

Carrollton Public Library Website: a usability assessment

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The Research Team



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The Study: Carrollton Public Library Website



<http://cityofcarrollton.com/index.aspx?page=114>

8 Participants

6 Tasks

Think-Aloud
Methodology

Quant/Qual Data

Front Page of the Website

CARROLLTON TEXAS

Fri, Nov 13 PARTLY CLOUDY, 79°F

News | Calendar | Jobs | Documents | Contact Us | Translate

Search...

[Home](#) [ABOUT US](#) [City SERVICES](#) [Home & COMMUNITY](#) [Business & DEVELOPMENT](#) [HAVING FUN](#) [I WANT TO...](#)

Library

- 24-7 Digital Branch
- Account
- Catalog
- Contact the Library
- Online Resources
- About the Library
- Book Lists
- Events - Library
- FAQ - Library
- Fast Facts

City Services > Departments G-P

Carrollton Public Library

November 25: Libraries CLOSE 6:00 p.m.
November 26-27: Libraries CLOSED

Like Follow

24-7 Digital Branch

News

Metrocrest Resale Store Requesting Donated Goods 4

Menu bar for the city

Menu bar for the library

6 Tasks

- **Task 1:** put a book on hold using the library website
- **Task 2:** locate a call number for *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*
- **Task 3:** find out when the library will be closed over Thanksgiving
- **Task 4:** search for new books that have just arrived at the library
- **Task 5:** use the online help option for a lost library card
- **Task 6:** locate the *Ancestry Library Edition* database on the library website

The Two User Groups

1

Use Library
Websites Often

2

Hardly Ever Use
Library Websites

Other Characteristics:

- Gender
- Native Language
- Age

Our Participants

3



1

Latino

4

Caucasians

5



3

Indians

50%

Native English
Speakers

6/8

Participants are 18-30
years old

Use of Library Websites

7/8

Participants are at an
advanced computer
proficiency level



Findings

Performance Measures

Quantitative Data

Time to Complete Tasks

- For 4/8 participants, Task 2 took the longest to complete
- The average time to complete Task 2 was **3:40**
- Task 3 took the least amount of time to complete with an average of **1:41**
- In general, non-native English speakers took 37 seconds longer to complete a task than native English speakers

Average time
to complete
a task was
2:22

Easiest and Most Difficult Tasks

	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task 6
Total # of Errors	11	9	5	8	5	7

Most Difficult Task

Task 1 – put the book, *Ghost Fleet*, on hold

Easiest Task

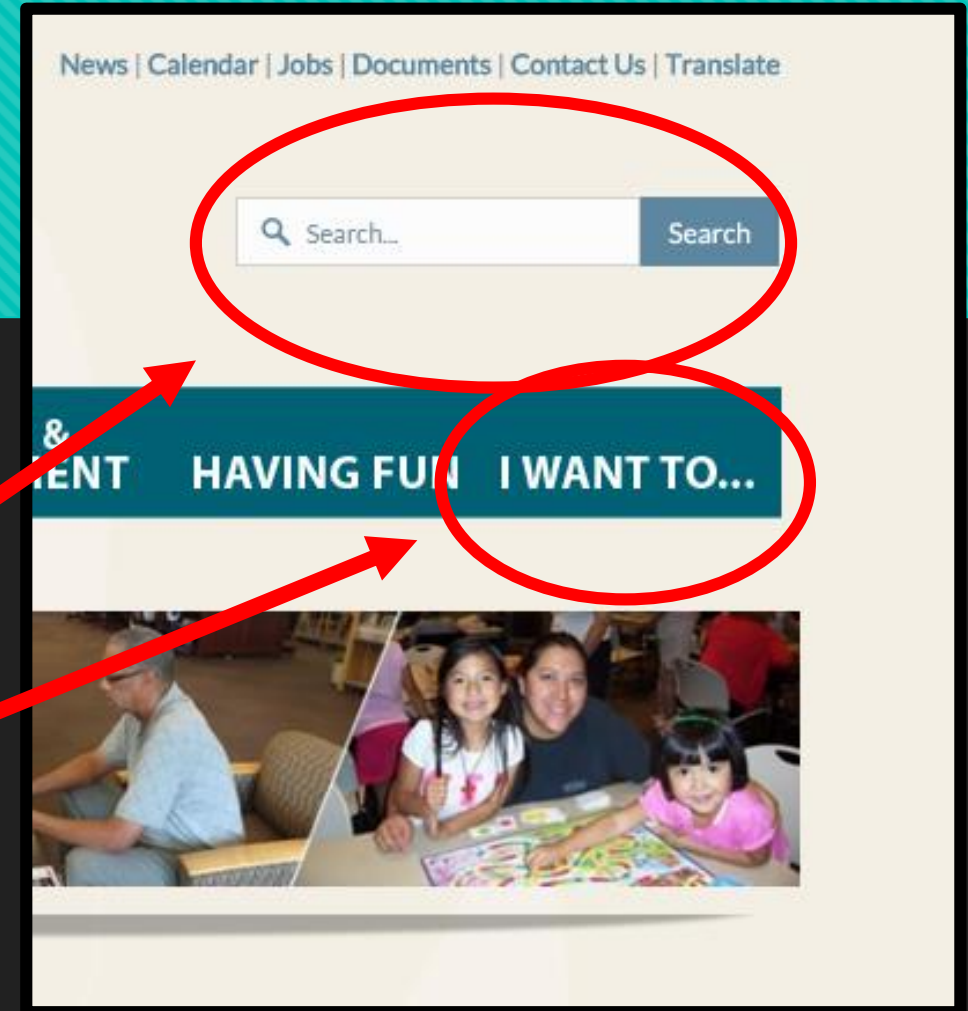
Tasks 3 & 5 – find when the library is closed & help with a lost library card

