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Ask Us - Label/Perception Guerilla Test

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Project Cover Sheet

Project	**Ask Us Label/Perception** *Ask Us Guerilla Test* Ask Us is a service present on the Library's Gateway page (lib.umich.edu) that leads to methods (email, chat/IM, phone) for contacting library staff.
Committee & Members	Usability Working Group Kat Hagedorn (chair), Suzanne Chapman, Karen Downing, Anne Karle-Zenith, Shana Kimball, Gurpreet Rana, Robert Tolliver Natasha Sant (student intern)
Report Info	Report Author(s): Natasha Sant Contact Information: ul-usability@ctools.umich.edu Report Date: April 2007 Last Revised: April 2007
Objectives	The goal for this test was to determine if users notice the main Ask Us bubble graphic and current use of the Ask Us services and IM in general.
Methodology	Method – Informal "Guerilla" User Tests 9 participants Dates of study: April 2007
Results & Analysis	Test results revealed that the majority of the participants overlooked the Ask Us bubble on the page, but nearly half of them noticed the link under the 'Help' section of the page. Also, the test revealed that most users were familiar with IM and would consider using it to contact a librarian.
Recommendations	Create new design mockups for the Ask Us button and test to see if there is improved usability. This could be followed by a re-test with the inclusion of the phone, chat/IM and email links (as in the original design). Furthermore, additional links to 'Ask Us' are recommended. Also, making the chat/IM link more prominent might prove beneficial.

Introduction:

This was a follow up to a previous test of the UM Library Gateway redesign paper mockup. The new design included a section to promote the Ask Us services. One of the goals of the earlier test was to gauge people's familiarity with the Ask Us service and their understanding of its functionality.
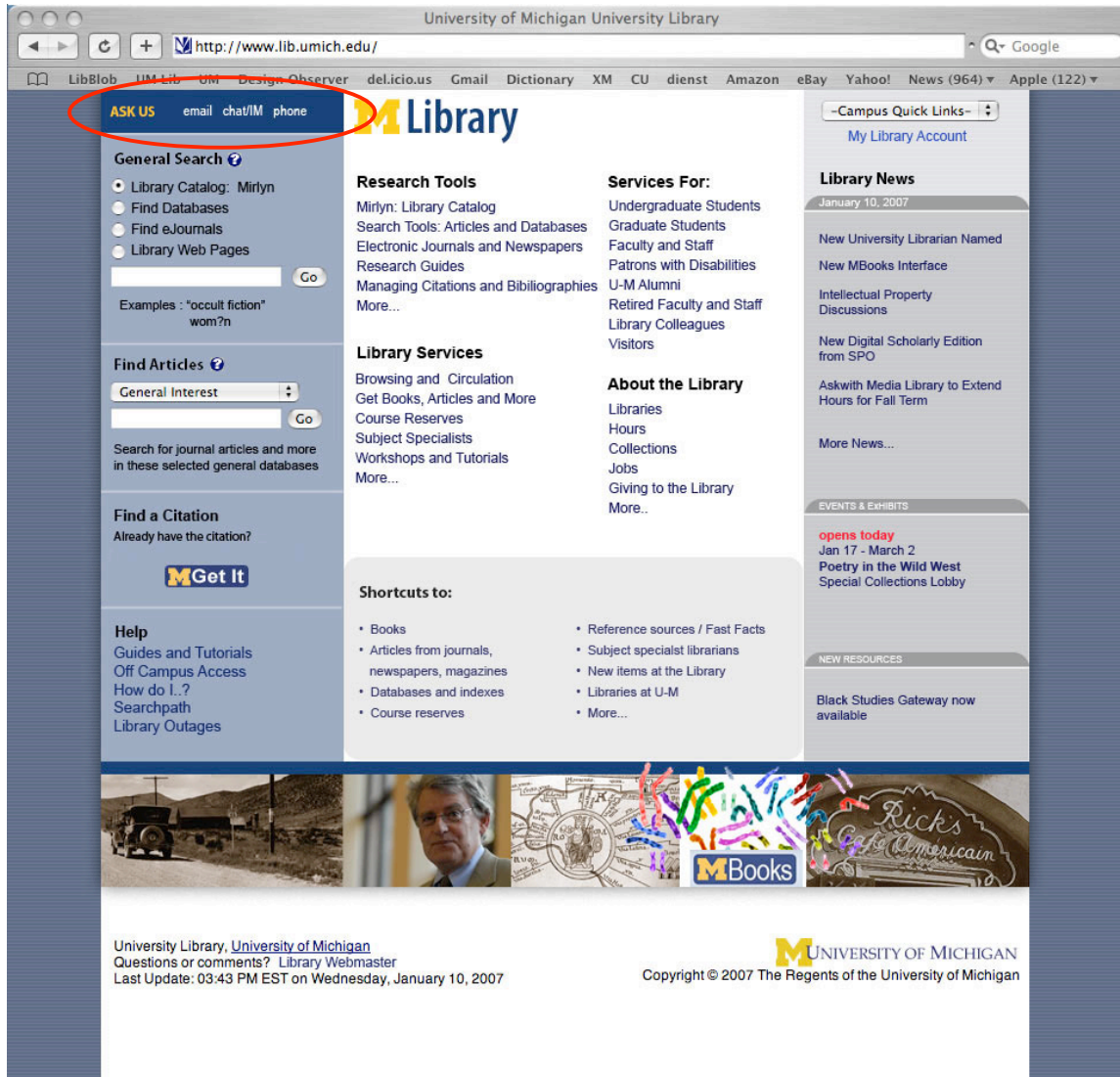

