

OAC Redesign Project:

Findings from Second-Round Usability Tests, Remote Users

California Digital Library

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OVERVIEW

This report describes findings from five tests conducted over April 2, 2009 and April 3, 2009 to gauge the usability of the redesigned OAC interface and target areas for improvement. All tests were conducted remotely via audio and web conferencing services. The subjects were instructed to share their desktops so that the test facilitators could view their movements and click patterns. Appendix A contains details about the usability sessions and Appendix B contains a complete list of questions asked of participants.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings and recommendations are presented page-by-page to show places where the interface was successful in assisting users in the tasks, as well as those in need of improvement.

Homepage



Figure 1 Homepage

1. Global Search Box

There was a perception among some users that the global search box would perform a “site search” (as opposed to a search of the archive itself). This was apparent when users repeatedly did not use the box—choosing instead to browse collections, for example—for tasks that would be best completed with a search. One user did not see this box at all, or else disregarded it when attempting to search collections. Another user commented, “when I see a search box in the upper right corner of the homepage, I think it’s an overall search [...] it may even link to Google.”

2. Map

All of the users in the study expressed interest in the map image, as well as enthusiasm about the application if and when they found it. However, as the map was not immediately recognizable as an interactive feature, users did not always realize that they could click on and use it.

Furthermore, when users were asked whether there was a way to view institutions by location, they gravitated towards the “browse institutions” tab, rather than the image of the map. If this is a logical place for users to find geographic information for institutions, then a link to the map should be included here as well.

Recommendations:

- Move the global search box to another location on the homepage to avoid the appearance of a “site search.”
- Add a “browse map” link in the global navigation bar to alert users to the interactive map feature.
- Add a link to the map application on the “browse institutions” page.

Collection Guide Page

The screenshot shows the OAC (Online Archive of California) Collection Guide page for the 'Finding Aid for the Manzanar War Relocation Center Records, 1942-1946'. The page is structured as follows:

- Header:** OAC logo and search bar (7).
- Navigation:** Home, Browse Institutions, Browse Collections, About OAC, Help, Contact Us (2).
- Breadcrumbs:** Home > UC Los Angeles > Special Collections, Young (Charles E.) Research Library.
- Collection Guide:**
 - Collection Title:** Finding Aid for the Manzanar War Relocation Center Records, 1942-1946 (3).
 - Collection Number:** 122 (3).
 - Get Items:** Offline, Contact UC Los Angeles::Special Collections, Young (Charles E.) Research Library; Online items available (5).
 - View entire collection guide?** (4)
 - Search this collection:** manzanar (6)
 - Table of contents?** (8)
- Collection Overview:**
 - Description:** The Manzanar War Relocation Center was located in the Owens Valley in Central California. The United States Army initially established the camp as the Owens Valley Reception Center under the management of the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA), March-May 1942. On June 1, 1942, Manzanar was reconstituted as a War Relocation Authority (WRA) center. Its peak population was 10,121, and the majority of its internees came from pre-World War II Japanese American communities in the Los Angeles basin. The collection consists of files collected and maintained by Ralph Palmer Merritt (Director of the Japanese Relocation Center at Manzanar, California) including files of the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA), the War Relocation Authority (WRA) records and correspondence from April 1942-December 1945, a history of the Manzanar Center (5 volumes), daily records of the Block Managers, Ralph Merritt's office files, and a two volume index of all evacuees at Manzanar. There are also books, clippings, copies of the Congressional Record, reprints of committee hearings, and magazines documenting the history of Japanese and Japanese Americans in the United States and their internment and military service, photographs and photographic negatives documenting activities and people at Manzanar, and approximately 170 photographs by Ansel Adams of the Manzanar War Relocation Center on 14 x 18 inch mats. The collection also contains copies of various newspapers and printed materials such as the Manzanar Free Press.
 - Background:** The Manzanar War Relocation Center was located in the Owens Valley in Central California; the site was used by Paiute-Shoshone Indians for centuries until it became a Euro-American fruit-growing settlement, 1910-35; the United States Army initially established the camp as the Owens Valley Reception Center (9).
 - Table of contents:** 466 Search hits. Clear search hits. Overview. Full overview [23 hits]. Container List: War Relocation Authority (WRA): Administrative and Personnel Management Handbooks, Reports, Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) - Manzanar File [1 hit], War Relocation Authority (WRA) - Manzanar file [20 hits], Manzanar Relocation Center - Daily reports of block managers to Town Hall [1 hit], Manzanar Relocation Center - Town Hall Records [2 hits], Ralph P. Merritt (Project Director) Office file [4 hits], Far Eastern Propaganda Analysis files: Alphabetical file of newspaper clippings re: WRA, Manzanar, etc. [1 hit], Manzanar Relocation Center - Numbered photographic negatives and prints [2 hits], Manzanar Relocation Center - War Relocation Authority photographs [6 hits], Manzanar Relocation Center - Ansel Adams photographs [14 hits].