Most Incorrect Menu Choices

Task 2 – find the call number for *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Navigation Issues

- Two menu bars – city and library
- Search bar located in the top, right-hand corner is for the city
- *I Want To...* option is misleading



Success/Completion Rates

Task 4 was completed by all participants.
62.5% of participants completed it *without difficulty*

Only **25%** of participants completed **Task 6** *without difficulty*

Only **37.5%** of participants completed **Task 2**

We found that **Task 2** was difficult to complete because the library did not use a traditional “call number.”

Preference Measures

Qualitative Data

Positive Feedback

“The website is pretty good to use, however I faced some difficulties to navigate back to where I started.”

“That was pretty easy!”

In general there was very little positive feedback...

Negative Feedback

“Search bars are super common, you use them all the time, it’s at the very top of the page. It’s just sort of a natural reaction...type it into the search bar and click. So I was surprised when it routed me to different city things related to what was in the title so it just didn’t mean anything.”

“If you didn’t know that they had this ancestry program that you can utilize with your card...if you didn’t know about it and weren’t looking for it, there’s nothing. There’s absolutely nothing.”

Negative Feedback (cont.)

"You asked me to find the call number to find the book, and since I don't go to the library so often...even here in the US since I've been here for a little time, so I think that looking for a call number it was confusing for me because I didn't know what is a call number actually."

"Too much information on a single page!!!"

"This website needs to be totally redesigned. It is not conducive to finding information."

User Insights

- The obvious **search bar** on the homepage was meant for city use only and it confused a majority of participants
 - One participant used **Ctrl + F** to search for something since the search bar was irrelevant
- There was confusion over the term **Call Number** for participants not familiar with libraries
 - The Call Number system differed from common techniques such as the Dewey Decimal System
- The **back button** was used the most often to get back to the library homepage
- The term **feedback** was not seen as synonymous with help for a lost library card

Recommendations

1. Alleviate Crowding

General Recommendations

Cut down on the amount of links, minimize the use of bright colors, select fewer pictures, and use fewer words.

Specific Recommendation

Eliminate links already in the vertical navigation.

