

Micro Usability Testing

small-scale, modular, repeatable

Allan Berry

University of Illinois at Chicago

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So... usability testing is hard for me

- I tend to find UT intimidating:
 - to onboard stakeholders
 - to create the script
 - to synchronize schedules
 - to parse and code session data
 - to translate into development tasks (when possible!)

Usability testing methodology seems to assume a dedicated facilitator. I'm just one person with a lot of competing priorities.

But it's **super important!** Is there a simpler way?

How about a lower bar? Micro usability testing

- Small-scale, short, in-person
- err on the side of simplicity
- iterative execution:
if it doesn't work, reboot and try again tomorrow
- optional paper-based prototypes

Micro usability testing (*cont.*)

- An attempt to circumvent UT difficulty:
 - narrow scope
 - less cognitive overhead
 - execute on short notice, in a short period of time
 - targeted for known problems
- Currently a bit speculative, experimental
 - I think I learned about this at a conference back in the day
 - But I haven't found any sources during recent research? *Caveat Emptor*

When might micro testing be appropriate?

- Conventional Usability Testing
 - for rich & deep data, e.g. to discover “unknown unknowns”
 - for evaluating established or complex systems
 - to understand context
 - may be performed remotely, with appropriate support systems
- Micro Usability Testing
 - for targeted data, e.g. to solve known problems
 - for regular, repeat testing
 - to decide between solutions
 - for subsystems or small-scale, bite-sized questions
 - in-person only

Procedure

- For in-person tests
 - Remote testing is more complex, deflating the technique's rationale
- Provide a single, clear topic
 - Not appropriate for open-ended exploration
 - subsequent tests for additional questions
 - A/B testing is a good fit
- 5 minutes or less
- Provide a simple incentive, e.g. chocolate
- Record results in a spreadsheet



Equipment

- testing on desktop?
 - Provide a laptop with an (optional) physical mouse
 - largest screen available
- testing on mobile, e.g. a phone or tablet?
 - ask participant to use their own device
 - provide a QR code to any online resources
- or: maybe just use paper?
 - print out wireframes
 - provide sharpies

People involved

- Facilitator
 - any Library professional, trained beforehand
- Participants
 - May work best with common patrons, e.g. undergraduates
 - May not require a large quantity, perhaps a half-dozen
 - if an answer to your question is not clear by then, maybe you need a new question
- Stakeholders
 - Anyone who uses the system

Time and Space

- When library is busiest, e.g. early afternoon
- Prominent location in a busy area, e.g. a library lobby

Make a nice, big, fat sign

- desired participants
- emphasize anonymity (by default)
- how long it will take
- who it will benefit
- description of incentives

Example test #1: Library Hours

- Can you find today's hours on the Library website?
- What time is the Library open next week Wednesday?

These simple questions already provide some key data:

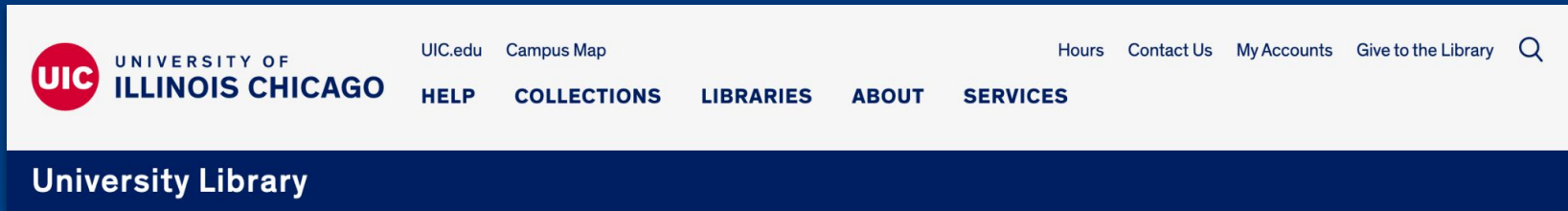
- Did they first visit the Library homepage, or Google instead?
- Where did they expect to find the Hours?
- Are the Hours navigation tools intuitive?
- Was this process fast and easy for this user, or frustrating?

