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Ask Us - Guerilla Test of Ask Us Icon

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Project Cover Sheet

Project	<p>Ask Us</p> <p><i>Guerilla Test of Ask Us Icon</i></p> <p>The Ask Us icon on the Library's gateway page leads to Ask Us information for users to contact librarians.</p>
Committee & Members	<p>Usability Working Group</p> <p>Kat Hagedorn (chair), Suzanne Chapman, Michael Creech, Karen Downing, Anne Karle-Zenith, Shana Kimball, Gurpreet Rana, Robert Tolliver</p> <p>Josh Morse (student intern), Xiaomin Jiang (student intern)</p>
Report Info	<p>Report Author(s): Josh Morse, Xiaomin Jiang</p> <p>Contact Information: ul-usability@umich.edu</p> <p>Report Date: August 2007; Last Revised: August 2007</p> <p>Date Submitted to PARC: August 22, 2007</p>
Objectives	<p>The goal for this test was two-fold. First, we wanted to compare two prototype icons that had different ways of displaying "email, chat, phone". Second, we wanted to get feedback about how to make the icon more noticeable.</p>
Methodology	<p>Method – Informal "Guerilla" User Tests</p> <p>18 participants</p> <p>Dates of study: August 2007</p>
Results & Analysis	<p>Test results revealed that none of the users noticed either Ask Us icon. The most common and accepted suggestion to improve this was to make the icon a brighter color and reposition it. Sixty-six% of users preferred the form 2 icon, which displays "email, chat, phone" under the bubble.</p>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replace the current Ask Us icon with the icon from form 2.• Change the form 2 icon's color so that it is blue text on a yellow background and rolls over to yellow text on a blue background.• Move the icon to the left so that it overlaps the edge of the column for more visibility.• Retain the Ask Us link and icon under the Help menu in the left column.

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Methodology

Introduction:

Previous user testing has shown that users do not often notice the current Ask Us icon. We hoped to test two new icon possibilities to see if they helped visibility, and, if they did not enhance visibility, get suggestions of ways that visibility could be improved.

Test Overview:

We administered a short test to 18 users that took approximately 5 minutes. Participants were recruited at the Shapiro Undergraduate Library and the Fishbowl in Angel Hall. Of the 18 people approached, 7 were graduate students and 11 were undergraduate students. See Figure 1 for a visual of total affiliations of test participants.

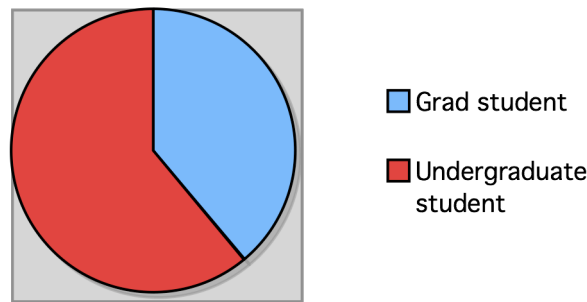


Figure 1: Total Affiliation of Test Participants

The tests were broken into 4 sections. For Part A, users were shown a prototype library gateway webpage with one of the icons we were testing, both of which included a rollover icon when the user's mouse was positioned over them (see Figures 2 & 3). These were labeled Form 1 and Form 2 (see Appendix C). Each of the forms was shown to 9 participants for an even distribution among the 18 participants. They were then asked to contact a librarian using the laptop and the gateway page, and their actions were recorded by the interviewer.

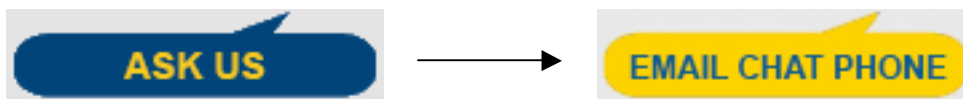


Figure 2 - Icon from Form 1 with rollover

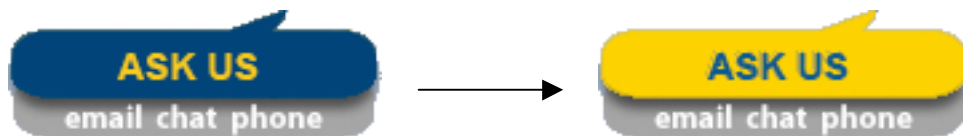


Figure 3 - Icon from Form 2 with rollover

For Part B, all participants continued to be shown the webpage from Part A. If they had not clicked the Ask Us icon in Part A, they were asked if they had noticed the icon. If they had not, they were asked “what changes do you think would make it more clickable”. This was intended to get suggestions from actual users as to why they had not noticed the icon and what changes would help them notice it.

During Part C, all participants were shown the form that they were not given in Part A and asked “Which icon do you like better? Why?”. This allowed us to compare the two icons fairly, since the same number of users (9) would be biased by seeing Form 1 or Form 2 first in Part A. The feedback we were given helped us decide which of the icons we were testing was better received.

