

## Report on the MyLibrary@CDL Focus Group held at UCB

October 16, 2000  
University of California, Berkeley  
120A Bechtel Engineering Center

### Moderator

Pat Maughan, User Research Coordinator, The Teaching Library, UCB

### Observers

Camille Wanat, Head, Kresge Engineering Library, UCB  
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### Purpose

- To gather feedback from potential users of MyLibrary
- To identify necessary improvements to this tool
- To establish user expectations and desires concerning personalized library gateways
- To identify possible future enhancements
- To learn about usability problems

### Participants

Sixty-one (61) engineering graduate students received email invitations to participate in this focus group. Invitations were sent to:

1. Students who had received article requests through the Kresge Engineering Library expedited document delivery service in 2000 (49 invitations).
2. Students included in the web-based graduate student list published by the Department of Industrial Engineering & Operations Research (12 invitations).

The focus on students who had requested articles through the library helped target the group to known library users.

Invitations were sent in two batches. The first group of thirty-one (31) received their invitations on September 29<sup>th</sup>, followed by a second email on October 4<sup>th</sup>. When this failed to secure enough volunteers, invitations were sent to a second group of thirty (30) on October 5<sup>th</sup>. This group received a follow-up email on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Fourteen students accepted the invitation, seventeen students declined it, and thirty students failed to respond. On October 11<sup>th</sup>, the thirty students that did not respond received notice that the focus group was full.

Of the fourteen students who accepted the invitation, nine actually attended the focus group. Their breakdown among departments was as follows:

- Bioengineering – 1
- Civil & Environmental Engineering – 1
- Electrical Engineering & Computer Science – 3
- Mechanical Engineering – 2
- Materials Science & Minerals Engineering – 2

Attendees received refreshments and \$10 copy cards in gratitude for their participation.

### Structure of the Discussion

Part A: General.

The focus group began with a general discussion of customization tools and personalized gateways such as MyYahoo! This included talk on the most and least useful features of such tools. The discussion then moved on to library-based personalized gateways and the features most appropriate for these.

Part B: MyLibrary.

At this point, the moderator demonstrated MyLibrary through a series of screen shots incorporated into a PowerPoint presentation. Participants were then led into a conversation about this tool, including

discussion of its strengths and weaknesses. Participants also suggested additional features for the tool and recommend marketing techniques.

### **Discussion Summary**

This summary has been organized around four questions about MyLibrary and one question about other personalized library services. These five questions were not asked verbatim during the focus group. However, they help highlight the main themes of the discussion. Throughout this report, pronouns have been used randomly to protect the anonymity of the participants.

### **WHAT FEATURES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE INCLUDED IN MYLIBRARY?**

The participants recommended several new features to add to MyLibrary and suggested numerous enhancements to existing features.

#### **1. Personalized Journal List**

- Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the multiple access points for most journals (e.g., print vs. electronic, CDL vs. UCB). They find it inconvenient to locate a journal each time they need it. One participant described it as “too difficult” and “time-consuming”.
- One participant said that locating one journal is “no big deal.” However, when he wants to regularly browse through certain journals, he finds it inconvenient to look them up each time.
- For these reasons, participants expressed a strong preference for personalized journal lists with quick links directly to the electronic versions.
- One participant requested the ability to include print journals in his list when we do not have access to the electronic versions. Basically, he would like to include the UCB call numbers and locations so that he does not have to find them in the catalog each time.
- Another participant suggested that any journal could be included in the list, even if the journal is not available at UCB. For these unavailable journals, MyLibrary could link to an interlibrary article request form online.
- It seemed that, for many participants, the personalized journal list would be their primary reason for using MyLibrary.

