

Web Usability Project Report: Portals and Homepage Development

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June 25, 2008

Goal Description

This is a follow up study to the web usability study and the LibQUAL+ survey in 2006-2007. The purpose of this study is to create special web portals based on the different communities at FAU (Students, Faculty, Distance Learners, First Time Users, Special Needs Users, and Library Staff), and to test their usefulness.

In the previous web usability study, it was found that the university-implemented branding caused the library web users to have trouble navigating the website. The library website currently has an overwhelming number of links, both along the side bar and under the drop down menus. In order to remedy the overwhelming amount of information found on the homepage, the library plans to create special web portals that are designed with links that each community group would need on a daily basis. The Library's homepage would then be considered a more advanced website with both daily use information and information used less regularly.

The study directly supports FAU Libraries:

Vision of "enhancing the quality and accessibility of traditional and virtual collections to meet the needs of researchers"

Goal II: Services

This study supports the FAU Strategic Plan:

Goal 1 (all objectives): Providing Increased Access to Higher Education

Goal 1, Objective 2: Foster institutional commitment to student satisfaction and success

Objective

This study consisted of focus groups to gain feedback on the design, structure, and content of the web portals, created by the library. This study used the student community (undergraduate and graduate) as its test population because they are the main focus of the library's services. Upon completing the interviews, the library will modify the remaining web portals (from the other user groups) and then put them online. It is suggested that a feedback survey be attached to all of the portals to determine if further modifications need to be made.

Outcome

The desired outcome of this study is to improve the design and organization of the libraries' website to ease navigation for the user. The web portals will be simpler versions of the libraries' homepage and could be used in place of the libraries' homepage without losing content that is used on a daily basis.

Criterion for success

The authors expect that at least 75% of the students in the focus group will approve and possibly prefer the web portal over the libraries' homepage. The authors expect this same percentage to be reflected in the web feedback form.

Data Summary

Portals:

The authors brainstormed on what links they considered to be most important for a student to use on a daily or weekly basis to put on the student portal. This included access to research materials, helpful web pages, basic information about the library, and policies. A web page was created containing the links. The authors designed one for undergraduates and one for graduates.

Homepage:

There were two modifications to the homepage. 1.) Links were removed from the quick links list which were duplicated under the drop down menus, and the order of the links were rearranged. 2.) The proposed portals links were added to the page.

All Web Pages:

Two elements were added to both the portal designs and the homepage design. 1.) An emergencies/information space was added, which would post alerts or announcements from the Libraries blog. 2.) A new search box was added to the homepage which will consolidate the catalog and website search boxes with a new database search box. Students would be able to choose which area they wish to search by selecting the appropriate tab.

Focus Group:

The data for this study was collected at focus groups. A total of 5 students (undergraduate and graduate) participated in the focus groups to "provide feedback on the design, structure, and content of the web portals and homepage." The students were given copies of both the current and suggested design of the library homepage, as well as a copy of the suggested design of the portal. Students compared and evaluated the printouts and discussed their ideas, opinions, and experiences as they related to using the libraries' web page and what they would need/like to include in the portal. Students were asked follow-up questions to help further evaluate their

needs and to gauge that they had considered all the components of the homepage and portals. The students' suggestions were incorporated into a new draft of the portal and homepage and emailed back to the students for further evaluation and criticism.

Please see figure 1, 2, and 3 for the original drafts of the homepage and portal.

Summary of Student Comments

All Web Pages:

- The name “portal” was removed from the title of the pages and replaced with “resources” because the term is library jargon.
- The emergency blog feed was moved to the top of the web page and bolded in red letters in order to properly highlight important announcements for all users. If other blogs are created, they will be located at the top right corner. The students felt that the feed needed to be repositioned so that it would be more noticeable.
- The search box was redesigned and moved to the center of the page as students stated that its former location at the bottom of the page kept it hidden and they weren't exactly sure of its function. The search box was redesigned in order to make the quick search boxes more obvious and to make them more closely resemble Google search fields. The search box will require special coding, and therefore the authors only made a .jpg modified copy of a similar search box found on the University of Illinois Library's homepage. In order to add such a search engine to the FAU's website, the Systems Department will need to script the box.
- Students requested that five to ten databases be added in this search box. JSTOR, ABI INFORM, CINAHL, PUBMED and ACADEMIC SEARCH PREMIER are databases currently under discussion; however, there is room for further discussion and no final decision has been made to date.

