

# Usability Study on “UW Libraries & Research FAQs”

## Purpose

Evaluate the usability gains (if any) afforded by the redesign of the Information Gateway FAQ pages for the library and for research. Qualitatively compare UW Library FAQ performance to a representative sample of peer library FAQs.

## Problem Statement/Test Objectives

Product	Problem Statements
Library FAQ and Research Guide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How quickly are patrons able to locate the information they need?</li><li>2. How well does the design of the FAQ facilitate the finding of information?</li><li>3. Is the patron able to find information by themselves without resorting to the “Ask a Librarian” service?</li><li>4. What are the affective reactions to the FAQ page design?</li></ol>
FAQ Comparison	<p><a href="#">UW Library FAQ and Research Guide</a> [ gif 1 ] [ gif 2 ]</p> <p><a href="#">University of Arizona FAQ</a> [ gif ]</p> <p><a href="#">University of Iowa FAQ</a> [ gif ]</p> <p><a href="#">University of Oregon FAQ</a> [ gif ]</p> <p><a href="#">Duke University Research Guide</a> [ gif ]</p> <p><a href="#">University of Michigan Library Home Page</a> [ gif ]</p> <p><a href="#">Wake Forest University Research Guide</a> [ gif ]</p> <p><a href="#">Purdue University Library Research Guide</a> [ gif ]</p>

## User profile

Participants selected for this study will come from the following groups: undergraduate and graduate students. Participants should be novice researchers, or classify themselves as such. Participants will be intellectually curious and proactive when it comes to finding information. Participants are expected to have some experience with the Information Gateway and with web searching.

## Test Methodology

### 1. Participant greeting and background questionnaire

Each participant will be personally greeted by the test monitor and made to feel comfortable and relaxed. The participants will be asked to fill out a short pre-study questionnaire which gathers background information. (See pre-test questionnaire)

## 2. Orientation

Participants will each receive a scripted, verbal introduction and orientation which will explain the purpose and goals of the test. They will also be assured that the website is what is being tested, not themselves. Participants will then be introduced to the equipment and told that they will be recorded with video/audio recording, and by tracking mouse clicks and movement. They will then be asked to sign standard consent forms, if they haven't already.

## 3. Performance Test

The performance test consists of a series of tasks that the participants will carry out while being observed. These tasks will be conducted in the following manner:

- a. Participant will be presented with a script, which they will be asked to read out loud, detailing the task to be accomplished. They will then attempt that task.
- b. After concluding the tasks, the participant will complete a short survey to gauge their responses to the tasks. (See post-test questionnaire)

During the performance test the monitor will make notes on participant errors and comments. The monitor will also make note of any unusual circumstances that may not be picked up by the recording devices.

## 4. Participant Debriefing

Each participant will be debriefed by the test monitor, with the session being audiotaped. The topics of the questions will be:

- Participant's overall agreement with the Information Gateway design.
- Participant's comments and recommendations regarding the Information Gateway design.
- Participant's responses to probes from the monitor about specific errors or problems that occurred during the test.

### ***Task list***

Task 1	Description
Task	What does photocopying cost in the library?
Starting State	Online questionnaire with four FAQ home pages: UW, Arizona, Michigan, & Oregon.
Successful Completion Criteria	Participant locates an FAQ entry, or other library web page, which answers the question on each of the below web pages.
Script	Imagine that you're researching for a term paper and you find the perfect article, but it's not available online. You would like to make copies of the article, but you're not sure how much photocopies cost in the library. Using the following steps, find out how much a copy is.

1. Find the answer to the above question using each of the following four websites.
2. On each webpage, locate information on “photocopying.” Please remember to think aloud while you’re looking.