The screenshot shows the Carrollton Public Library website. The vertical navigation menu on the left contains the following links: Online Resources, About the Library, Book Lists, Events - Library, FAQ - Library, Fast Facts, Hours - Library, Kids Place, News - Library, Teens, La biblioteca en Español, Online Book Clubs, Friends of the Library, and Friends of the Library Amazon. The 'About the Library' link is circled in red. The main content area features a header for 'Carrollton Public Library' and several sections: 'November 25: Libraries CLOSE 6:00 p.m. November 26-27: Libraries CLOSED', 'eBooks & eAudiobooks', 'Connect With Us' (Facebook Like, Twitter Follow), '24-7 Digital Branch', 'New at the Library' (Pay Fines Online), 'Voting Information' (November 3 Constitutional Amendment Election), 'Happening at the Library' (Computer Classes, Preschool Classes/Stories, Calendar of Library Events, Leisure Connections Magazine), 'Library Cards' (Getting a Library Card, Library Computers), 'Job Hunting' (Job Hunting Resources, ResumeMaker®, Learning Express Library's Job & Career Accelerator), and 'NextReads Newsletters'. The right sidebar contains 'News' and 'Events' sections. The 'About the Library' link in the main content area is also circled in red. A red arrow points from the 'About the Library' link in the navigation menu to the 'About the Library' link in the main content area. Another red arrow points from the 'Specific Recommendation' text to the 'About the Library' link in the main content area.

2. Make the Hold Button Larger

CARROLLTON TEXAS

24-7 account catalog events explore

start over place hold save to my shelf save this item

KEYWORD ghost fleet

2 results

Author Singer, P. W. (Peter Warren) author

Title **Ghost fleet : a novel of the next world war**

Publication Info Boston : Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.

Rating ★★★★★

This is a(n) book

GHOST FLEET

P.W. SINGER AND AUGUST COLE

Add Place Hold here

General Recommendation

Make the *Place Hold* button larger.

Specific Recommendation

Move the *Place Hold* button so that it is located next to the book to be put on hold.

3. Make the Call Number More Explicit

1 hold on first copy returned of 4 copies

	LOCATION ON SHELF	AVAILABILITY	BC (STAFF USE)
Row	NEW BOOKS other titles nearby	DUE 12-14-15	33204700657389
Row	NEW BOOKS	ON HOLDSHELF	33204700657397
Row	NEW BOOKS	ON HOLDSHELF	33204700657405
Row	NEW BOOKS	DUE 11-24-15	33204700657413

General Recommendation

Make the call number more obvious by labeling it, bolding it, or putting it in a different color.

Specific Recommendation

Create a *help* or *what is this?* link next to the call number users can hover over in order to read what it is about and how to use it. For instance:

What is This?

4. Make Library Closures Stand Out in Calendar

Lymphatic System 1:00 PM Cribbage 1:00 PM Movie Monday - Age of Adaline 2:00 PM Ping Pong	3:00 PM Zumba 3:00 PM Reunion Hispana 5:30 PM Guitar sessions 7:00 PM Building Your Skills Computer Classes: Résumé Writing				
23 8:00 AM Walking 9:00 AM Aerobics 9:00 AM Dominoes 10:00 AM Close Knit 10:15 AM Toddler Time - Josey Ranch Lake 10:15 AM Toddler Time - Hebron & Josey	24 8:00 AM Walking 8:45 AM Body Blast 9:00 AM Dominoes 9:00 AM Clay/Ceramics 10:00 AM Stretch 10:15 AM Toddler Time - Josey Ranch Lake 11:00 AM	25 Libraries and Rec Centers Close Early Both Libraries CLOSE at 6:00 p.m.	26 City Facilities Closed for Thanksgiving Both Libraries CLOSED	27 City Facilities Closed for Thanksgiving Both Libraries CLOSED	28 10:30 AM Ping Pong

General Recommendation

Make the calendar shorter because one day does not fit without scrolling down.

Specific Recommendation

Use a different color, bold text, or underlining to signify a closure of the library.