Homepage:

- The students aired the need for most commonly used links like EZproxy and View/Renew Books to be moved towards the top of the list, since they used those links the most from off campus and need to locate them immediately.
- In addition, a link for Library Maps was added under Quick Links to make the library map more visible and accessible, since it had been buried within the web page.
- During the interview, students expressed that they did not know where to search for articles and they desired to search on a more basic level. There was a push to have 360 Search be called basic search to meet students' varied needs, and because it was a “one stop shop” like Google. The “advanced search” would be the list of databases.
- The students expressed that they did not use many of the other links under the quick links, because they did not understand the meaning of the link name. Those items that

they indicated were renamed to include both the layperson and jargon names so that those who did not understand the “correct” term would be able to access the information just as easily as those that did understand the library jargon.

- Examples: Basic Article Search (360 Search), Advanced Article Search (Indexes/Databases List), and Teacher Assigned Resources (Course Reserves).
- The students mentioned that when they come to the library they often want to get to MyFAU or Blackboard first. At this time, students would have to scroll to the bottom of the homepage to get to MyFAU and Blackboard. Some of the students expressed that they didn't know the two links were on the homepage since you cannot see them when the webpage opened. MyFAU and Blackboard links were moved from under quick links to the bottom center of the page to just above the portals list.
- There were comments from the students concerning not being able to see everything on the homepage when the window first opened. They did not know MyFAU, Blackboard, or the libraries website search were on the homepage. This means they do not tend to scroll down the page, making any information not seen on the screen unusable. This made the authors think about how other links from the homepage might not be used if the student must scroll down to find it on the homepage. In order to have all of the quick links appear on one page, the list would have to be shortened to include only the most necessary links for users. Links under both the quick links and the vertical tabs of Research, Services, About the Libraries and News and Events, were omitted, since these items would still be only one click away, thereby being readily accessible.
- The students had no idea what the “i” icon was, therefore the authors changed this icon into a “how to” link.
 - Examples: Basic Article Search (360 Search :: How To), Library Catalog :: How To, and View/Renew Books :: How To
- Students mentioned that it was not clear that there were drop down menus or further information within the horizontal drop-down menus of the Research, Services, About the Libraries and News and Events tabs. Vertical menu arrows were added next to each tab to help the students to identify there were further items located within the drop down menus.
- Students also suggested decreasing the number of items listed under these drop down menus, as often they felt that it was difficult to move between the horizontal and vertical listing of items (i.e. when the mouse hovers over the links and then has to open another set of links, like the different campus libraries. It was easy to lose the drop down menu). The authors did not edit the drop down menu list, but perhaps a new study could be created in the future.
- The header text "Libraries" was made smaller and consistent with the general homepage text. The students felt the "Libraries" header took up a lot of room and was redundant, since it says Florida Atlantic University Libraries in the banner. The summary statement was shortened as well to make room for the portal links.
- Students noticed the banner and calendar ads do not change on a regular basis. They suggested that these areas either be updated or be used to present other helpful information.

- Students expressed that they found the following to be helpful: Ask a Librarian, Instructional web pages, and 360 search (although it is rather slow).

See figure 4 for the new recommended homepage for the FAU Libraries web team to consider implementing.

