

Academic Libraries: Accessibility and User Experience

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“All literary students are dedicated to the same task, the discovery of truth. Some prefer to regard themselves primarily as critics, some as scholars; but the dichotomy between the two is far more apparent than real, and every good student of literature is constantly combining the two roles, often without knowing it” *The Art of Literary Research* by Richard D. Altick.

Traditional Academic Libraries

Academic Libraries are an important component of university life and literary research. The current state of Academic Libraries have vastly changed from the older Traditional Libraries

Traditional Academic Libraries prioritized:



Collections



Administrative Procedures



Rules and Regulations

This outdated model no longer works for Academic Libraries.

As a result of online databases, and the growing competition from other libraries, Academic Libraries were no longer the sole provider of resources for researchers.

Because of the new competition, Academic Libraries had to become more than collections of books. In general, Academic Libraries had to adapt to the needs of their user base, and become more accessible to non-traditional students.

User Experience

User Experience (UX) is listening to how users experience a product or service. Accommodating UX means listening to the needs of the user base to make the overall product better.

The Current State of Academic Libraries

Modern Academic Libraries have adapted to UX and have increased the amount of services they provide. Instead of being a place solely for the collection of academic resources...

Some of the services Academic Libraries provide now are:



Workshops



Study Space



Tutoring

USask's Academic Library

The University's Academic Library is more than a collection of resources, but provides various services to its user base.

During my internship, at the University's Student Learning Services, I became familiar with the various services and resources the library provided.

The USask Library has a number of different services, such as the Writing Centre, IT help, study spaces/rooms, online resources, KCS (knowledge centered service), online resources, databases, research guides, undergrad and grad help, and much more.

These services have helped evolve the standard of Academic Libraries to what they are today. Without listening to UX, these services would have never been brought into effect.

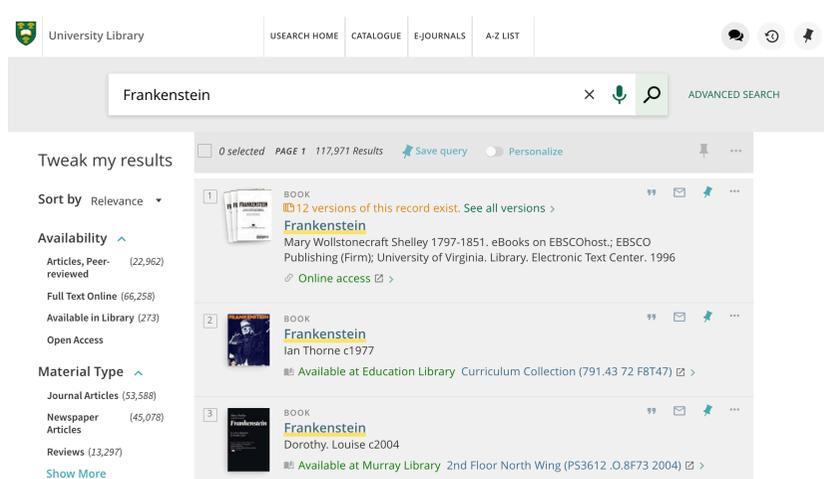
Access to Databases

Which allows for the access to subscription based research journals



Online Resources

Such as research databases, like the OED or Picture archives



Accessibility Issues

Despite the change that Academic Libraries have done over the last few decades, there are more changes that need to be made for better accessibility.



Baby Changing Stations



Wheelchair accessibility



Accommodations for the Hard of Hearing, Deaf and Visually Impaired



Student Parents



Student parents are a demographic that are ill provided for. Despite certain libraries actually allowing children in their facilities (like USask) many parents feel uncomfortable bringing their child to the Library. This can lead to the parents being unable to attend classes, miss out on group projects, and not have access to the libraries services that traditional students have access to.

Student parents face many hardships that traditional students do not face. Hardships such as, family responsibilities, work, and conflicting time schedules.

Despite Student Parents generally being more mature than your average first year student, with more drive to finish their degree, Student Parents do not have the same level of accessibility that other students receive.

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