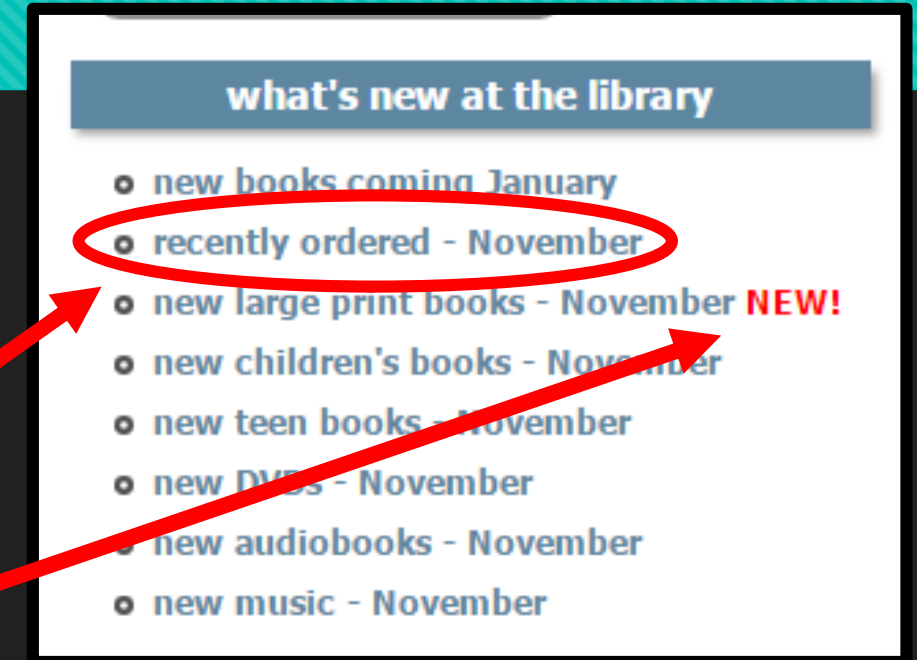
5. Create Link for *All New Books*

General Recommendation

Create a link for *All New Books* for ease of searching and to eliminate confusion.

Specific Recommendations

Remove *recently ordered – November* from the list and put it somewhere else close by. Also eliminate the *NEW!* tag in red since all these books are new.



6. Separate Feedback and Help Options

Separate

Library Account Feedback

for questions or help with PIN/password, renewals, lost library cards, overdues, fines owed, etc.

Children's Feedback

for questions or comments about children's programs and materials

Adult Feedback

for questions or comments about adult programs and materials

Website Feedback

for suggestions or navigation problems while using the library website, catalog, databases, or online account access

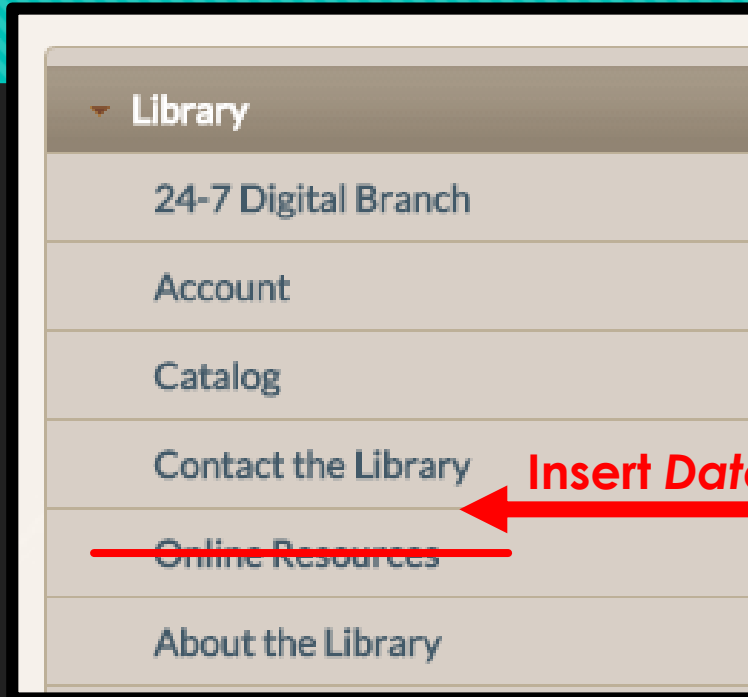
General Recommendation

Separate feedback for the website with feedback about library help and issues.

Specific Recommendation

Change the title of *Library Account Feedback* to something that matches user language and expectations, such as *Library Account Help*.

7. Add *Databases* to the Global Navigation



General Recommendation

Make online resources more explicit.