Portals:

- The undergraduate and graduate portals were merged into one general students' portal. This was due to the similarity within the portals and that the honors students and senior year students fall between the scope of each individual portal.
- The guide was divided into sections based on common subject matter. A number of these areas were renamed to better express what was contained in each section, for ease of scanning. The students recommended the addition/subtraction of links.
- The “How To” links were added to the portals webpage. This was done for View/Renew Books tab and for Basic Articles Search Tab (360 Search).
- Pictures were added as the students stated that pictures engaged them. They said it helps them to navigate the website because it makes the webpage more comfortable. (Image found royalty free on <http://pro.corbis.com/>).
- An Ask-a-Librarian/Meebo box was added so that students could get necessary help without having to return to the library homepage, which saves time.
- In order to simplify library language for students and other lay people, descriptions for specific concepts were provided, after the jargon terminology. For example, links and descriptions were provided for subject guides, research help, research check list, library vocabulary, research workshops, reference consultations, tutorials and podcasts and vodcasts. Students had expressed that they were unfamiliar with what these specific links were for and with what the library had to offer.
- A section called “Where are the Books” was added to assist students with identifying call numbers within the library, so that they can find their books/research. Furthermore, a Library maps link was added.
- Students voiced that the portals are easy, clear and navigable. They stated that they liked that all of the information was available in one place. Overall, all the students aired satisfaction with the implementation of Portals.

See figure 5 for the new recommended portal for the FAU Libraries web team to consider implementing.

Other comments:

- Some of the students expressed their ever present bewilderment using the Interlibrary Loan page. Students requested that a link be added to the ILL page, so that they could request their password if they forgot it as well as a completely revamping the order of the links and adding better descriptions. They stated they always had to click on multiple links in order to figure out which was the right link. Perhaps clicking on “Interlibrary Loan” should go directly to the actual form, and then a link could be added to the form which directs library users back to an informational web page. After all, having the landing page just adds an extra click to get to the needed resource.
- Students noted that the E-Journal page is rather challenging to use due to the great number of mouse clicks required to get to a journal (if browsing). In addition, students stated that overall there was general confusion with Indexes/databases, E-Journals and the overall electronic resources pages, because it was unclear what each resource contained (plus they all link to each other, which they found confusing).
- In addition to what has been created, the authors are in the process of creating a web page to describe what computer programs are available in the library and on libraries’ policy on textbooks.

Analysis of Data:

The changes in design, structure, and content of the web portals and homepage were completed in accordance with student feedback from focus group interviews. It appears that the implemented changes for the library homepage and portals will further contribute to success in the area of student research as well as their satisfaction with library services and resources.

The Next Steps:

First Steps, upon approval

- Upload the portals (reference sub web?) and link to them through the highlights (possibly a banner ad?) so that the FAU community can test them.
- An online feedback survey can be developed to link to each portal to determine if the other FAU community sections approve of the portals design.
- An assessment sub-committee for the web team should be created to carry on all future web usability studies as such studies are necessary to provide the best customer service possible to the library website community. They could first develop the online feedback survey.
- Simple changes, such as verb use and wording in the quicklinks, will be able to be modified at this time. Major design changes will have to wait for approval from communications, if the web team approves the recommendations.

Further Steps

- Due to the limited focus group size and that the group consisted of only students, all the recommendations concerning the homepage should be retested. The assessment sub-group could expand the focus groups into the different FAU community groups and ask for further recommendations.
- The proposed search box definitely attracted the attention of the students in the focus group. A tabbed box, or a drop down box, will need to be researched and designed by the Systems department.
- A new study might be necessary based upon feedback from students, on the difficulty of navigating and successfully utilizing these resources:
 - ILL webpage
 - Electronic resources webpage
 - Drop down menu on the homepage
- The proposed blog(s) will need to be developed further and linked to appropriate places on the website. At this time, a blog is being researched.

