

Usability Report Summer 2007

Borrowing Materials from Other Libraries

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to clarify the effectiveness of communicating borrowing options to students and faculty, a usability study was conducted in September 2007 with a total of 9 participants. We also used this study as a pilot project for the campus video usability lab. The lab allowed us to capture participant interaction with the web site on video for 6 out of the 9 participants.

The goal of the study was to determine the users understanding and utilization of GIL Express in contrast to the interlibrary loan link and/or ILL web page (not the ILLiad application).

The study provided to be inconclusive for design and content of the Interlibrary Loan page but did provide insight regarding the interface of GIL and GIL Express

THE TASK

The study asked participants to complete the following task:

You need the book titled "Through Secret Channels" written by Mahmoud Abbas for a research paper you are writing. How would you get the book using the library web site?

The book was chosen because it is not held by GSU library and would require the user to go beyond GIL to succeed in the task. The results were:

- No participant used the Interlibrary Loan web page or ILLiad to help them understand how to use the library to get materials not owned by GSU library.
- The video recordings demonstrated that 4 out of 6 participants chose GIL and then made it to the Universal Catalog (UC).
- None of the 6 recorded participants proceeded from the UC to GIL Express to complete the transaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study do not inform design or content decision-making for the ILL web page. Information gleaned from the study and that would help users is directly tied to the interface of GIL and GIL Express. Recommendations are:

- Have the Interlibrary loan link on the home page continue to point to the ILL page.
- The ILL department may wish to update the ILL page to better support instruction and referral since it is being used in ways not revealed in this study.
- Put a link to UC right on the GIL search home page.
- For GIL results pages, the link to the UC should use more obvious terminology than "click here" and make the link more obvious (it may be overlooked in the bulleted list of text at the top).
- The branding on GIL says Law-Library and a couple of users thought they were searching law collections.

Put a link to GIL Express by each record instead of at the top and change the terminology. Users don't know what GIL Express is and are not finding the link in the banner or footer.

FULL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Since no participant in the study used the ILL web page or ILLiad then we have no informed recommendation for the design or content of the ILL page. We recommend that the home page link labeled “Interlibrary Loan” continue to point to the ILL web page with the understanding that the ILL department may wish to update the page as they see fit to support its use in instruction or referral.
- Participants went to GIL through our home page icon button. However, some participants eventually used the UC by clicking on the text link for Find Books. Currently both links operate differently. One suggestion is to make the icon link behave like the text link and take the user to the Find Books page. The concern is that this will introduce an extra step prior to being able to go to the catalog.
- When someone submits an ILL for a book that we do not own but can be retrieved through the UC and GIL Express (like the book Through Secret Channels) ILL will still request it for the patron through ILLiad.
- Put a link to UC right on the home page search of GIL. Possibly replace the current redundant link to GIL with a link to the UC. The link, "GIL - search the library catalog," was just refreshing the page, but now it goes to the GIL Keyword Search page. Either way, it would be more useful to have a GIL UC link there. On the page the GIL results link to the UC should use more obvious terminology than "click here" and make the link more obvious (it may be overlooked in the bulleted list of text at the top).
- The branding on GIL says Law-Library and I think a couple of users thought they were searching law collections. Change the header.
- For the Universal Catalog, items in a search result show multiple times. Put a link to GIL Express by each record instead of at the top and change the terminology - users don't know what GIL Express is and users are not finding the link in the banner or footer.

BACKGROUND

Why are we studying?

There are many ways to request and find library materials and users are not limited to books within the GSU library building. ILL, ILLiad, GIL Express, and the Universal Catalog are the names given to the variety of services available. These library centric labels have no meaning to the majority of users. The current primary link to direct users to the information and forms for finding and requesting materials is called "Interlibrary Loan". However, the current ILL page is, we suspect, unclear in its focus or in its effectiveness in communicating its service.

In order to clarify the effectiveness of communicating borrowing options to students and faculty, a usability study was conducted in September 2007 with a total of nine participants. Six of the nine participants had their task sessions on the computer recorded to video as part of the pilot test of the new usability lab on campus. The goal of the study was to determine the users understanding and utilization of GIL Express in contrast to the interlibrary loan link and/or ILL web page (not the ILLiad application). The study evaluated users choice and understanding of GIL Express and ILL in hopes of finding out if/when they use those services, how they locate the services via our web site, and the effectiveness of the link labels we are using for those services.

