

PVCC Library Web Usability Focus Group Study

Summary:

The PVCC Library developed their library web page almost a decade ago and it has organically been grown to respond to the various needs of PVCC's students, faculty, and staff. No real survey has been conducted to assess whether the PVCC Library web page is meeting the needs of students, faculty, staff, and our greater PVCC community. The development of this focus group study is to obtain reliable information concerning the needs and likes and dislikes of the PVCC Library web page. A focus group study was conducted on (date) in order to find out more about our users as a prelude to a more organized web usability study to be conducted during the Spring 2008.

PVCC Library Web Usability Focus Group Team:

Consists of adjunct faculty Sylvia Frost who was brought in to help with PVCC Library's Program Review and our web usability study. She has conducted other web usability studies with ASU West. John Chavez is Library Faculty and coordinator of electronic resources at the PVCC Library and charged with PVCC Library's web usability study.

Focus Group Characteristics:

Approximately 6 students participated. Basically, there were three females and three male students. Two females were older and reentry students while the other was younger and a daytime student. There was one reentry older male in the male group and the other two younger student males were regular daytime students. One was of Native American descent with the rest being Caucasian. The mix was fairly representative of PVCC's student population.

Process:

For this focus group study approximately 10-15 questions were developed by the PVCC Library Web Usability focus group team. The questions that were developed were to get at what students find useful in web sites, what they find useful or not about our website, and any problems or issues they may be having with our library web site.

Before, the selection of students for the focus group the PVCC Library Web Usability focus group team identified several criteria to make the group more representative of students using the library web site by choosing certain age groups and daytime and evening students were looked at, as well.

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It was determined the students' participation and efforts on the 45-60 minute experience they would be provided free pizza and drinks. Students were recruited randomly through the student announcement email system and through word of mouth by asking students who were on the Library LAN & Computer Commons computers for their voluntary participation.

For PVCC Library Web Usability focus group interviews, Sylvia Frost acted as the moderator and John Chavez took the role as the recorder of the information which was displayed on the white board and some easels so that the group could see their responses. The information was placed on easel board paper and later transcribed to regular word documents.

To start off with the students were asked about their top 10 resources they use in the PVCC Library web site. Five responses were given in the following order:

1. To access the Databases – one said he used CQ Researcher
2. To access Black Board for class work.
3. To check student's records and grades – comments were given about including a multi-tiered drop-down box rather than the current one being used.
4. To access the PVCC home page.
5. And lastly, to access magazine articles.

Some changes to the library web page were noted as well:

1. "Develop a virtual library, more visually-oriented with tutorials".
2. Provide a "visual map of the library"
3. Provide real-time rss "ALERTS" on the web page in order to inform them about any campus emergencies that might affect them.
4. Also, provide RSS news feeds so that they can stay informed about news happenings throughout the day on the web site.

The second question asked of the focus group was "What do you like when using the Web?" The responses for this question were:

1. Like to check on their email regularly.
2. Like the ability to obtain different sources of information at one time.
3. Like the constant maintenance of our web site. We are constantly updating and changing our web site home page.
4. Like to use our web site to check for images. (Google Images?)
5. Like to look at educational TV web sites to obtain more information.
6. Like to obtain "weather" information.
7. Like connecting with others from other countries through email. (Social networking).

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8. Would like the customability of the web site – “to be able to personalize it! and be able to do “web forums” were a discussion can take place.

Some of the “problems with the PVCC Library web site were:

1. Selecting an appropriate database to do research.
2. The difficulty with trying to type on “notepad” since the library computers doesn’t have MS Word or any type of word processing.
3. The visual placement of the Library’s hours caused some consternation and a suggestion was made that they be “upfront” at the top and not at the bottom.
4. When they had problems finding information on the PVCC web site then they would just go to Google and would “Google it!” although info received might not be appropriate or critically valid.
5. The last of the problems had to do with “citing:” They had problems with determining the citation differences off the databases versus our own current list of MLA examples we have.

Again, the focus group was asked “Why do you use the PVCC Library web site?” Basically, three big reasons for them using the PVCC Library’s website were for research, to access the databases, and to locate books on their topic.

They use the library web site to access information for term papers they are working on, to support previous research they have done on their topic, and to access materials that help them learn “how to write papers”.