In Part D, all users were asked how often they had used Ask Us in the past, so that we could see if expert users reacted differently than novice ones. We also asked for their University status (faculty, staff, undergraduate student, graduate student, or visitor) for demographic purposes.

Results

Each of the three parts of our test were tallied and reviewed individually.

Part A

In the first part of our test, all 18 users failed to click on the Ask Us icon. Thirteen of these users chose the Ask Us link under help in the right column, while the other 5 chose something different, such as “Subject Specialists”. Full results are available in Appendix B.

Part B

For Part B, none of the users said that they noticed the icon. We had a wide variety of qualitative recommendations, however, and we have grouped the most popular responses into three general categories:

- Six users said that the text should be larger, though this could be difficult given the layout constraints.
- Four users mentioned moving the icon closer to the center of the page. This also could cause some layout difficulties.
- Three users suggested changing the color. One user mentioned that the yellow background color used for the rollover would be more useful as the starting color, as users would probably not rollover the icon unless they saw it first.

Part C

To measure the results of Part C, we simply recorded the number of users that preferred Form 1, Form 2, or had no preference:

- Form 1: 4/18
- Form 2: 12/18
- No preference: 2/18

Two-thirds of our users preferred Form 2, a clear majority. Most of them chose Form 2 because they could see all of the different conversation mediums (email, chat, and phone) right away, which might make them more likely to click on it. With Form 1, they would already have to have chosen to click on it in order to see the chat mediums on the rollover.

Of those who chose Form 1, most said they chose it because they liked the rollover effect aesthetically. While aesthetics are important, we feel that usability should have priority.

Part D

Our results showed that 4 users had used Ask Us less than 2 times per year, the lowest frequency we offered for the question. The remaining 14 users had never used Ask Us.

Clearly, our test users can be considered novices. We had 7 graduate students and 11 undergraduate students as our users. This information is illustrated in Figure 1 above.

Recommendations

Based on the results of Part C, we can easily recommend using the icon from Form 2 rather than the icon from Form 1. However, the results from Part A and Part B show that even though Form 2 was preferred over Form 1, users still failed to notice it. Thus, we recommend a few changes for the Ask Us icon in Form 1.

First, the icon and its rollover should have their background colors reversed. This way, users will see the icon with a yellow background when they visit the Library gateway page. This should cause the icon to “pop-out” to the user and attract their attention. The icon can then shift to a blue background when the user moves their mouse pointer over it to indicate that it can be clicked. This may cause the overall page layout to be somewhat jarring, but it appears to be necessary to get users’ attention.

The icon can also be repositioned to the left of the left column. This way, it breaks the natural flow of the page and catches the users’ eyes. Many users suggested moving it closer to the center, but this would probably cause problems with the general page layout. A mockup of our revised gateway page with the Ask Us icon is shown below.

Finally, the Ask Us link and icon under the Help menu should be retained. Thirteen of our 18 users used it to locate a librarian, so it seems to be in a location that users naturally look when trying to contact someone to get help.

