3)	50% (3)

* One respondent in each of these categories had an ambiguous response to this question, so was not included in either category.

Usage of Library Website

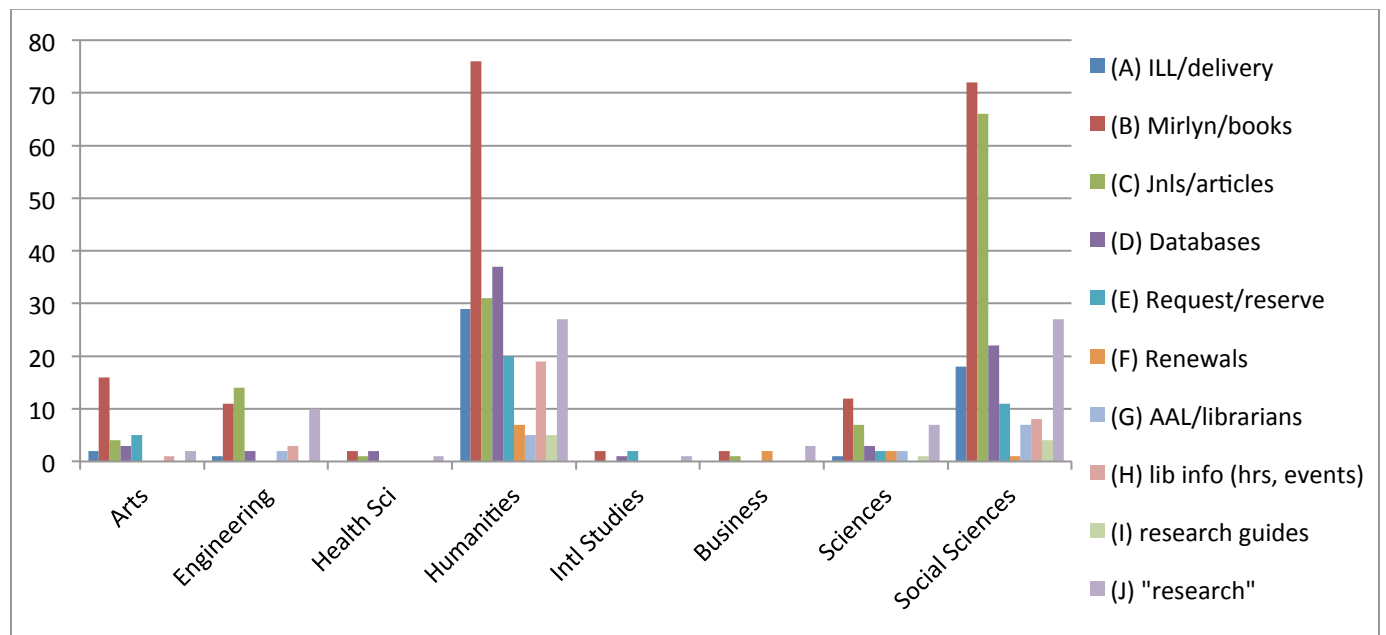
Even though Q6 “What do you use the library website for?” had a free-text response, there were several services and types of resources that were common to many respondents. As best we could, we grouped usage of commonly mentioned library resources and services, according to academic discipline. We understand that self-reported usage is not likely to be comprehensive.

Categories of commonly mentioned resources or services

- (A) Document delivery/ILL/7Fast
- (B) Mirlyn/looking up books or other items
- (C) Journals/articles/ArticlesPlus
- (D) Databases – mentioned either generally or by name
- (E) Requesting/reserving books or other items
- (F) Renewing books or other items
- (G) Ask a Librarian/consult with librarians in general
- (H) Library info (hours, events)
- (I) Research guides
- (J) “Research” in general (no additional details)

The following chart summarizes the number of respondents within each discipline who indicated that they use the website for the commonly mentioned resources or services, as above.

For the largest academic groups, the humanities and social sciences, the two most commonly mentioned uses were Mirlyn/looking up books or other items found in the catalog (B) and journal/articles (C). Using databases (D) and document delivery services (A) were also high on the list for both groups. We should note that Group A and E may be overlapping, but we had no way to determine the actual service used.



Website Use by Area of Study

Notable Comments

Note that several comments, across disciplines, indicate that many users, even those who feel very comfortable with the website, suspect that there are more features and resources than they are not utilizing, e.g. "I feel pretty comfortable, but I'm sure there's a lot I don't know."

Arts

"Moderately. I can navigate it pretty easily, but I don't know exactly what everything means or does."

Engineering

"My Engineering 100 class was entirely research based, so I used many of the data bases and narrowed my results down with the options on the side. I also transferred the MGetIt links to RefWorks to make my bibliography."

"Personally speaking, I am not very satisfied with it. Every time I type in the title of the book, it would take quite a while to wait for the result. And for the result page, the found item is not shown at the first part, but shown in several catalogs. I have to check different catalog to find out which one is what I wanted."