As for databases, they mentioned they have problems choosing the “right” databases for doing their research. They mentioned that they do not like bringing up citations with no full-text articles attached to them.

And lastly, they use the PVCC Library web site to locate books, to renew their books, and to locate books at other libraries.

On a positive note they like the library’s staff help! And it was noted that the library lacked “study rooms” which makes it difficult for students to locate group work spaces since they have to compete for this resource. The PVCC Library currently has 2 mid-size group study rooms which can accommodate 6-8 people each and has 4 individual study rooms which can accommodate no more than 2 people.

Several reasons were given about “Why they enjoy PVCC Library’s web site. First, they like the straightforward linking to resources from the library’s web site. They like that there is immediate access to the resource. Also, the use of colors on the

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homepage is well liked because it highlights and makes it easy to locate various links. Lastly, it was pointed out that it is important to provide the most important links at the home page so that easy access to those resources can be provided. Another comment that was stated that it would be nice if the home page contain local school links, for example, ASU, NAU, and Grand Canyon University.

The focus group also commented on those “Things that frustrate them about websites” such as popups, junk mail, not having a readily available link to their email site such as Yahoo Mail, Gmail, or Hotmail from the web site, having to click too many times to obtain information, non-working web sites or web pages, Black Board difficulties like the grade book not showing, and various issues due to the use of Google Docs which is use to substitute MS Word because it is not offered at the PVCC Library.

The focus group was also asked about “What cool things do you find about any web sites you have seen?” Some of the responses were: that they would like to see “cool pics on the web site that draws you in”; “learning sites where you can learn something”; categories broken down to make it visually easier to see links, “F.A.Q.’s that help you navigate and inform”; and “the use of working drop-down menus”.

And finally, the focus group did an activity about their favorite web sites which were categorized and listed below:

What are some of your FAVORITE web sites? - PAGE 8

<p>1. EMAIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yahoo.com b. MSN.com c. Yahoo.com d. Gmail.com e. Yahoo f. AOL g. Sometimes Hotmail h. Yahoo.com mail <p>2. NEWS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Az.com <p>3. SOCIAL WEB SITES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. MySpace b. Facebook.com c. YouTube.com d. MySpace.com <p>4. COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS WEB SITES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Toshiba.com b. Olympus camera website c. HP.com <p>5. GAMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. POGO.com 	<p>6. BANKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. EBT.JPMorgan.com b. DesertSchools.org c. USBank.com <p>7. COURSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Blackboard b. Blackboard c. Blackboard <p>8. LEISURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Country websites <p>9. ARTISTIC COLLECTIONS & ARTIST GALLERIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Streetgangs.com b. US Mint c. Ultimateguitartabs.com <p>10. EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PVC.EDU b. Databases c. U of A Bookstore d. Library of Congress (L.O.C.) e. Microsoft templates f. SCC web site g. FAFSA.com h. US Govt Printing Office i. Google Docs j. Republic of Croatia
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Conclusions:

Even though the focus group currently enjoys using our Library web page for locating information, accessing their email, grades, and Black Board accounts they are still wanting to see certain changes to our PVCC Library web page in order to better meet their needs.

We will need to work on the following requests that were mentioned: 1.) "Develop a virtual library, more visually-oriented with tutorials". 2) Provide a "visual map of the library" 3.) Provide real-time rss "ALERTS" on the web page in order to inform them about any campus emergencies that might affect them. 4.) Also, provide RSS news feeds so that they can stay informed about news happenings throughout the day on the web site.

We also need to do the following provide : 5.) "weather" info rss feed, 6.) an "Images" category for locating various image links both pics and videos, 7.) a web page that they can customize (possibly, a PVCC Library web tool bar might provide this feature), 8.) web forums (or a wiki where a discussion can take place), 9.) word processing, 10.) tutorials on "how to use and choose the appropriate databases for their research, 11.) links to educational TV web sites such as PBS, NPR, etc., 12.) citation links and how to cite, 13.) F.A.Q.'s link, 14.) PVCC Library web site map, important 15.) better visibility of library's hours 16.) email links 17.) school links like NAU, ASU, etc. 18.) "the use of working drop-down menus", and lastly 18.) "learning sites where you can learn something".

The PVCC Library Web Usability Team will be looking to incorporate and implement the student's input in our revamping of the PVCC Library web site, hopefully, by Fall 2008 or Spring 2009.