Comparing Search Engines for Online Resources

Sam Bosley, Rahul Philip, and Colin Wheelock
Project Overview

- Library has a few search engines users can use for finding resources (journals, articles, etc. online)

- Search engines we're testing:
  - UCI ERDB - Electronic Resources Database
    http://www.lib.uci.edu/research/eresources.html
  - UCI ANTPAC - Electronic Resources Database
    http://antpac.lib.uci.edu
  - Cornell Library Database
    http://www.library.cornell.edu
ERDB (UCI Libraries)
Usability problems

- For Online Resources search engine, not comprehensive search
- For ANTPAC, no clear option for searching online resources specifically; relegated to a tiny dropdown menu

- Limited search options even with online resources tab
- Plan to expose more issues through study
Method

- Conduct user testing/interviews
- Screen/audio recording with tasks set by customer
- Goal - compare the library search engines with each other as well as with non-library tools to expose usability problems and suggest improvements

Tasks
  - Find a particular journal using all 3 search engines
  - Find a journal on the topic of stem cells using all 3 search engines
  - Find a specific paper as well as any related paper using any tool the user wants (library search engine, Google, etc.)
User Tests

● Pre-task questions
  ○ Previous experience with these search engines?
  ○ User's preferred method of finding research information?

● Tasks
  ○ Screen/audio record
  ○ Have users think out loud

● Post-task questions
  ○ Favorite/least favorite aspect of each search engine
  ○ If they had to choose one to use, which?
  ○ Justify chosen method for task B
  ○ Solicit suggestions for improvements

● Projected time per subject: ~1hr
User Tests

- **Subjects**
  - Focus on researchers, i.e. professors and grad students
  - ~8 subjects total, 4 profs, 4 students
- Recruit through email lists
- Incentive - $5 Starbucks gift card
Timeline

- Pilot study w/ two users: Nov. 4
- Find and schedule subjects: Nov. 4
- User testing: Nov. 4 - Nov. 11
- Data analysis and recommendations: Nov. 11 - Dec. 1
- Final project report: Dec. 1 - end of quarter

Who's Doing What

- Find users - All
- Scheduling - Rahul and Sam
- Pilot study - Colin
- Prep users for tasks - Colin
- Interviews - Rahul and Sam
- Data analysis/final recommendations - All
Questions?