Health Sciences

"I feel that I can somewhat navigate the library system. Ask a librarian has come in handy for me, also, I have found that going to the library to ask questions also helps greatly. I still feel like there is a lot that I don't know how to do with the library's website. There are many resources online, and sometimes it can get confusing."

Humanities

"Quite [comfortable], as a result of a long familiarity and a good introduction to it when I first came to the university."

"Rather comfortable, but sometimes I find it a bit awkward. For instance, when I try to renew my books or sometimes find a journal, it can be a bit clunky. Also, its search power (or archived terms) leaves something to be desired. When I seek L'Annee Philologique, a simple missed letter does not return anything (unlike Google, which, especially with such a long title, could figure it out). Also, the subcategories are redundant. Different categories are ultimately the same such as "Roman law" and "roman law" (which, by the way, have different numbers of books with only some cross-referenced in Mirlyn)."

"I feel quite comfortable using it for the things I know best (Mirlyn and, lately, Articles Plus), but I'm sure there are many capabilities and areas on the site that I'm not utilizing to their full extent. I tend to follow the same path I always have in order to find what I'm looking for, and I don't think it's always the most efficient."

"I enjoy using the library website. It makes searching for books much easier. With so many large libraries, it can be a little overwhelming at times."

"Fairly comfortable, although there are still parts I find baffling. The database section is quite confusing... Research and ordering books that I need. I try to use it for finding magazine and journal articles to read online, but I oftentimes get bewildered and give up."

Business

"I use Mirlyn to find books I want to check out. But still has difficulties working with journals and other database sites."

Sciences

"Pretty comfortable. I use it a lot and usually do trial error until I get to the page I know I've used earlier."

"Not quite. It is really useful but not use [sic] it a lot because I feel kind of confused when using it."

"I feel very comfortable navigating the library website, it is user friendly and I haven't encountered any glitches."

"Somewhat, and my discomfort is due to not being able to find what i need. I use the medschool library website more often, as finding scientific search databases is easier."

Social Sciences

"Far more comfortable as a grad student than I was as an undergrad. There are still some things I don't know, but now not only do I use it to do my own research, but I teach a class in which we walk students through using the libraries online research (and other) resources, but I also feel like I know where to go and who to ask when I run into a task that proves difficult or challenging."

"Not very comfortable with it, I rarely go to it on my own and occasionally look at it from the homepage in library computers... I learn about the menu at Bert's cafe, and check when puppies are available to be petted. I also rent movies from the media library."

"I feel much more comfortable now after getting guidance from Marija Freeland in my [course] with [professor]. It's a great site but there are many functions I was not aware of or was using properly before the tutorial... I use it primarily to find articles, citations, and materials I cannot locate on other servers. I have used the online help desk for my GSI work for [course]. The librarians have been such amazing resources and very approachable and helpful."

"Not at all. I hate the new format. I waste a lot of time trying to find things that were very easy for me to find before the site changed."

"Moderately - I have been to three workshops by librarians focusing on different aspects of the library website. However, I realize that I am using only a small portion of the available resources."

“Very comfortable. The staff are very friendly and knowledgeable. The facilities are very easy to use and I enjoy studying and spending time in the library in general.”

Comments About Survey Instrument

Sample Limitations

We were not able to get an evenly distributed sample of students from all areas of study. Also, in many areas of study, responses were often more heavily weighted towards undergraduates or graduates.

Question 3

Students were asked how many years they were at the University of Michigan. There were no constraints placed on the text box, so some students entered whole numbers, others entered decimals, and others wrote out how many years in text. In future surveys, the text box may be restricted to one type of input. Also, students in general have not been at UM for an exact number of years, so perhaps asking for the number of semesters would give more precise answers.

Question 4

Students were asked to state their area of study via free text response in case they wanted to give additional detail. Some students used acronyms; others cited a specialization under their main area of study; and many students were pursuing more than one degree. Students’ areas of study oftentimes had to be checked against what the University of Michigan online directory listed in order to discern what their actual area of study was. For future surveys, a drop-down listing of majors by school and/or department would make analysis easier with a text area to add more detail if desired. Also, allowing students to indicate a second or even third major or area of study in separate text areas or dropdowns would aid analysis as well.

Question 5

Students were also asked to indicate their comfort level using the library website via free text response. Some students did give additional detail as to why they felt a certain way, while others simply stated their comfort level. For future surveys, a Likert scale would be both clearer for respondents as well as easier to analyze. An optional text area would allow respondents to give extra detail if they desired.

It was also interesting to find that comfort level could be high, but students recognized that they may not know how to use all the areas of the site. In future studies, the disparity between comfort and proficiency could be investigated further.

Question 6

Students were asked to report what services they used via free text response so they could decide how much detail to give. This approach was too open-ended, resulting in some students saying vaguely that they used the site for “research” or “looking up information for papers”, etc. Many responses lacked specifics. In the future, we may consider providing a list of services with

checkboxes be utilized instead, with an optional text field to indicate any services that were not included in the list. This would ensure that all responses can be utilized and easily processed, and it would also provide a way for respondents to recognize rather than recall how they have used the website in the past.