The library believes the best path for users seeking materials is as follows (and this instructional information is currently available on our web site through the ILL web page):

- check GIL for local holdings (including access to online electronic versions when print may be unavailable)
- if not available in GIL then check the universal catalog
- if available in the UC then request materials via GIL Express
- or based on UC holdings info, visit other libraries to use or sometimes to check out the materials
- the final option should be ILL for us to retrieve the materials from libraries where the patron would otherwise be unable to get the materials on their own

What we learned?

- 1) OBJECTIVE: Determine the usage, clarity and effectiveness of the link label "Interlibrary Loan".
 - a. Half of the participants are familiar with the term.
 - b. Participants did not use the existing ILL web pages for the tasks in the study.
- 2) OBJECTIVE: Determine the usage, clarity and effectiveness of the link label "GIL Express".
 - a. Familiarity with participants is very low.
 - b. Usage of GIL Express is obscured by terminology and the UI of the catalog.
- 3) OBJECTIVE: Discover if the links are useful in their current locations on our web site.
 - a. Use of ILL for completing the task is inconclusive.
 - b. Links to the UC and GIL Express are not in optimal locations in their respective interfaces.
- 4) OBJECTIVE: Discover what users may already know about their options and, during the debriefing survey of the study, tell us where they would expect to find the information on our site and what labels to use for the links to that information.
 - a. Users don't really know the variety of services and the differences between them. For example, most subjects were unaware that they could order a book from another USG library. Some subjects guessed at the meaning of "interlibrary loan" based on the name.
- 5) OBJECTIVE: Do users follow our best path?
 - a. Users searching for a book don't know that GIL Express exists. Even if they notice the GIL Express link, they don't think to click on it, because they don't know what it means. Even if they did know there is a service that will allow them to get a book from another USG library, they won't necessarily associate the term "GIL Express" with that service.
- 6) OBJECTIVE: Find out what paths users follow.
 - a. The study demonstrated that users choose GIL. 4 out of 6 users captured on video chose GIL and then made it to the UC. It is important to note that none of them proceeded from the UC to GIL Express to complete the transaction. In this sense 2/3 of users may be following the spirit of our recommended best path but then encounter difficulties.

THE BIG PICTURE – BEYOND AN ILL WEB PAGE STUDY TOWARD BETTER LIBRARY SERVICES

OBJECTIVE: The Library should continue to look for ways to make library services more intuitive for the user.

The way to accomplish this is to improve the UI of the applications themselves. Many of the problems users face seem to stem from lack of knowledge of Library services. Education and marketing are key, and a user interface that encourages users to make decisions about what they need (i.e. decision tree).

Ideally we should be able to construct a web site (or web experience) in such a way that most users will find the answer to their question. The problem is in figuring out what that path should be and what terminology to use. Most commercial web sites seem to do a very good job of this, but the terminology used in popular commercial web sites are often part of the popular culture "scene." How do we replicate this on an academic Library website?

It is worth noting that this study involved no less than 4 discreet web environments or web applications (web site, GIL, UC, GIL Express, and ILL). With this in mind perhaps a good place to start would be in exploring the next generation ILS systems or portal services such as PRIMO.

STUDY DETAILS

The study was completed Friday September 14, 2008 with one additional test subject taking the study on the September 17, 2007 to make up for her absence on a scheduled date.

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS: 9 (6 participated in video recording sessions)

- UNDERGRADUATES: 6
- GRADUATES: 2
- STATUS UNKNOWN: 1

GENDER

- Male: 1
- Female: 7
- N/A: 1

AGE

- 18-25: 7
- 26-35: 1
- N/A: 1

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE WEB

All 9 respondents reported daily use

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE LIBRARY WEB SITE

- Daily: 2
- Weekly: 1
- Monthly: 3
- Less than once a month: 1
- Never: 1

WHERE DO YOU ACCESS THE LIBRARY WEB SITE FROM

- Home: 5
- Work: 1
- School: 5
- Computer Lab: 3
- Library Building: 6
- Other: n/a

ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH GIL

- Y: 4
- N: 4

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE GIL

- Daily: n/a

- Weekly: 1
- Monthly: 2
- Less than once a month: 3
- Never: n/a

ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH ILL

- Y: 2
- N: 5

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE ILL

- Daily: n/a
- Weekly: n/a
- Monthly: n/a
- Less than once a month: n/a
- Never: 6

ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE UNIVERSAL CATALOG

- Y: 2
- N: 6

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE UNIVERSAL CATALOG

- Daily: n/a
- Weekly: n/a
- Monthly: n/a
- Less than once a month: 1
- Never: 3

ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH GIL EXPRESS

- Y: 1
- N: 7

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE GIL EXPRESS

- Daily: n/a
- Weekly: n/a
- Monthly: n/a
- Less than once a month: n/a
- Never: 2

DID YOU UNDERSTAND THE SCENARIOS AND TASKS

- Y: 9
- N: n/a

WERE ADEQUATE INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED

- Y: 8
- N: 1

THE TEST ENVIRONMENT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER

- Y: n/a
- N: 9

VIDEO RECORDED SESSION SUMMARY

INITIAL ENTRY OF USERS

- Users choosing the GIL icon link on the right of the home page: 3
- Users choosing the Books text link from the Find Information text menu on the left: 2
- 1 chose Research guides but then finally GIL icon on right
- 3 are unknown (no video)

UC INTERFACE SUCCESS

- Users that eventually got to the Universal Catalog interface and found the record of the book: 4
- Users that never got the UC interface: 2

HOW USERS GOT TO THE UC INTERFACE

Every user that got the record to come up in the UC stops...no one proceeds to the GIL express link and the majority (if not all) are unaware of the GIL express link and its purpose until we explain it to them.

Users will start a GIL search and then back up to the home page when it fails, then click the books text link and re-enter GIL and search again...or they click on advanced search in GIL and continue to search over and over.

- Users choosing CLICK HERE text on the GIL screen: 2
- Users choosing the UC link from Find Books (text link menu) page: 2
- Users that never got to the UC: 2

GENERAL NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM VIDEO SESSIONS

More than one user used our find books page to get to the UC. The others are using the GIL link to the GIL interface. Since no participant used ILL, how do we surmise that users in general know if and when to use ILL? Do people learn about and use ILL via word-of-mouth or instruction or referral?

Do we need to change the find books page to include instruction on GIL, GIL Express, ILL, and just streamline ILL? or make the ILL link go straight to ILLiad (esp. if the service is used by people who know and want ILL only)?

No participant confidently used GIL Express.

Most users are unsure what GIL Express is or does. Put explanatory text or other clues on the express request page to reward the user that they are in the right place.

Why are we using "click here" as the link for something as pivotal as a link to the UC? Most users don't get to it for a long time.

When a search fails in GIL should there be a more obvious "Try your search across all university libraries" or something instead of a "click here" link that is last in a bulleted list with a complete sentence instead of a simple phrase?

Based on our study what (if anything do we need to change for the following pages -- with subsequent studies of new interface designs beforehand?

[It was observed that sometimes users] click on things that they absolutely don't understand (for example, this subject clicked on "Click Here for Info Menu for this item based on ISBN.") Is this out of desperation?

Can we index GIL so that a site search of the library's site will find it? Might not be necessary...I don't know how often someone will know they need GIL but not know to get there. Are other resources indexed?

URLS FOR THIS STUDY

- Find Books: <http://www.library.gsu.edu/findinfo/pages.asp?ldID=68&guideID=280&ID=1587>
- ILL: <http://www.library.gsu.edu/services/pages.asp?ldID=68&guideID=281&ID=4210>
- GIL: <https://gil.gsu.edu/>
- UC: <https://giluc.usg.edu/>

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND FOR FUTURE USABILITY STUDIES IN GENERAL

- create appointment cards with directions/map/contact/RSVP info and a place to write the participants scheduled date and time
- give Lee Stewart in LAO at least 1 week prior to testing to get panther cash cards
- other?
- give users an identifying number and reference it on any media and also their forms (i can't readily match the video sessions with the paperwork)
- include facilitator names on the schedule (i can't readily match the video sessions with the facilitators/paperwork)
- for demographic survey ask participants if they have had any library instruction sessions (maybe correlation with success or failure of tasks in the study?)