Figure 2 Collection Guide with Full Overview and Hits

The screenshot displays the OAC (Online Archive of California) interface. At the top left is the OAC logo. A search bar is located at the top right. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: Home, Browse Institutions, Browse Collections, About OAC, Help, and Contact Us. The breadcrumb trail reads: > Home > UC Berkeley > Bancroft Library.

The main content area is titled "Collection Guide" and contains the following information:

- Collection Title:** California Faces: Selections from The Bancroft Library Portrait Collection
- Collection Number:** (blank)
- Get Items:** Offline. Contact UC Berkeley::Bancroft Library. Online items available. (A yellow callout '10a' points to this section.)
- View entire collection guide:** PDF (1.75 Mb) | HTML
- Search this collection:** (Search bar with "go" button and radio buttons for "Entire Collection Guide" and "Online Items")
- Table of contents:** (A yellow callout '10' points to this section.)

The "Table of contents" section lists various individuals and their dates, such as Adams, Ansel, 1902-1984. Below this, a search results section shows "1 - 20 of 1231 results" and a "Results page:" with navigation controls. The first result is for "Adams, Ansel, 1902-1984." and includes a portrait photo and a description: "Guest speaker - Ansel Adams of Carmel, California, at the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Bancroft Library, University of California - Berkeley Campus. Sunday, May 14, 1967. The book under his arm is entitled: 'Valley of Salt, Memories of Wine' by Louis Nusbaumer, Edited by George Koenig."

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with navigation links and the text: "The Online Archive of California is an initiative of the California Digital Library. © 2008."

Figure 1 Collection Guide with Online Items Available

3. Collection Guide Information

All of the users demonstrated understanding of the relationship between the collection guide and the physical collection. Several explicitly pointed out that the “no online items available” text and icon effectively communicated the fact that many materials described in the OAC can only be accessed in-person. When asked how they would look at or obtain a copy of an object that interested them, they correctly ascertained that they would need to visit the institution holding it.

4. View Collection Guide Options

When users were asked how they might print the collection guide, some did not realize that they could do so by downloading the PDF version. A few users figured that the only way to print the collection guide would be to cut and paste the portions they wanted into a separate text document. It is possible that some users do not know the capabilities of PDF, or that file format is not what they immediately think of when they want to perform an action. An explicit reference to print capabilities may be needed.

5. Collection Guide Search

Use of the “search this collection” box was varied. Some users appeared to be unaware of this function, because when asked to find specific items or people described in the guide, they preferred to manually tab through the table of contents or else perform a search with their browser (control+f key stroke).

Other users did not immediately recognize this search as being limited to the specific collection guide. This was apparent when they attempted to do broader searches of all OAC content there. After finding a small number of results for those queries, they realized that this box performed a more limited search.

6. Narrow Search Buttons

These options simply were not visible to most users. Only one user discovered them after spending some time familiarizing him/herself with the collection guide format.

7. Global Search Box

While the global search box appeared to be a source of confusion on the homepage, it was effectively utilized here. Users expected it to perform a search of all OAC collections, as opposed to either the website or the specific collection guide.