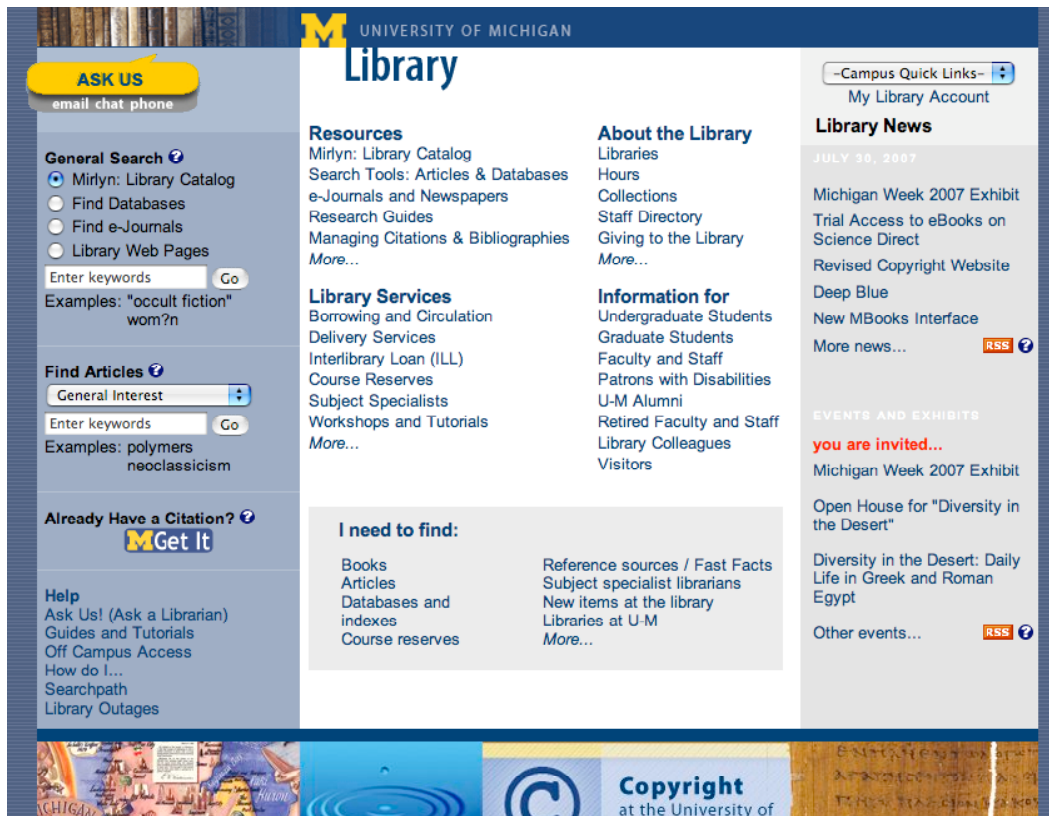


Figure 4 - Ask Us icon recommendation prototype

Appendix A: Test Script

Greet the participant

Hi, my name is _____. Would you be willing to participate in a brief study about one of the library's services? It will take about five minutes of your time. *(Yes or No)*

Pre-test procedure

Thank you for participating in this study. I do want you to know a couple of things before we begin:

- I want to emphasize that we are not testing you or your abilities – we are testing the product. We are here to learn from your experience.
- You should know you are not obligated to take this test, but we hope you will, to help us improve our library's resources.

We need you to sign a consent form for our IRB (behavioral study) records. Your answers will be anonymous and we need the information only for analysis purpose.

Thanks! Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Begin Test

Part A:

All users will be shown a modified webpage of the current library gateway page with the latest Ask Us icon.

1. *Icon 1 with email/chat/phone text (1/2 of users tested)*
2. *Icon 2 with light grey background (1/2 of users tested)*

- Please contact a librarian using this page.
(Document what the user did below)
 - User clicked Ask Us bubble at upper-left
 - User clicked Phone --- Chat --- or Email under bubble
 - User clicked Ask Us bubble at bottom under Help
 - Other

Notes:

Part B:

Observe the user clicks on the modified webpage. After opening Ask Us service page, direct the user back to modified webpage. If the user did not click the Ask Us icon in the upper-left, ask:

- Did you notice this icon?

1. If “Yes”, ask

- Why did you decide not to click on it?

2. If “No” or user clicked on it already in Part A, ask

- What changes do you think would make it more clickable?

Part C:

Show the user the webpage used in Part A and the one not used in Part A, and ask

- Which icon do you like better? Why?

Part D:

Have the user fill out these questions.

- How often do you use Ask Us service?
 - 2 or more times a week
 - 2 or more times a month
 - 2 or more times a year
 - Less than 2 times a year
 - Never used it
- What is your status?
 - Faculty
 - Staff
 - Graduate Student
 - Undergraduate Student
 - Visitor

Thank you for participating in this study. Feel free to take a piece of candy.

Appendix B: see separate document

Appendix C: Form 1 and 2



Figure 5 - Form 1 used for testing

The screenshot displays the University of Michigan Library website interface. At the top, the 'ASK US' button is highlighted in a blue speech bubble, with 'email chat phone' text below it. The main navigation bar includes the University of Michigan logo and the word 'Library'. The left sidebar contains sections for 'General Search' (with links to Mirlyn, Databases, e-Journals, and Web Pages), 'Find Articles' (with a dropdown menu set to 'General Interest'), and 'Already Have a Citation?' (with a 'Get It' button). The main content area is divided into three columns: 'Resources' (listing Mirlyn, Search Tools, e-Journals, Research Guides, and Citations), 'Library Services' (listing Borrowing and Circulation, Delivery Services, Interlibrary Loan, Course Reserves, Subject Specialists, and Workshops), and 'About the Library' (listing Libraries, Hours, Collections, Staff Directory, and Giving to the Library). Below these is an 'Information for' section with links for Undergraduate Students, Graduate Students, Faculty and Staff, Patrons with Disabilities, U-M Alumni, Retired Faculty and Staff, Library Colleagues, and Visitors. A central box titled 'I need to find:' lists categories like Books, Articles, Databases, and Reference sources. The right sidebar features 'Campus Quick Links' (My Library Account), 'Library News' (dated July 30, 2007, with links to Michigan Week 2007 Exhibit, Science Direct, and MBooks Interface), and 'EVENTS AND EXHIBITS' (including 'you are invited...' and 'Diversity in the Desert'). The footer contains contact information, a copyright notice for 2007, and the University of Michigan logo.

Figure 6 - Form 2 used for testing