Meriam Library Website Usability Takeaways

# Key Recommendations

1. In Onesearch results, increase the text size of the Format Type, or otherwise make it more identifiable.
2. Investigate other ways of presenting Onesearch scopes on the homepage.
3. Consider alternate labels for “Is part of” in Onesearch full display.
4. Consider adding journal results to the Articles scope.
5. Add ILL link in OneSearch full display.
6. Move Course Reserves back into Quicklinks.
7. Change the Databases A-Z quicklinks icon to not resemble a book.
8. Recommend to CO that Name-sorting be removed from Course Reserves interface, and increase visibility of the search bar.
9. Link to the checkout policies on the Library Policies page.
10. Consider adding Policies link to the About menu.
11. Investigate adding brief policy descriptions to My Library Account in Primo.
12. Add help files for circulation related questions.
13. Use bento-box style results for site search, so that users can search the website in addition to Onesearch.
14. Add a link to the Dorothy M Hill collection on the SPC collections page.
15. Implement recommended resources in OneSearch for subject and collection keywords.

# Question Specific Observations

1. Find a book on gun control

* Most of the incorrect answers were due to finding a resource of the wrong format, for example a review instead of a book.
* We could try to find a better way to identify resource formats, either through text formatting or maybe color coding.
* We could consider having the Format facet open by default, or display the first several facet options.
* Most participants used the “Everything” scope, when the Books scope would have given them more immediate results.
* We could investigate other ways of presenting scopes to make them more obvious.

2. Find a journal article on swine flu + name journal and article title

* Some participants were not familiar with the terms journal article, and this made them more likely to get this incorrect.
* Students were more likely to try things other than the onesearch bar on the homepage. Several tried searching Databases A-Z, or Newspapers.
* Many incorrect answers were due to an inability to find the Journal title.
* The label on the Details section is “Is part of” which could be improved.
* At the top of the full display there is no label for the journal title, it is presented by itself.

3. Find the journal Early Education and Development

* All of the incorrect/incomplete answers chose the Articles scope to look for the journal, which didn’t produce the result.
* Perhaps this scope could include journals in it?

4. Find a news article on gun control

* Some had trouble identifying newspaper name on full display.
* Some searched proquest, found it confusing, then finished question with OneSearch.
* Some identified resources other than newspaper articles.

5. Find A Short Story of Virginia City and borrow through ILL

* Some failed by identifying other resources as the book – this is probably inevitable as confirming we don’t have something is a lot harder than confirming we do have it.
* The ILL task is where most failed. Those who succeeded went back to the homepage and found ILL services that way.
* The button to borrow is only visible after logging in, but the user is not prompted to log in when the “Show libraries” button is clicked.
* The GES for ILL is located in the box above the Show Libraries button, so it can still be a challenge to find after being logged in.

6. Find books on Reserve by Prof. Wasinger

* Some were unfamiliar with the concept of course reserve and didn’t know where to look.
* Some found their way to the Course Reserves site at calstate.edu but failed because they used name-sort, and it only sorts by the first professor listed.
* Recommend: remove name sorting. Make the search feature more prominent.

7. Find help using the library

* I feel like we have solved this.

8. Find the policy on undergraduate checkout periods

* A wide variety of outcomes here. Some went immediately to it, others hunted around for many minutes.
* A common pitfall was to wind up on the About the Library page, and then proceed to the Policies page, where we hadn’t linked to the Checkout policies.
* Recommend: Link to the checkout policy from the Policies page.
* Some used the DIY help search, but there are no help files on this or related topics.
* Some used the site-wide search bar, but this leads to Primo by default. Nobody noticed the dropdown options for website search.

9. Find information about the Dorothy M Hill collection

* Many found Special Collections, but only some of their collections are highlighted on the SPC homepage – this led to confusion for many.
* Recommend: Adding a link to Dorothy Hill collection, or maybe just a “view all our collections” link.
* Some used the site-wide search or Onesearch. There is no path from OneSearch to the collection.
* Again the sitewide search default went to OneSearch, nobody noticed they could search the website (the most likely intent).
* Searching on ContentDM doesn’t lead to collection level pages, only individual items in collections.

10. Find the History Subject Guide

* Two of the incompletes tried using OneSearch. Recommended Resources could help point to Libguides for searches that match a subject.
* One of the incompletes just didn’t try, everyone else found it.

General feedback for further studies:

* Each task should be its own question. If followups are involved, separate them out for more clear data collection.
* We must be careful with what questions we ask – the path to those answers will be prioritized over others. Make sure we are asking students to accomplish what is most important, so we prioritize that. (Ex: I’m incentivized to streamline the path to the Dorothy Hill collection over others).
* If resources are hidden behind authentication, we must either ensure we log in before the test begins or make it clear to study participants that they might be asked to log in, and they should feel free to do so.
* Sometimes task completion is ambiguous, we might want to have students explicitly say “This is the answer” or something to that effect.
* Be careful with question phrasing. Ex: Because we asked for “the policy” on undergraduate checkouts, many participants focused on that word and went hunting for “policy”.
* Some concepts were unfamiliar. Perhaps a little bit of explanation of concepts would help before each question.