

## Melvyl-T Prototype Usability Test Summary (October 2001)

### Methodology and User Profiles

A total of eleven usability tests were conducted at five campuses (UCB, UCLA, UCSD, UCSF, UCSC).<sup>1</sup> The participants were student library workers, with varying levels of knowledge of online systems. The usability tests were conducted on static html pages of the basic and advanced search screens. Users were able to enter terms and use the pull-down menus, but there was no functionality available (e.g., searching or following links).

### Summary of Results

Overall users had a positive feeling about the look of the interface; they commented that they liked the colors and found the design simple and user friendly. Participants were able to conduct the search tasks with little difficulty and most chose the appropriate limits. Several participants commented that they liked the advanced search screen and liked having basic and advanced options. The most confusing aspect of the site was the terminology<sup>2</sup>; participants found certain labels to be unintuitive.

When asked what they thought the site was for, 4 responded that it was for searching for books only; 4 thought it was for articles only; and 3 thought it was for searching all library resources.

- **Terminology**
  - Six or more participants found the following labels unclear: command search; browse indexes; profile; sign-in (3 thought that you had to sign in to use the site); add more entry lines.
  - Six or more participants found the following labels clear: results list, marked list; previous searches; advanced search; and change collection (7 understood that you could use this option for one or more of the following options: to search for only books or only journals or only resources in a particular library)
- **Interface Design** – 7 participants noted that they liked the colors; several noted that the interface seemed simple and user friendly
- **News/Message box** – 5 participants found this box unclear/not useful
- **Tasks**
  - Author Search - 8 participants chose to limit their search to author (5 entered the search terms “last name, first name”; 3 “first name last name”)
  - Title Search - all participants chose to limit their search to title (4 chose exact phrase)
  - Keyword Search - 8 participants chose to limit their search to keyword
  - Advanced Search - Only 3 did not use the advanced search; 6 chose to limit the search to “type” dissertation.

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<sup>1</sup> The task list and summaries of the sessions are available on request

<sup>2</sup> We were testing a prototype where the users was not able to click on links; we appreciate that in an interactive interface users might have clicked on an unclear link and figured out what the links offered, however for these tests we were interested to find out if at face value the labels were clear.

### Suggestions and Further Comments by Participants<sup>3</sup>

- Have “mouse overs” on the labels that explain what is behind them (3)
- Remove BCE, it is confusing (2)
- Add “subject” to the basic search pull-down menu options (2)
- The tip for change collection was unclear (2)
- Would have liked “change collection” to allow you to limit your search to just books on a certain topic (e.g., medical literature)
- High-light the more important functions
- Browse indexes is misleading; it is really search indexes
- Like having PE and Melvyl together
- Users shouldn’t have to sign in or have to create a profile
- Not sure what “not” does
- Provide the option to specify books on basic search screen
- Move the basic search box to the center of the screen
- Found the font too small for some of the labels
- Clicking “search” and pressing “enter” should do the same thing (they led to different pages during the test)
- The relationship between choosing “optional limits” such as location and it saying “entire collection” on the page was unclear.

During two of the tests, the experimenter asked the participants to suggest other terms for confusing labels here are those suggestions:

Create Profiles → Your Preferences; Creating Personal Preferences

Sign in → Accessing Personal Preferences

Browse Indexes → Browse; Browse Types

Change Collection → Change Categories; Change Database

Complete Lists → Specify Locations, Types, Languages

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<sup>3</sup> If the number of participants who made the suggestion is more than one, then the number is noted