#### **2. Full Integration**

- In discussing MyYahoo!, one participant said he disliked returning to the full Yahoo! service when something he needed was not in his personalized gateway. He expressed a desire for a fully integrated system.
- Throughout the session, participants requested that their inventory be available through MyLibrary. This was definitely one of the most strongly recommended features.
- As one participant mentioned, with the inventory included in MyLibrary, they could easily check due dates by “just going to the site.”
- Another participant cited the inclusion of his inventory as a strong enticement to use MyLibrary.
- One participant suggested a permanent MyAccount profile with name and contact information, which could be directly fed to online forms when accessed through MyLibrary.
- Some participants expressed a desire to manage their CDL profile and updates through MyLibrary.
- One participant suggested that updates could be posted to MyLibrary. It was unclear whether this was in place of email or in addition to email.
- Another participant suggested links to saved searches could be included in MyLibrary. Clicking on the link would automatically run the saved search. One participant wanted to save not only CDL database searches, but Pathfinder searches as well.
- Many participants requested that the library post personal alerts on MyLibrary. This included:
  - Reminders about overdue books
  - Alerts about books on hold in the library
  - Alerts when photocopies of requested articles become available.

- Other participants suggested discipline-specific announcements on MyLibrary. This included:
  - New books
  - New journals
  - New library services.
- One participant suggested that MyLibrary provide a link to the email account specified in the profile. With this link, he could easily verify that he had received any records emailed from a database.
- One participant suggested that CDL offer EndNote to its users. Later, another participant suggested MyLibrary include a “bibliography building tool.”
- Some other features that participants would like to see integrated into MyLibrary were:
  - Online book and article order forms
  - Online book and journal recommendation forms
  - Web search engines
  - Cross-database searching (as in SearchLight)

It was unclear whether participants wanted these features fully integrated into MyLibrary (i.e., with search boxes) or if links to existing resources would suffice.

- It seemed that most participants would prefer everything integrated into MyLibrary, available directly through the portal. However, one participant said that CDL shouldn't put a lot of effort into reinventing existing resources but instead just link to them.

### 3. Links

- Some participants suggested that MyLibrary should include pre-selected personal links. It seems that they would like a set of default links, like those provided under Electronic Journals, Databases and UCB Library Links.
- To paraphrase one participant, CDL should have a list of links most students would want to use.
- One participant requested links to the U. S. Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) and UMI.
- Another participant requested links to libraries. It was unclear whether this meant campus libraries, UC libraries or important libraries throughout the world. It was also unclear whether he wanted these listed under Personal Links, UCB Library Links or in a whole new section.

### 4. Frames

- One participant in particular pushed for the use of frames in MyLibrary.
- She recommended that the navbar remain in a frame as users surf the web and use library resources.
- Another participant suggested that MyLibrary could simply open resources in a new window. The first participant agreed this could work, but said she would prefer frames.
- There did not seem to be consensus among the participants on the frames issue, although there wasn't much disagreement either.
- According to various participants, using frames could possibly accomplish the following:
  - Make it easy to get back to MyLibrary if users get lost on the web
  - Make it easy to access any library resource from another (e.g., access an electronic journal from a database, using the MyLibrary navbar)
  - Make it easy to add links to resources that are not included in the CDL Directory.

### WHAT QUALITIES SHOULD MYLIBRARY POSSESS?

Participants listed a range of highly desirable qualities that they felt MyLibrary should possess. Throughout the discussion, participants reinforced these qualities with recommended features that exemplify them.

## 1. Flexibility

- In general, participants requested a wider range of organizational choices.
- One participant said that personalized gateways should allow their users to categorize resources based on their interests, because this “makes life a lot easier.”
- Using electronic journals in MyLibrary as an example, another participant reiterated this sentiment. He would like the option to arrange his electronic journals by topic, rather than simply compile one long list.
- Another participant said that she would like the ability to categorize her personal links, for the same reason.
- One participant said that MyLibrary should be “easy to change” as users’ interests change.
- One participant suggested that the user be given a choice of organizational styles. Users could organize their resources by topic within individual pages for each resource type, or they could organize them by resource type within individual pages for each topic.
- A different participant listed other organizational choices that users should be allowed to make:
  - Option to specify the number of topics
  - Option to specify the number of pages (one aggregate page vs. many specific pages)
- Working in an extremely interdisciplinary field, one participant in particular requested the ability to choose multiple disciplines in her profile.