Figure 1

> FAU PEOPLE DIRECTORY > SITE INDEX > TEXT ONLY

FAU WEB SEARCH **GO**

FAU FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES

Home / Libraries Home

Ask a Librarian! LIBRARIES CATALOG QUICK SEARCH **GO**

RESEARCH SERVICES ABOUT THE LIBRARIES NEWS AND EVENTS

QUICK LINKS

- Library Catalog **i**
- Indexes/Databases
- Central Search - Now '360 Search' **i**
- Electronic Journals
- Course Reserves
- Off Campus Connect (EZproxy)
- Campus Libraries
- Collections
- Comments & Suggestions Form
- Contact Us
- FAQ
- Hours
- Instructional Services
- Interlibrary Loan
- Staff Home Page
- View/Renew Books :: Help
- My FAU
- Blackboard

FAU Libraries Site Index
SEARCH FAU LIBRARIES WEB SITE **GO**

Libraries

Easy Search Books Journals Reserves Media Other
FIND ARTICLES, BOOKS, JOURNALS, WEB PAGES
enter search terms **Go** Advanced
Search by title, author, or keyword in a broad selection of sources.

RESOURCES FOR:
Undergraduate Students | Graduate Students | Faculty | Distance Learners | First Time Users | Visitors | Special Needs Users | Library Staff

HIGHLIGHTS
Election Resources
New Online Catalog!
New Resource: Visual History Archive
Workshops!

LIBRARIES UPCOMING EVENTS
• Concerts
• Lectures
• Exhibitions
• More

Just In...
Digitool @ FAU Libraries
read more >

Library Fund - 561-297-3316. Make a gift!

Figure 2

			
<h2>Undergraduate Students Portal</h2>			
<h3>Library Information</h3> <p>FAQ Page</p> <p>Hours, all campuses</p> <p>Campus Library Locations</p> <p>Library Maps, in Boca Raton, Jupiter, and Treasure Coast</p> <p>Library Tour, in Boca Raton</p> <p>Policies: Mission of the Libraries, Strategic Plan, Collection Development, Checking out books, and more</p> <p>Information on Textbooks</p> <p>Software in the library</p> <p>Wireless Laptop</p> <p>News and Events</p> <h3>TECHNICAL PROBLEMS?</h3> <p>Having a problem connecting to a specific electronic resource or service? Consult with the appropriate helpdesk as indicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unable to connect to any FAU web service: Contact your Internet Service Provider• Unable to connect to the FAU Library web site: Contact FAU's Help Desk• Having difficulty accessing information from a database: Contact FAU's Reference Desk (681/297-3766, lyref@fau.edu)• Unable to access an electronic resource with your OWL Card: Contact the Access Services Department (681/297-8911, lyolro@fau.edu)	<h3>Research Help</h3> <p>SEARCHING:</p> <p>Find Books, Course Reserves, Articles, and Journals</p> <p>Off Campus Connection: You must log in to use any electronic resources when at home</p> <p>Resources Brochure</p> <p>RESOURCES:</p> <p>Research Help Page</p> <p>Research Checklist</p> <p>Research Subject Guides</p> <p>Class Webpages</p> <p>Library Vocabulary Terms</p> <p>Research Workshops</p> <p>Tutorials</p> <p>Podcasts and Videos</p> <p>Ask a Librarian Service</p>	<h3>Blog info here</h3> <p>announce 1</p> <p>announce 2</p> <p>announce 3</p>	
FAU Homepage	FAU Libraries Homepage	FAU Libraries E-collection	FAU Libraries Catalog
<p>FAU Libraries Web Site Design Team</p> <p><i>This page is maintained by: FAU Libraries Web Manager</i> Created 26 January 2008 Last updated 6 February 2008 © Florida Atlantic University All rights reserved</p>			

