

Ask A Librarian Student Interviews

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11am-12:30pm

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Write-up of Participant Responses and Conclusion

Background and Justification:

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how students use the Library's chat reference routing page and how it could be better organized to facilitate access and understanding. Subjects were asked a series of questions regarding their thoughts of the library's Ask a Librarian Web page. The principal investigators interviewed the subjects in the University Library. Each interview lasted for 5-10 minutes, and each participant was asked to provide his/her name and year (freshman, sophomore, etc.) No video or audio taping occurred, but the researchers made notes of the participants' responses.

Participants were compensated with \$5.00 Guest cards for use at Georgia State University.

Questions:

These are the questions that were posed by the researchers to each respondent:

1. Please review this page. If you wanted to ask a research question, where would you go? (They choose)
2. Why did you choose this page?
3. Did this page provide you the information you were expecting? Why or why not?
 - a. Repeat questions 1-3 as needed, until Ask a Librarian page is selected.
When the arrive at the Ask a Librarian page, proceed to question 4.
4. Having seen this page (Ask a Librarian) please give us your comments on this one (the mock-up). Which page do you prefer, and why?
5. Did you know about the library's Ask a Librarian service before today?
6. If so, have you used it before?

Responses:

Participant 1

Participant clicked on the "Start Your Research" links because she knows about the subject librarians. She chose this page for the specialized assistance. When sent back to the home page and asked again "what link would you choose if you wanted to ask a librarian a question?"; participant chose links to GIL, Journals, and then the Ask-A-Librarian (AAL) page.

The Ask a Librarian page does present the information the participant expected to see. When presented with the alternative AAL Web page mock-ups, the participant preferred mock-up #2 because it is "prettier"; specifically, the participant liked that she could see the photos, and she liked the bigger fonts.

This participant did not know about the AAL service before completing this survey.

Participant 2

Participant clicked on the “Search GALILEO” link first because her instructors sometimes ask students to use GALILEO databases. Participant’s second choice was GIL so she could find books, then she chose the “Start Your Research” link.

Participant was shown the AAL page by an Investigator, and then shown the AAL mock-up Web sites. Participant preferred mock-up #2 because it “catches your attention” and because of the “big size.”

Participant recommended a re-titling of the Ask a Librarian page. Revision suggested” “Need Help? Ask Us.”

Participant knew about the AAL IM service before completing this survey, but was confused as to how to access it.

Participant 3

Participant chose the “Start Your Research” link because it says you can start researching at that point; she was also happy to see a search box so she could narrow down her topic. The participant’s second choice was the AAL link (box graphic). Participant liked the highlight in the block and the words “need help”.

After the participant reviewed the current AAL page, she was shown the mock-ups. Participant preferred #2 because “I can see it better” and she liked the pictures. She stated that mock-up #1 could work if it had bigger graphics.

Participant did not know about the AAL service before completing this survey.

Participant 4

Participant chose the AAL link, which presented the information expected. When shown the AAL mock-ups, the participant preferred #2 because the pictures are “big and it seems easy to get in fast contact”. The participant also noted that the colors were bright and the page seemed friendly.

Participant did not know about the AAL service before completing this survey.

Participant 5

Participant chose the AAL link because “I wanted to ask the librarian a question.” The current AAL page provides expected information. When shown the AAL mock-up, the participant preferred #2 because “the other one is too small”. The participant states that #2 “catches my attention”.

Participant knew about e-mail and phone options; but not the chat AAL service.

Participant 6

Participant chose AAL page (under Library Services) because it says “Ask a librarian”. When shown the AAL mock-ups, participant preferred #2 because its in the center of the page. Participant also noted that the placement of the graphics seems to show ease of contact in hierarchical form (“top 2 choices seems like that the easiest way, and the bottom tier are the secondary options”).

Participant did not know about AAL service before completing this survey.

Participant 7

Participant clicked on the “Contact Us” (About the Library) because he wanted phone numbers and email addresses, which this page provides. His second selection was the “Ask a Librarian” link, which gives him the information he “really wanted”. When shown the AAL mock-ups, the participant preferred #2, and had some suggestions: He would like to see the graphics highlighted (as opposed to the rollover highlights) and see “Live chat” in red or yellow. The participant also liked mock-up #1 (the list format) but he would want to see bigger icons.

The participant did not know about the online reference services before completing this survey.

Participant 8

Participant chose “Contact Us” (About the Library) so he could ask a question first; and the AAL link was his second link selection. The current AAL page has more options – “more than expected” (beyond email and phone numbers). When shown the AAL mock-ups, the participant preferred #1 because everything’s small and all the options seem equitable. Participant feels that #2 promotes the visitor choosing chat or IM; while #1 gives “no pressure” to choose a certain method of contact.

Participant has never used the AAL service; didn’t know about the chat service before completing this survey.

Conclusions/Comments

1. Two people noted that the graphical mock-up (2) seemed to imply a hierarchy, with the chat options being preferable. Is this what we really want?
2. The contact page should more prominently feature a link to the other assistance options (chat etc.) and would benefit from a re-organization, perhaps with a more graphical interface.
3. The research guides page should more prominently feature a link to the other assistance options (chat etc.)
4. The graphically based interface was overwhelmingly preferred.
5. Only one participant was aware of the chat service before this survey, and none had ever used it before.
6. The “Consultation” option should have a button on the Ask a Librarian page.