## 2. Simplicity

- When asked about enticements, one participant said that MyLibrary should be “easy to use” while another said it should be “simple.”
- Participants implied that MyLibrary should be user-friendly. Specifically, one participant said that there should be “no investment required” to learn the system. Another said that users should be able to comprehend it immediately.
- Some participants felt that the set-up required too much effort. This included the initial set-up as well as the process for adding resources. One participant suggested that offering basic and advanced versions could solve this problem. Paraphrasing her comments, she said that initial set-up should only require a few simple steps. This would create a basic product with pre-selected resources that could later be converted into the advanced product with greater flexibility.
- Offering a basic vs. advanced mode allows MyLibrary to offer the myriad of requested options while still fitting the simplicity standard set by participants.

## 3. Accessibility

- Participants felt that library resources should be available from anywhere at anytime through MyLibrary. They felt that such easy accessibility would entice them to use it.
- As an example, some participants felt that off-campus access currently requires too much effort. They wondered if the MyLibrary password could authorize them to use available databases and electronic journals

## 4. Speed

- Many participants referred to the speed of access.
- One participant felt that graphics should be kept to a minimum. She wanted a product that would load quickly over a standard modem. Other participants agreed with her.
- One participant specifically mentioned “speed” as an enticement to use MyLibrary.
- Another participant mentioned the currency of information. She would like MyLibrary updated daily.

## 5. Convenience

- By requesting that account information, inventories, updates, notices, request forms, electronic journals, databases, personal links and other resources all be available through MyLibrary, the participants clearly exhibited a preference for the convenience of a fully integrated library system.
- Participants' rationale for using the electronic journals list (i.e., to make finding and browsing electronic journals easier) clearly exemplifies the quality of convenience.
- Participants' request that licensed resources be made available through the MyLibrary password further establishes this "convenience" theme.

## 6. Clarity

- Many participants emphasized the need for clear and detailed help throughout MyLibrary. One participant specifically requested that a help button be included.
- One participant requested that all the ways to add resources to MyLibrary be clearly defined on each page.
- Participants asked that clear terminology be used throughout the system. This was especially true for headings in the navbar. Participants requested that MyLibrary use clearer headings that would be obvious even to novice users.
- To improve clarity, one participant suggested that descriptive information should "pop-up" when a user rolls his mouse over the headings.

### WHAT DID YOU FIND CONFUSING ABOUT THE PROTOTYPE?

Participants criticized a few aspects of the prototype, mainly relating to its lack of simplicity and clarity.

#### 1. Too Complicated

- Many participants wondered why it required so many steps to delete a resource from MyLibrary. As one participant expressed it, this is "not a life-changing decision." He further noted that resources could always be added back to MyLibrary if removed in error.
- Participants also found it difficult to add resources to MyLibrary, especially for resources not included in the CDL Directory.
- There seemed to be a general consensus that users would not like typing in URLs for desired resources. The participants themselves certainly did not like this aspect of MyLibrary.
- Participants especially disliked typing in URLs for electronic journals available at UCB but not in the CDL Directory.
- Participants offered several solutions to this problem:
  - Users could find their resource on the web, then return to MyLibrary and have the page they came from automatically added.
  - MyLibrary could open a new window from the "Add/Remove" screen. Users could find their resource in this new window, then return to the MyLibrary window and have the page displayed in the new window automatically added.
  - The MyLibrary navbar could remain as a frame while users search the web and other library resources. When they encounter resources they would like to add, users could click on an "Add Resource" link in the navbar to add the page displayed in the main frame.
- One participant said that it took "too many clicks to get to results."

#### 2. Unclear Headings

- In general, participants found the navbar headings to be unclear.
- One participant said he found the headings to be "initially confusing," although it seemed he caught on to them relatively quickly.
- Another said that they could be confusing to people unfamiliar with libraries.