Figure 1 – Design mockup showing the new Ask Us section

This earlier test revealed that:

a. When users were asked "Where would you go on this page if you would like to contact a reference librarian?", zero out of 6 chose the Ask Us section at the top of the page.

b. When users were asked to describe what they thought the Ask Us links were for, they did understand the functionality.

c. Most users expected to see the 'Ask Us' link under the 'Help' section on the library's gateway page.

As a result, the 'Ask Us' button was redesigned to be more graphically interesting using a bubble shaped button that is more prominent in its current location. A new link— "Ask Us! (Ask a Librarian)" —was also added under the 'Help' section of the gateway page.

The goal of the current test was to determine whether the changes made a difference to people's awareness of the service and also to get an idea of their perceptions of the service.
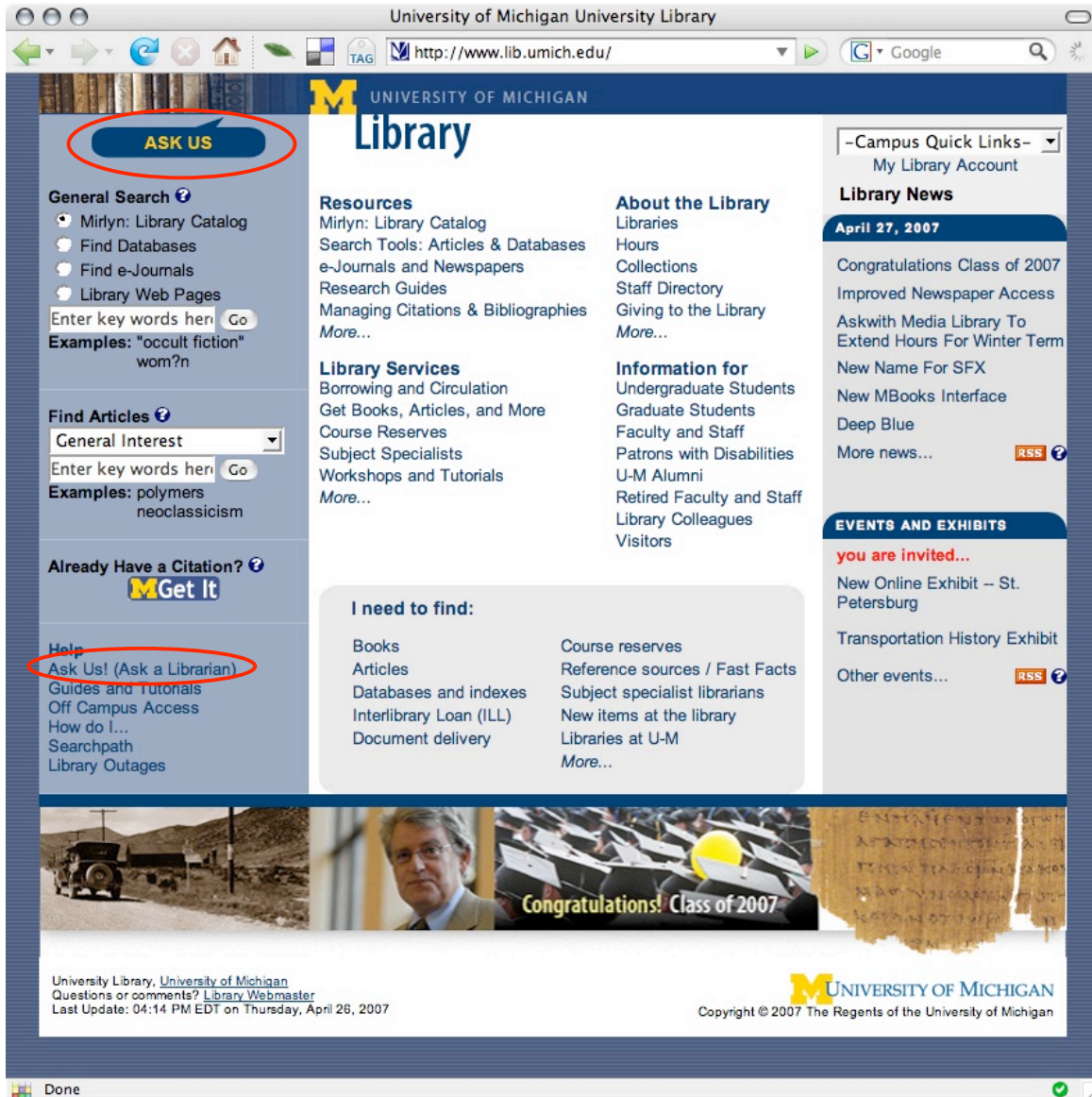

Figure 2 – UM Library main gateway showing new "bubble" Ask Us button design

Test:

The test was in the form of a short survey. Participants were recruited at the Graduate and Undergraduate libraries and the Duderstadt Center. Of the 9 people approached, 4 were graduate students, 3 were undergraduate students, and 2 were staff members. The test was divided into four parts.

In the first part, participants were asked where they would go on the main gateway page if they wanted to contact the library. If they did not point to the Ask Us link/bubble, they were pointed towards it and then asked if they ever noticed it during the session.

In the second step, participants were asked if they ever had to contact a librarian and if they did, what methods they used. In the third step they were asked specifically if they had used the Ask Us service before and if they did, they were prompted to elaborate more on what method of communication they used, what purpose they used it for, etc.

Finally, as a closing question, participants were asked if they used Instant Messaging (IM) with their friends or family. As a follow-up, they were also asked if they would consider using a similar service to contact a librarian.

Results:

The test revealed some very interesting results:

Firstly, 8 out of 9 people failed to notice the Ask Us bubble. Three of these people commented on how the bubble appeared to be part of the static graphics on the page and not like a clickable button/link.

Seven of the 9 participants had never used the Ask Us service before.

Four out of 9 people noticed the Ask Us link under the 'Help' section.

Although the findings of the test revealed that most of the participants had never used the Ask Us service before, they all replied positively when asked if they would use the IM service to contact a librarian in the future.

Recommendations:

Create new design mockups for the Ask Us button to make it more noticeably clickable and then test to see if there is improved usability. This could be followed by a re-test with the inclusion of the phone, chat/IM and email links (as in the original design). Furthermore, additional links to 'Ask Us' from the gateway are recommended. Also, making the chat/IM link more prominent might prove beneficial.