8. Table of Contents

Users were enthusiastic about the interactive capabilities of the table of contents and appeared to understand how it represented the structure of the collection guide. A few users expressed confusion about the box and series descriptions, and the fact that they differed across collection guides, but the source of their confusion appeared to be due to unfamiliarity with the varied arrangement practices for archival records rather than the interface. This finding underscores the fact that users were not fazed by the inclusion of MARC records in the OAC; they appeared to approach each record anew, familiarizing themselves with each as it demanded.

Some users did not immediately see the “full overview” option, and did not appear to understand that by clicking this link they would see details of the collection, including series and item information.

9. Hits

Most users understood the concept of a “hit” (with the exception of one who was not familiar with that terminology), but some were not comfortable interacting with the “next hit” icons that appeared embedded in collection guide. Two users said they were “afraid” to click on these icons because they did not know where they would be directed, thinking they might arrive at another record.

10. Links to Items in Container List

When some users tried to locate online items via the container list (as indicated by the eye icon), they did not see the “see online items” links embedded in the collection guide. This was compounded by the fact that some users had previously clicked on the “online items available” link in the collection information, which displays thumbnails of all items in the collection guide frame (10a). The “see online items” links in the collection guide will need to be more visible so as to alert users to the fact that their queries have yielded results and that the links will direct them to the online items.

Recommendations:

- Add language or an icon to the options under “view entire collection guide” to alert users to print capabilities.
- Increase the size or emphasize the font for the search box (“Search this collection”), as well as for the facet buttons (“Entire Collection Guide” and “Online Items”).
- Increase the size or alter the terminology of the “full overview” option in the table of contents.
- Emphasize the icons directing users to search result hits throughout the collection guide.
- Increase the size and graphically emphasize the “see online items” links in the collection guide (which appear when users browse the guide or click on specific areas of the guide with online items).

Search Results

The screenshot shows the OAC (Online Archive of California) search results page. At the top, there is a search box with the text 'manzanar' and a 'go' button. Below the search box, there are navigation links: Home, Browse Institutions, Browse Collections, About OAC, Help, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled 'Search Results' and shows 'manzanar' in the search box. Below this, there are tabs for 'Collections (75)' and 'Items (1168)'. The results are displayed in a list format, with the first result being '1. Manzanar War Relocation Center Records 1942-1946'. The description for this result is: 'Contributing Institution: UC Los Angeles::Special Collections, Young (Charles E.) Research Library. Description: The Manzanar War Relocation Center was located in the Owens Valley in Central California. The United States Army initially established the camp as the Owens Valley Reception Center under the management of the War Relocation Authority Control Administration (WCCA), March-May 1942. ... Read More'. Below the description, there is a link for 'Online items available'. The second result is '2. Manzanar Collection 1942-1994'. The description for this result is: 'Contributing Institution: California Polytechnic State University. Description: Materials relating to the forced relocation to Manzanar, California, of Miriko Nagahama and Honey Mitsuye Toda, including correspondence, photographs, and newspapers, donated in 1981 and 1995. 37 search terms found: ... Manzanar Collection...'. The third result is '3. Ueno (Harry) Papers 1912-1997'. The description for this result is: 'Contributing Institution: Stanford University::Manuscripts Division. Description: Papers relating to the Harry Ueno's interment at Camp Manzanar in 1942. Includes'. On the right side of the page, there is a 'Refine search results' section with facets for 'Institutions' and 'Date'. The 'Institutions' facet lists: California Polytechnic State University (3), California State Archives (4), California State University, Dominguez Hills (1), Archives and Special Collections Department (1), and California State University, Fresno (2). The 'Date' facet lists: 1800s (1), 1810s (1), 1820s (1), 1830s (1), and 1840s (2). There are also links for 'View all 20' and 'View all 21'.

Figure 2 Collection Results Page

11. Items Tab:

Several users struggled with the tasks that asked them to find online objects. One reason for this was that they did not see the “items” tab on the search results page. Very few users clicked on this link in the entire testing session.

12a and 12b. Online Items Available Indicators:

The “online items available” indicators were also overlooked both within the collection results and in the “refine search results” box. These options will need to be emphasized so users know that it is possible to hone in on collections that have digital objects.