- The following headings were specifically cited as confusing:
  - Databases. Participants doubted that many users would immediately understand this heading. They suggested “Search Databases” and “Search Engines” as possible alternatives, although these have obvious problems.
  - Preferences. One participant said this sounded like the place to set your preferences, but it looked more like a simple profile. It seemed she would prefer more choices be included under “preferences,” possibly referring to options that would set the appearance and organization of MyLibrary.
- One participant said that users might not know which section to use for certain tasks. He asked rhetorically, “Which section do you use to search for articles?”
- As noted before, one participant suggested that descriptive information should “pop-up” when a user rolls his mouse over the headings.

### **3. Insufficient Help**

- Participants identified the lack of a help button as a problem.
- They suggested an obvious help link or help button that would provide clear instructions.

## **HOW SHOULD THE FINAL RELEASE BE COMMUNICATED?**

Participants mentioned several methods for marketing MyLibrary upon its final release.

### **1. Word of Mouth**

- In the early stages of the discussion, one participant said that he began using MyYahoo! because he had seen someone else using it in the computer lab. This other user showed the participant how to use MyYahoo!, and the participant has used it ever since.
- When asked how CDL should market MyLibrary, one participant specifically mentioned “word of mouth.” In this instance, the participant seemed to mean “word of mouth” from other graduate students.
- Another participant said CDL should have faculty encourage graduate students to use MyLibrary. If MyLibrary were promoted well enough among the faculty, they would spread the word about it to their graduate students. Participants seemed to think this would entice graduate students to use the system.

### **2. Email**

- Participants agreed that email would be an effective form of advertising.

### **3. Departmental Seminars**

- One participant said that MyLibrary could be advertised in departmental seminars. It was unclear if he meant the resource seminars offered by the Kresge Engineering Library or the departmental seminars offered by the various research groups within each College of Engineering department.

## **WHAT OTHER LIBRARY SERVICES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE AVAILABLE ONLINE?**

Throughout the discussion, participants highlighted many library services that they would appreciate. Many of these seemed to fall out of the realm of CDL and MyLibrary. As such, they may prove more interesting to the Kresge Engineering Library and the UCB Library System than to CDL.

### **1. Email Notification**

- One participant stated an extreme disdain for postcard notification. The other participants seemed to feel similarly.

- Participants expressed a strong preference for email notification. They would like to be notified under a great many circumstances:
  - As a reminder of due dates a few days before items are due
  - As an overdue books notice
  - As an alert that recalled books are on hold in the library
  - As an alert that photocopies of requested articles have arrived
  - As an alert when a busy database (such as Web of Science) becomes available

## **2. QuickDoc Online Orders**

- Several participants requested that article order forms be made available online.
- For some participants, this meant the general Interlibrary Borrowing Services (IBS) article order form. They seemed unaware that it already exists online.
- For others, this meant a special article order form directly to the Kresge Engineering Library (ENGI). ENGI offers a QuickDoc (quick document delivery) service to its faculty and graduate students. However, this service requires patrons to visit the library and turn in a paper IBS article order form. Participants expressed a desire for an online version of this service.

## **3. Patron-Initiated Recalls**

- One participant requested that patrons be allowed to place their own recalls on books. She disliked having to ask library staff to place her recalls. Other participants seemed to agree with this sentiment.

## **4. Real-Time Online Reference**

- One participant requested "instant messenger to the library." He would like the option to have questions answered online in real-time, rather than waiting for an email response.
- If this service were established at UCB, the participant would like MyLibrary to link to it.

## **5. Library Instruction Seminars on the Web**

- This same participant suggested that the library videotape its instruction seminars and publish the videos on the web. For attendees of these seminars, web videos would allow them to review the presentations. These web videos would also provide instruction to patrons who would otherwise not attend seminars.

*Report prepared by Brian Quigley  
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