Figure 3

			
<h2>Graduate Students Portal</h2>			
<h3>Library Information</h3> <p>FAQ Page</p> <p>Hours, all campuses</p> <p>Campus Library Locations</p> <p>Library Maps, in Boca Raton, Jupiter, and Treasure Coast</p> <p>Library Tour, in Boca Raton</p> <p>Policies: Mission of the Libraries, Strategic Plan, Collection Development, Checking out books, and more</p> <p>Information on Textbooks</p> <p>Software in the library</p> <p>Wireless Laptop</p> <p>News and Events</p> <h3>TECHNICAL PROBLEMS?</h3> <p>Having a problem connecting to a specific electronic resource or service? Consult with the appropriate helpdesk as indicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to connect to any FAU web service: Contact your Internet Service Provider • Unable to connect to the FAU Library web site: Contact FAU's Help Desk • Having difficulty accessing information from a database: Contact FAU's Reference Desk (681/297-3785, lyref@fau.edu) • Unable to access an electronic resource with your OWL Card: Contact the Access Services Department (681/297-8911, lyolro@fau.edu) 	<h3>Research Help</h3> <p>SEARCHING:</p> <p>Find Books, Course Reserves, Articles, and Journals</p> <p>Off Campus Connection: You must log in to use any electronic resources when at home</p> <p>If FAU does not have what you are looking for? Try the WorldCat database</p> <p>This database searches most of the world's libraries for resources. You can request an Interlibrary Loan (ILL) for any resource found in this database.</p> <p>All Collections available at the Library</p> <p>Resources Brochure</p> <p>RESOURCES:</p> <p>Research Help Page</p> <p>Research Checklist</p> <p>Research Subject Guides</p> <p>Class Websites</p> <p>Library Vocabulary Terms</p> <p>Research Workshops</p> <p>Reference Consultation Form, in Boca Raton</p> <p>Tutorials</p> <p>Podcasts and Videos</p> <p>Ask a Librarian Service</p>	<p>Blog info here</p> <p>announce 1</p> <p>announce 2</p> <p>announce 3</p>	
FAU Homepage	FAU Libraries Homepage	FAU Libraries E-collection	FAU Libraries Catalog
<p>FAU Libraries Web Site Design Team</p> <p><small>This page is maintained by: FAU Libraries Web Manager Created 25 January 2008 Last updated 6 February 2008 © Florida Atlantic University All rights reserved</small></p>			

Figure 4

The screenshot shows the Florida Atlantic University Libraries website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for FAU People Directory, Site Index, and Text Only, along with a search box labeled 'FAU WEB SEARCH' and a 'GO' button. Below this is the FAU Libraries logo and a banner image of a building. A secondary navigation bar includes 'Home / Libraries Home', 'Ask a Librarian!', 'Important Announcements: Blog Feed', and a 'Read more' link. A main navigation menu features 'RESEARCH', 'SERVICES', 'ABOUT THE LIBRARIES', and 'NEWS AND EVENTS'. On the left, a 'QUICK LINKS' sidebar lists various services like Off Campus Connect, Library Catalog, and various search options. The central content area includes a 'FAU Libraries' introduction, a search box with 'Top 10 Search' and 'Find Articles' options, and a 'LINKS FOR:' section listing resources for different user groups. On the right, there are 'HIGHLIGHTS' for Election Resources, a 'BLOG' section with three recent posts, and an 'Election Resources @ Your Library' banner. At the bottom, there is a 'Library Fund - 561-297-3316. Make a gift!' call to action, a footer with campus locations, privacy policy, and copyright information, and a page access counter.

FAU Campuses: [Boca Raton](#) | [Dania Beach](#) | [Davie](#) | [Fort Lauderdale](#) | [Jupiter](#) | [Treasure Coast](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [University Regulations](#) | [Emergency Information](#) | [Get Help](#) | [Contact Us](#)

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Last Updated: 03 April 2008

This page has been accessed 2374739 times since January 17, 2006.

Figure 5


FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES


Student Resources



BLOG:

- * Posting 1 about the library
- * Posting 2 about an exhibit

Important Announcements: Blog Feed
Read more

Searching:

Top 10 Search
Books
Website

Find Articles Search by title, author, or keyword in a broad selection of sources.

Advance Search
What are the Top 10 databases?

- Books (Catalog also includes other media like video and CD's)
- View/Renew Books :: [How To](#)
- Course Reserves (Teacher Assigned Resources, limited time check out at the Circulation Desk)

Off Campus Connection/EZproxy: You must log in to use any electronic resources when at home

- Basic Articles Search -- (360 Search :: [How To](#))
- Advanced Articles Search -- (Databases)
- Electronic Journals
- Refworks -- A way to save and organize your citations

FAU does not have what you are looking for?
Try searching other library catalogs: [WorldCat database](#)

Find a resource in another library?
You can request an [Interlibrary Loan \(ILL\)](#) and we will get the resources for you!

