Goldmine Usability Assessment
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Executive Summary

In June 2015, the J. Murrey Atkins Library’s Usability Lab conducted an assessment of the digital repository at UNC Charlotte, Goldmine. The Interim Head of Special Collections met with the Director of the Usability Lab and the Usability Assistant to discuss an assessment of digital repository during the soft launch. Goldmine is under development at J. Murrey Atkins Library and its initial release “features oral history interviews digitized as part of the project Living Charlotte: The Postwar Development of a New South City” (Goldmine). Goldmine was built on the Islandora platform, an open-source software framework designed to help institutions and organizations and their audiences collaboratively manage, and discover digital assets using a best-practices framework” (Islandora).

The objective of the digital repository is to have accessible digital resources that document the history of UNC Charlotte and the Charlotte region through “oral history interviews, manuscripts, university records, publications, photographs, maps, moving images, and other selections from Department of Special Collections.”

Usability best practices were incorporated by the Usability Assistant to complete the assessment. The assessment identified several opportunities for improvement to the digital repository that would result in a more efficient, effective, and desirable web interface. This report contains a list of recommendations to address these issues. Additionally, the recommendations from the assessment suggest possibilities of inquire for future studies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed based on the usability assessment of Goldmine. Goldmine currently has minimal content deposited in the interface. The assessment revealed several issues that can be improved. While no critical usability issues were uncovered (problems that made the site unusable or negatively affect its efficiency to users), the study did reveal smaller issues that could be improved to increase the efficiency, effectiveness, ease of learning, error tolerance, and engagement of the digital repository.

1. **Conduct a usability study of Goldmine.**
   This assessment was conducted on the current digital repository, which has minimal content deposited, thus a thorough usability study cannot be conducted until there is more content to test. Conducting thorough usability analysis of Goldmine will analyze its efficiency, effectiveness, ease to learn, error tolerance, and engagement. The objectives of a usability study on Goldmine would include the following:
• Identify the effectiveness of the digital repository, is the repository useful to users and can the repository help them achieve their goals accurately.
• Identify the digital repository’s efficiency, can users complete a task quickly and accurately.
• Identify how engaging the digital repository is to users, is the repository pleasant and satisfying to use.
• Identify how error tolerant the digital repository is, does the user encounter errors, and how does the repository help a user recover from errors that occur.
• Identify the digital repository’s ease of learning, does the repository support the ease of completing a task through initial orientation and continued learning to novice and expert users.
• Identify recommendations for design and functional improvement of the digital repository.

The study could utilize task-based analysis, an approach that relies on representative user groups’ attempt to perform relevant tasks to uncover design and functional issues with the interface. This methodology allows the researcher to compare data across common benchmarks based on the participant groups’ ability to complete each task. Tasks used in this study will focus on activities commonly performed by the participant groups and answered questions related to the search function, the search results, the navigation, the icons’ purpose, and any other relevant content.

2. Ensure the repository is consistently and correctly labeled throughout the site.
On the homepage and the “About” page, the title of the digital repository is always referred to as “The Goldmine.” When the title is referred to in the middle of a sentence, “the” is capitalized misleading users to think the title of the digital repository is “The Goldmine.” “Articles (a, an, the) function as adjectives because they modify the items they designate by either limiting them or making them more specific” (Alred 43). A definite article, the, denotes a particular item. For example, “the digital repository is under development at J. Murrey Atkins Library” denotes a specific digital repository. There is only one Goldmine therefore, “the” is unnecessary when referencing the title. “An article can be superfluous” (Alred 43). For example the homepage states, “The Goldmine: Repository at UNC Charlotte” (Figure 2.1) it could be revised to state, “Goldmine: the repository at UNC Charlotte” to reduce confusion among users. Apply these edits throughout the interface.
3. **Ensure site navigation is accessible and consistent throughout the site.**

Add the navigation menu to the search result’s page to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and engagement of the digital repository. If a user is on the search results page and wants to return to the homepage, they will have to click the browser’s back button until they return to the homepage or a webpage that includes the navigation menu (Figure 3.1). In addition, including the navigation on the search result’s page could decrease clicks improving the interface’s efficiency, effectiveness, and user engagement.
4. **Determine short-term and long-term location for Goldmine.**
   Determine the short and long-term web location for Goldmine to aid in discoverability and ensure future use. Currently, users must know the URL to access the site. For the short-term, Goldmine could be located on the Department of Special Collection’s webpage because the digital repository is holding selections from their collections. For the long-term, Goldmine could be located on Atkins’ website because it was developed there and because it might expand from just deposits from Special Collections. In addition, Atkins’ website has more traffic and could result in more user traffic from being located there.

5. **Add contact information to the digital repository.**
   Adding contact information to the digital repository will increase its efficiency and effectiveness. Currently, the “About” page includes Goldmine’s team members but does not include any form of contact information to assist users when they have inquiries. *(Figure 5.1)*

![The Goldmine Repository at UNC Charlotte](Image)

*Figure 5.1*
6. **Conduct a usability study on the mobile interface to ensure all content is accessible.** Currently, the mobile interface is suppressing the “About” page from the navigation (*Figure 6.1*). Conducting a usability study would test the efficiently, effectiveness, ease of learning, error tolerance, and engagement of the mobile interface.

7. **The “Advanced Search” feature should be consistent throughout the interface.** On the “Home” page, the “Advanced Search” page, and the “About” page the advanced search feature is located in the navigation, while the search box is located in the upper right of interface (*Figure 7.1*).

![Figure 6.1](image1)

On the search result’s page, the advanced search is integrated within the search box in the left pane (*Figure 7.2*). Removing “Advanced Search” from the navigation and integrating it with the search box in the upper right corner and making it consistent with the search located in the result’s page will increase the effectiveness, efficiency, ease to learn, and engagement of the interface.

![Figure 7.1](image2)

![Figure 7.2](image3)

**Conclusion**

The assessment identified several opportunities for improvement that would result in a more efficient, effective, and desirable interface. The report outlines an assessment not a usability study. The Usability Assistant incorporated usability best practices as part of this assessment. Actual usability testing was not completed due to the limited content in the repository. The information gathered from the assessment informs possibilities of inquiry for a future usability study of the search function, the search results, the navigation, mobile interface, and any other
relevant content before Goldmine’s hard launch. The following recommendations should be addressed prior to the hard launch:

- Conduct a usability study of Goldmine.
- Ensure the repository is consistently and correctly labeled throughout the site.
- Ensure site navigation is accessible and consistent throughout the site.
- Determine short-term and long-term location for Goldmine.
- Add contact information to the digital repository.
- Conduct a usability study on the mobile interface to ensure all content is accessible.
- The “Advanced Search” feature should be consistent throughout the interface.

Works Cited