Appendix A: Test Script

Greet the participant

Hi, my name is Natasha. Would you be willing to participate in a brief study to help us improve the library's website? It will only take five minutes of your time. *(Yes or No)*

Pre-test procedure

We need you to sign a consent form for our IRB (behavioral study) records. Thanks! Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Ask if they are faculty/staff, undergrad or grads.

Begin Test

(*Participant will be shown the main gateway page live on a computer to see where they move the mouse. Mouse movements will be noted for Step 1 only.*)

Step 1:

Where would you go on this page if you would like to contact a librarian right now?

(*If they choose one of the Ask Us links (bubble or link), go to Step 2 and make note of whether or not they hover and read the ALT tag.*)

(*If they don't choose one of the Ask Us links, show them the bubble and ask…*)

Did you notice this icon? (*If so…*) Why did you decide not to click it?

Step 2:

Have you ever contacted a librarian? If so, what methods have you used?

(*If no answer, prompt with: Have you ever emailed a reference librarian or visited the reference desk at a library?*)

Step 3:

Have you used the Ask Us service before?

If yes, what option did you use? (chat, email etc.)

Could you describe what prompted you to use this service?

(*If no answer, prompt with: Maybe you needed a reference question answered right away or you were unclear on how to get a book delivered to you?*)

How often do you use these services?

Step 4:

Do you use IM with your friends, family and/or coworkers?

Would you use this feature to contact a librarian?

Test Ends

Appendix B: Test Results

#	Affiliation with UM	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Comments
1	Staff	• Staff directory • Did not notice the 'Ask Us' bubble/link. • Did not hover over to read.	Never needed to contact a librarian.	Never used Ask Us	• Don't use IM • Might consider live chat with a librarian	"Oh okay, if I had noticed it (Ask Us bubble), I would've clicked there"
2	Grad	• Went straight to the Ask Us link under Help. • Did not notice the bubble • Did not hover.	Has visited Reference desk and used Ask Us.	• Has used Ask Us. • Used chatIM • Used it to locate a resource • Used it twice.	• Uses IM very often with friends • Would consider using IM to contact librarian.	
3	Staff	• Staff directory. (was also looking for 'Contact us' type of link) • Did not notice bubble. • Did not hover.	Has visited a reference desk.	Never used Ask Us	• Uses IM • She would use chatIM to contact a librarian	When user was shown the bubble, she said, "Oh! But I would never have known to click on it even if I had noticed it. It doesn't look clickable. It blends into the background"

4	Grad	• Went to staff directory. • (Read comment) • Did not hover.	Has visited the reference desk.	Has never used Ask Us.	• Uses IM • Would not use to chat with a librarian.	User knew about the Ask Us service but said, "I wouldn't use Ask Us because I don't like the idea of chatting with someone from the library because chatting is more informal. I would rather have a face-to-face interaction with a librarian. It's easier to explain what I want that way." "The bubble looks like a graphic…I wouldn't have clicked there"
5	Undergrad	• Subject specialists • Did not notice Ask Us.	Has visited reference desk.	Has never used Ask Us.	• Uses IM daily • "Um…maybe"	
6	Undergrad	• Went to Ask Us under Help. • Did not notice bubble. • Did not hover.	Has visited the reference desk.	Has never used Ask Us	• Uses IM frequently with friends. • "Yeah…I might...It sounds useful"	
7	Grad	• Went to Ask Us under Help • Did not notice bubble • Did hover and read it to herself.	Has visited a reference desk.	Has never used Ask Us.	• Uses IM all the time. • "Yes, I think I will use it."	"The bubble looks like its part of the decoration. It doesn't look like a button or a link"
8	Grad	• Went to Ask Us under Help • Did not notice bubble • Did not hover	Has visited reference desk, emailed and used chat too.	• Has used Ask Us. • Used chat and email • Used email more often than chat.	• Uses IM • Has used it to contact a librarian	"I would use the chat functionality because I have used it a couple of times before and I have a good impression of it. Its very convenient"

9	Undergrad	• Ask Us under Help • Did not notice the bubble • Did not hover	Has visited reference desk only to check out/return books.	• Has never used Ask Us	• Uses IM • "I didn't know you can IM a librarian. I might give it a try."	