General Information:

FAQ Page: Get help

Hours: all campuses

Computer Programs found in the library

How to Set up your Wireless Laptop

Campus Library Locations

Library Maps: Boca Raton, Jupiter, and Treasure Coast

Virtual Library Tour: Boca Raton

News and Events @ your library

Other Resources at the Library

- Digital Collections:** Student and Faculty Theses and Dissertations, Faculty Articles
- Government Documents:** Federal, State, International resources
- Judaica Sound Archives:** Listen to music online
- Media Center Collections:** Check out music, videos, and lap tops
- Microform Collections:** Newspapers, historical resources
- Special Collections and Archives:** Books as Aesthetic Objects, Music Collections, Collection of Colonial Imprints, more

Where are the Books?

See the Library Maps

Boca Raton-	Call numbers: A-HC HD-JZ HD-JZ K-QB QC-QR R-Z	Floor: 2 West 2 East 2 East 3 West 3 East 4 East
Special Sections:	Children's Literature Course Reserve (circulation desk) Curriculum Collection Government Documents Media Center Microforms Newspapers/popular periodicals Reference Special Collections	3 West 1 West 3 West 1 West 1 West 1 East 1 East 1 East 2 East

Jupiter-	Call numbers: A-E449.K29 E499.K7-Z	Floor: First Second
Special Sections:	Art Books Audio Books Children's Books Curriculum Books DVD's Journals Music CD's/Books Reference Videos	Second First Second Second First First Second First First
Treasure Coast- Special Sections:	Call numbers: Children's Books Circulating Collection A-Z Journals/Magazines Oversized Reference	Floor: First Second First First First

Research Resources:

Research Subject Guides: What is your major? We have a guide on the best resources for your major or any other subject

Research Help Page: Quick guide to how to research at the library

Research Checklist: A description of the whole research process from choosing a topic to finding resources to [Citing your resources](#)

Class Web Pages: If you have attended a library instructional session, check here for your classes resource web page

Library Vocabulary Terms: Don't know a term? Look here!

Research Workshops: Specialized workshops throughout the year

Schedule a **Reference Consultation (Boca Raton):** Do you need more help than 5 minutes at the reference desk? You can receive one-on-one help from a reference librarian!

Tutorials: How-To guides for using library resources (website, catalog, RefWorks, SciFinder, PubMed, etc.)

Podcasts and Vodcasts: View or download videos on how to use the library's resources and what is going on in the library (available through iTunes!)

Library Information

Have a Question? Ask-a-Librarian weekdays 9-5

Ask a Librarian Service: Chat, email or call us!

Policies:

- **Policy on Textbooks:** We generally do not collect textbooks. If you don't see it in the catalog, we don't have it.
- **Book Borrowing Information:** How do I check out books and for how long?
- **Circulation Polices and Services:** Library Cards, fines, missing books, photocopying/printing, reserving study rooms, security
- **Public Policies:** Here are some ideas for respecting the library and other people in the library
- **Children Policy:** Please be considerate when bringing children to the library
- **Eating and Drinking Policy:** Food in the library attracts bugs and pests, and we prefer to be bug free. Help us out!

Technical Problems?

Unable to connect to any FAU web service: **Contact your Internet Service Provider**

Computer problems? Contact FAU's **Help Desk**, or call 561-297-3999

Having difficulty accessing information from a database: Contact FAU's **Reference Desk** (561/297-3785, lyref@fau.edu)

Unable to access an electronic resource with your OWL Card (Off Campus Connection/EZproxy problems): Contact the **Access Services Department** (561/297-6911, lycirc@fau.edu)

Emergency or security problems? Call the FAU police at (561) 297-3500. If you see something, say something

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Created 25 January 2008

Last updated 29 April 2008

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