13. “Refine Search Results” (Facets):

Few users tried or even seemed to notice the facets. This was evident when some users instead attempted to search within the results using the search box on the page, which actually performs a new search, rather than narrow the results.

14. Limit Indicators

Some users made use of the facets unwittingly when they performed a search from an institution page (thus searching only collections held by that institution). They did not see the limit appear on the search results page. Subsequently, when they ran another search or refined the results, they were not aware that the limit had disappeared and were thus confused when more results appeared.

The screenshot shows the OAC search results page for the query 'ansel adams'. At the top, there is a search bar with the text 'Search OAC' and a 'go' button. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for Home, Browse Institutions, Browse Collections, About OAC, Help, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled 'Search Results' and contains a search input field with 'ansel adams' and a 'search' button. Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'Collections (137)' and 'Items (57)'. The search results are displayed in a list format, with the first result highlighted by a yellow circle containing the number '15'. The first result is 'Letter to John Francis Neylan from Ansel Adams, April 15, 1950: 1950 #2 Loyalty Oath'. The page also includes a 'Refine search results' sidebar with filters for institutions and dates.

Figure 3 Item Search Results Page

15. Items Icons:

Users who did click on the items tab—either by their own direction or after it was shown to them—demonstrated understanding of the icons representing online texts or offsite items. The word “item” was also generally understood to mean a single object as opposed to full collection.

Recommendations:

- Emphasize the tabs on the results page to make it clear that there are two ways to search: collections and items.
- Enlarge or enhance the “online items available” indicators.
- Shade the facets box and possibly change the language to make it more evident to users that this area provides tools for limiting search results.
- Highlight or shade limits applied to the search (either manually or inadvertently via another page) so users are aware of them and recognize how to remove or retain them.

Institution Page

The screenshot shows the OAC website interface. At the top, there is a search bar labeled "Search OAC" with a "go" button. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links: Home, Browse Institutions, Browse Collections, Browse Map, About OAC, Help, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled "Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley" and includes the text "Collections with online items: 207" and "Physical collections: 10296". A yellow circle labeled "16" is placed over the collection statistics. To the right of the text is a map of the San Francisco Bay Area with a blue pin on Berkeley. A yellow circle labeled "17" is placed over the map. Below the map is a "View larger map/directions" link. On the left side of the page, there is a "Browse the Collections" section with a search bar and a "go" button. Below the search bar is a list of collections starting with "A". A yellow circle labeled "16" is placed over the collection statistics, and another yellow circle labeled "17" is placed over the map area.

Figure 6 Institution Page

16. Contact Information:

Some users arrived at pages for institutions that had not recently updated their contact information. Not knowing that other institutions included more information, they wondered if it were possible to include address, telephone, and institutional contact. The pages for all institutions must have some limited information so it does not appear empty and the map does not appear broken.

17. Map Image:

Several users attempted to click on the image of the map. When they realized it wasn't linked, those that did not see the "view larger map/directions" text assumed that there were no interactive map capabilities.

Recommendations:

- Update contact information for all institutions.
- Link the whole image of the map to the map application so users know it is available.

Map Page

The screenshot shows the OAC (Online Archive of California) website's 'Map Institutions' page. At the top left is the OAC logo. To the right is a search bar with the text 'Search OAC' and a 'go' button. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: Home, Browse Institutions, Browse Collections, About OAC, Help, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled 'Visit an Institution' and features a large number '18' in a yellow circle. To the right of this are two drop-down menus: 'Choose a city: Select one' and 'Choose a campus: UC Los Angeles'. Below these is a prompt: 'Zoom in to view an institutions location. Click on an icon to see more information about the institution.' The central part of the page is a map of California with numerous blue location pins. A callout box for 'UC Los Angeles' is open, showing the address 'University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA 90095' and a 'Browse the collections' link. To the right of the map is a list of 'Contributing Institutions' including Alameda County Library, Albany Library, Anaheim Public Library, Arcadia Public Library, Art Center College of Design Archives, Berkeley Public Library, California Academy of Sciences, California Historical Society, California Institute of Technology, California Institute of the Arts Library, California Polytechnic State University, California State Archives, California State Library, California State Parks, California State Railroad Museum Library, California State University, Channel Islands, California State University, Chico, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Archives and Special Collections Department, California State University Archives, California State University, Fresno, Central Valley Political Archive, Special Collections Library, California State University, Los Angeles, and California State University, Sacramento Library.