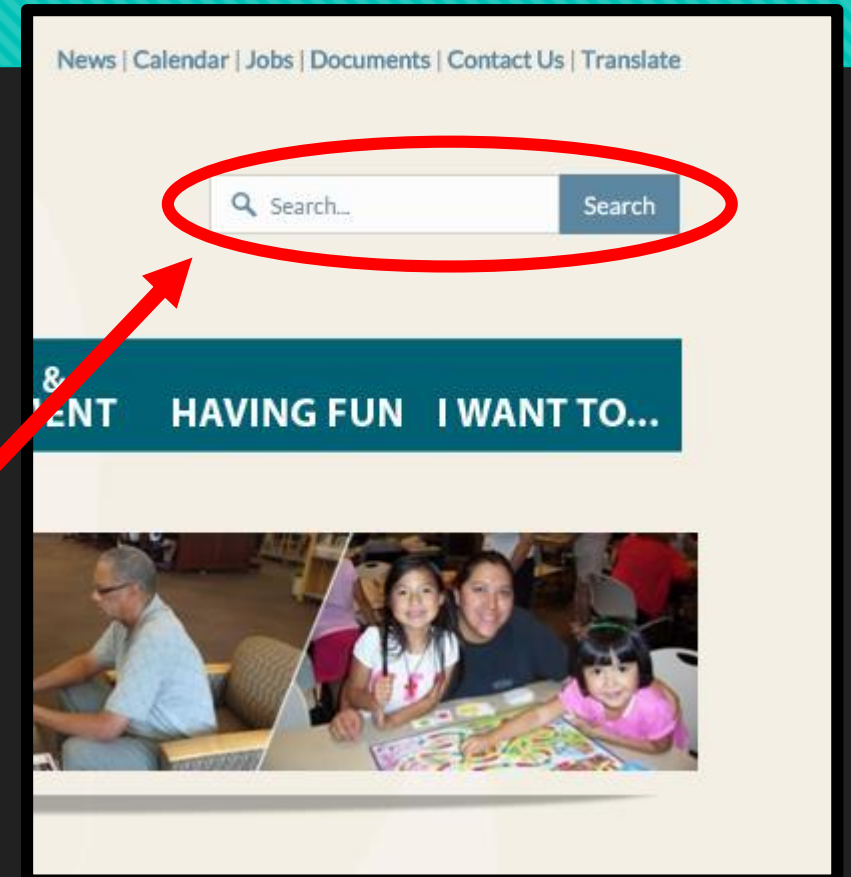
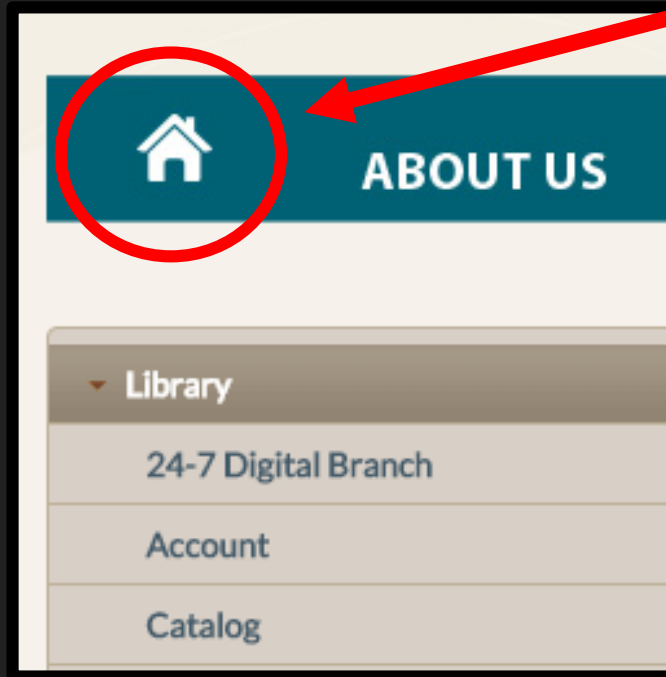
Specific Recommendations

Add *Databases* to the global navigation. *Online Resources* could be eliminated and *Databases* could include secondary navigation with eBooks, digital magazines, and websites.

8. Separate the Library and City Websites

Home button for city confuses library visitors

City search bar is mistakenly used for library searches, there is no library search bar visible on their homepage



8. Separate the Library and City Websites

General Recommendation

Separate the city and library websites.

Specific Recommendations if the separation is not possible...

- Eliminate the horizontal city navigation menu when on the library homepage and subsequent pages.
- Make the search bar globally search both city and library things.
- Or create an obvious search bar for library use only and make the city search bar small and in the upper, right-hand corner.
- Create a logo for the library that uses the City of Carrollton logo but with a unique identifier.
- Ensure there are explicit *Home* and back buttons to return to the city page versus the library page.

Thank You!