[University of Arizona FAQ](#) [ gif ]

[University of Washington Libraries FAQ](#) [ gif ]

[University of Michigan Library Home Page](#) [ gif ]

[University of Oregon FAQ](#) [ gif ]

Task 2	Description
Task	Find an answer to the question: “Can I check out videos and DVDs from the library? What is available?”
Starting State	Online questionnaire with four FAQ home pages: UW, Arizona, Iowa, & Duke
Successful Completion Criteria	FAQ entry, or other library web page, found for each of the below websites which complete the task.
Script	<p>You’ve heard that it’s possible to check out videos and/or DVDs from the library. Find out if that’s true and what is available for you to check out. Using the following steps, find information on library videos and DVDs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find the answer to the above question from each of the following four websites.</li> <li>2. On each website, locate information on videos and/or DVDs. Please remember to think aloud while you’re looking.</li> </ol> <p> <a href="#">University of Arizona FAQ</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">University of Iowa FAQ</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">UW Libraries FAQ</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">Duke University Research Guide</a> [ gif ] </p>

Task 3	Description
Task	Find an answer to the question: “I’m supposed to find “scholarly” articles for a paper. How do I do that?”

Starting State	Online questionnaire with four FAQ home pages: UW, Wake Forest, Purdue, & Duke
Successful Completion Criteria	Research guide entry, or other library web page, found for each of the below websites which complete the task.
Script	<p>Imagine that you're a new student and your first assignment is to write a paper using "scholarly" articles as your source. Using the following steps, find information or guidelines on locating "scholarly" articles.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Click through to each of the following websites to find the answer.</li> <li>2. On each webpage, locate information on "scholarly" or academic articles. Please remember to think aloud while you're looking.</li> </ol> <p> <a href="#">Wake Forest University Research Guide</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">Purdue University Library Research Guide</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">Duke University Research Guide</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">UW Library Research Guide</a> [ gif ] </p>

Task 4	Description
Task	Find an answer to the question: "What do I do if the book I want isn't available in the library?"
Starting State	Research guide entry, or other library web page, found for each of the below websites which complete the task.
Successful Completion Criteria	FAQ entry found for all four FAQs
Script	<p>Imagine that you're researching for a term paper and you've found a great book on your topic. Unfortunately the book isn't available in the catalog! Using the following steps, find information on what you're options are when the book you want isn't available in the library.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find the answer from each of the following four websites.</li> <li>2. On each webpage, locate information on books that are not available in the library catalog. Please remember to think aloud while you're looking.</li> </ol>

[UW Library Research Guide](#) [ gif ]  
[University of Arizona FAQ](#) [ gif ]  
[University of Iowa FAQ](#) [ gif ]  
[University of Oregon FAQ](#) [ gif ]

Task 5	Description
Task	Find an answer to the question: “What is the best database to find an article for my biology paper?”
Starting State	Online questionnaire with four FAQ home pages: UW, Purdue, Wake Forest, & Duke
Successful Completion Criteria	Research guide entry, or other library web page, found for each of the below websites which complete the task.
Script	<p>Imagine that you’ve been assigned to write a paper for your biology 101 class. You know there are a large number of databases where you can find articles, but you’re not sure what the best database to use is. Using the following steps, find the best database for a biology 101 paper.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find a guide or FAQ to the databases from each of the following four websites.</li> <li>2. On each page you find, locate information that will tell you the best database to use for your biology paper. Please remember to think aloud while you’re looking.</li> </ol> <p> <a href="#">Purdue University Library Research Guide</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">UW Library Research Guide</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">Wake Forest University Research Guide</a> [ gif ]  <a href="#">Duke University Research Guide</a> [ gif ]         </p>

### ***Test environment/equipment***

The test environment consists of an office with a computer station and an observer chair. The computer is set up with Internet Explorer as the browser with <http://sauk.lib.washington.edu> as its home page. Monitoring the test is a video camera mounted behind and to the right of the test subject and focused on the computer monitor. Monitoring mouse movement and keystrokes is the software package Camtasia.

### ***Test monitor role***

The test monitor will sit in the room with each participant while conducting the test. The test monitor will not volunteer help unless the participant is seriously off-course and will only answer questions if they don't threaten to color the test results. The test monitor will be on hand in case of equipment failure or other problems. Participants will be instructed to use the test server home page, and in particular the "Libraries FAQ" and "Research Guide" sections, to answer test questions.

### ***Evaluation measures***

- Completion of task
- Participant comments and/or mannerisms
- Participants perceptions of the usefulness of the gateway
- Stated preference
- Relevant quotes

### ***Questionnaires***

#### **Pre-Test Questionnaire**

See [pre-survey.pdf](#)

#### **Post-Test Questionnaire**

See [post-survey.pdf](#)