Figure 7 Map Institutions Page

18. Drop-down Boxes:

Some users did not see the drop-down boxes at the top of the page. They manually dragged their cursors around the map or scrolled down the whole list of contributing institutions.

Recommendations:

- Emphasize or highlight the “choose a city” and “choose a campus” options to alert users to these capabilities.

APPENDIX A: OAC USABILITY SESSION DETAILS

Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of this second round of assessment was to determine the usability of the redesigned OAC site using a fully functional prototype.

The main objectives targeted include the following:

Homepage

1. Determine users' reactions to the different browse behaviors.
2. Determine users' expectations for browse behavior.

Global Search Results

3. Determine whether users are able to navigate using facets.
4. Determine users' perceptions of the collection tab and the items tab and the relationship between them.

Items Tab

5. Determine whether users know how to find and navigate to an online object.
6. Determine whether users understand what the car icon means and what actions they need to take to view non-online items.

Search: Drilling down to the collection guide

7. Determine how users interpret search "hits" and keyword highlights.
8. Determine how users interpret and use the "Search this collection" feature.

General Collection Guide

9. Determine whether users notice the difference in data between MARC and EAD collection records.
10. Determine how users interpret the car and eye icons – i.e., what do they mean to users.

Map

11. Determine general usability of the map feature.

Participants

All 5 participants were graduates students working at the UCLA Center for Primary Research and Training. They were all familiar with the current OAC site.

Methodology

This assessment was conducted remotely, using an audio and Web conference service. Each user was instructed to share his/her desktop with the testers and directed to the latest working prototype of OAC. Rosalie Lack facilitated the sessions, and Rachael Hu and Sherri Berger observed and took notes. The click trail of each participant was captured via a Web recording.

Each session began with an explanation about the purpose of the session and a demonstration of the "thinking aloud protocol." Rosalie asked participants to sign and return a release form if they agreed to participate.

APPENDIX B: TASKS

Warm-up

- Tell me about your research topic. What are you interested in?
- How do you conduct your research? How would you describe what you do to someone who wanted to use your methods? Which online resources do you use, if any?
- What are your top sites for everyday/non-academic questions? What do you like about them?

Prepared Task

[Entry point]

You are looking for information on Japanese internment during WWII. You have arrived at this page after conducting a Google search. What can you tell me about this page and the information that you are looking at?

- Does this collection have information specifically about Manzanar? How can you tell?
- Is it possible to view an item from this collection on this website? How can you tell?
- Try to locate and print a photograph from the Manzanar camp.

User-Defined Tasks

- Could you walk me through how you might look up something of interest to you and talk about what you're doing and why? Tell me any reactions you have to the site as you get yourself oriented.
- Now that you have found _____ (online or not), how would you get a hold of the actual, physical item.

Prepared Tasks

[Global Search Results]

- Please find a photograph of Ansel Adams. As you look, please take your time and remember to think aloud and narrate what you are looking at and what you are doing.
- You are writing a paper on the writer Raymond Chandler, and you know that he wrote letters to Hamish Hamilton. How would you view the original letter?

[Map]

- Imagine that you're going to be attending a conference in LA [or wherever] and you'd like to see if you could do some research while you're there.
 - a. What kind of prep work might you do using this site before you leave for your trip?
 - b. On the collection guide page, what information would you need and how would you take a copy of this information with you to the archive?

[MARC vs EAD]

- Find two collections related to Susan Sontag. Take a look at the two collections and share with me your reactions. (i.e., collection guides)

[Homepage]

- Could you tell me what draws your eye and any thoughts that are coming to mind? I'm interested in hearing your reactions to what you're seeing.
- Talk about any terms or labels on the site that confused you or you weren't sure what they meant.

[Overall]

- Could you talk with me about any other areas of the site that were giving you trouble and your overall reactions to the site?