Example test #2: new website header A/B test

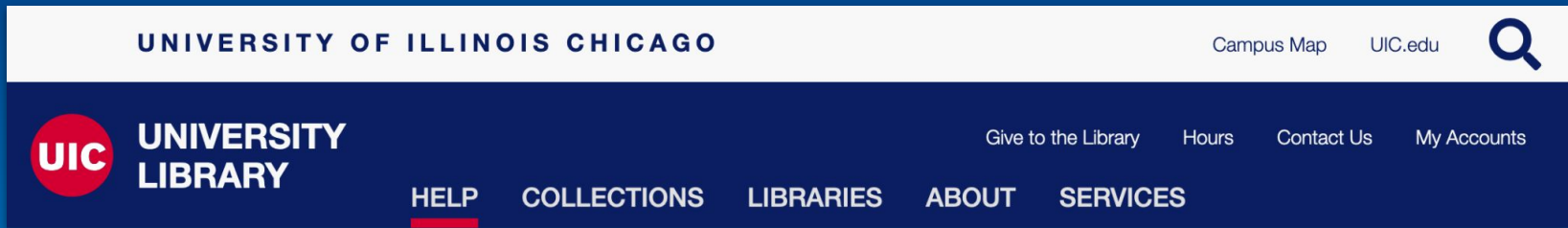
I'm testing a new website header prototype. I am expecting certain feedback, which I'd like to corroborate or invalidate.

Any UT tasks would be limited to using the header only.

A



B



#2 website header A/B test, continued

Questions:

- how might you get to the Library's homepage?
- can you eat at the Library?
- please click on the magnifying glass at top right.
What do you think this is for?

These seemingly mild tasks are loaded to highlight expected usability flaws in version A, potentially repaired in B.

Example test #3: Directory facets

Sometimes you want to test prototypes not yet built. For example, facets, or filters, in our Library Directory are broken.

These are questions I'd like to ask:

- How would you find all Librarians for our branch in Peoria?
- How would you find a Librarian specializing in Dentistry?
- Can you find [name of Librarian]?

I'm a designer by background, so I could probably mock up some wireframes using Axure or Figma.

But this takes know-how and lots of time.

#3 Directory facets (cont.)

Current (what a mess)

Better

The screenshot shows a web interface for a directory. At the top, there are navigation links: a red dot, "About", and "People". Below this is the heading "People" and the subtitle "Staff and Faculty of the University Library". A search bar with the placeholder "Search by name" and a "Search" button is present. Below the search bar is a "Filter by" section with a teal header and an upward arrow. Under "Filter by", there are two sections: "Categories" and "Departments". The "Categories" section contains several buttons: "UIC School of Law", "Richard J. Daley Library, Chicago", "Library of the Health Sciences, Chicago", "Crawford Library of the Health Sciences, Rockford", "Richard J. Daley Library", and "Library of the Health Sciences, Peoria". The "Departments" section contains a grid of buttons: "UIC School of Law Library", "Research Services and Resources", "LHS Chicago - Access to Resources", "Library Administration", "Special Collections and University Archives", "LHS Rockford", "Digital Programs and Services", "Human Resources", "Information Services and Research - LHS Chicago", "Resource Acquisitions and Management", "Library of the Health Sciences at Peoria", "Access Services", "Business Office", "Access Services - Interlibrary Loan", "LHS Chicago - Administration", "Assessment and Scholarly Communication", "Access Services - Circulation", and "Library Systems".

The sketch shows a simplified and more intuitive filter interface. At the top, the word "PEOPLE" is written and underlined. Below it is a search bar with a "Search" button. Under the search bar, the text "Filter by:" is written. Below "Filter by:" are two dropdown menus: "Categories" and "Departments". Below the "Departments" dropdown is a list of four items, each with a checkbox: "School of Law" (checked), "Library of the Health Sciences", "Human Resources", and "Access Services".

Survey

- Maybe a brief, standard survey at completion?
 - answer to the question intended
 - any difficulties encountered
 - what should be different
- optional: name and email address,
in case interested in future (conventional) testing
opportunities

Thanks!

Aiming to try in the Spring!

Any questions or comments?

- **Allan Berry**
aberry3@uic.edu

I'll let you know how it turns out