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# Ethnographically-inspired usability testing

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i3 Conference

Aberdeen, 24 June 2015



York St John  
University

# Background

The screenshot shows the York St John University library search interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text 'deleuze' and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are two radio buttons: the first is selected and labeled 'Search the library's print holdings and e-books', and the second is labeled 'Search everything including journal articles'. Below these is a link for 'Advanced search'. The header features the York St John University logo on the left and navigation links for 'Home', 'E-journal Finder', 'Reading Lists', 'Report ebook/ejournal issue', 'Help', 'My Library Account', and 'My Lists' on the right. A banner image of interlocking gears is positioned below the header.

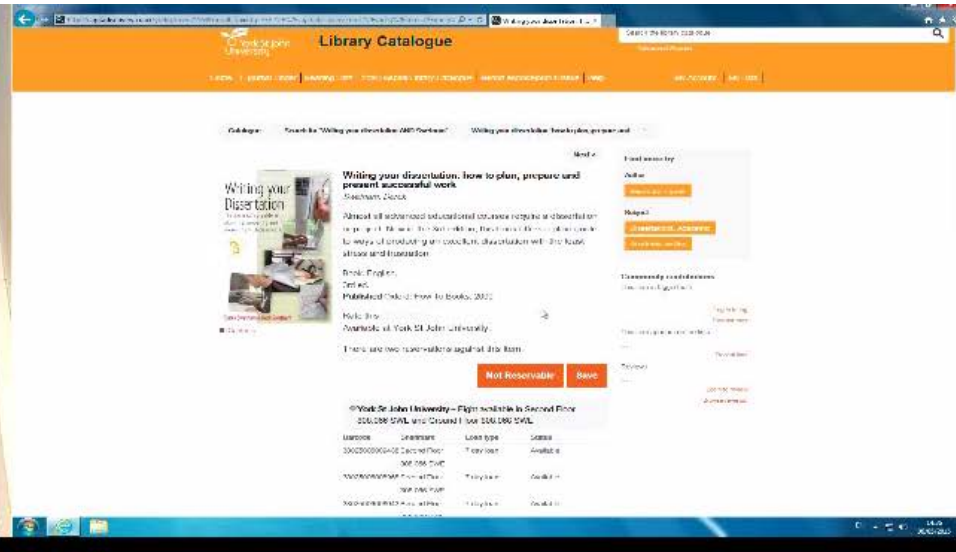
Below the banner, there is a 'New search' button and a search bar containing 'deleuze'. A 'Refine Your Search' sidebar is on the left, with sections for 'Format' (Book (84), eBook (23), Electronic resource (23)), 'Library Location' (York St John University), 'Collection' (Main Catalogue), and 'Year Published' (1809 to 2015). The main results area shows 'Results 1 - 10 of 84' and a 'Sorted by' dropdown set to 'Relevance'. A pagination bar shows page 1 selected. The first result is for the book 'Deleuze' by Reidar Due, published by Polity in 2007. The book cover is visible, and the description reads: 'Providing an introduction to the philosophy of Deleuze, this book offers an interpretation of his philosophy centred around the notion of thought as a...'. There are 'Check Availability' and 'Save Details' buttons for this result. Below the result, it is categorized as an 'Academic Journal'.

# Goals

- Observe the user's first experience of the catalog
- Questions to ask:
  - What do they think?
  - What works?
  - What doesn't work?
- Optimize the design and functionality before launch (August 2015)

# Test design

- Ethnographically-inspired (Emary, forthcoming)
  - Small sample size drawn from our team's contacts
  - Relationship and rapport increase the richness
  - Relaxed, discussion-based lab setting
  - Freeform test scenarios
  - Think aloud protocol



- 1 moderator, 1 greeter, 1 technical support
- 12 participants thought aloud during individual time slots
- 3 scenarios (20-30 minutes)
- Video capturing gesture and affect as well as their screencast.

# Testing day(s)

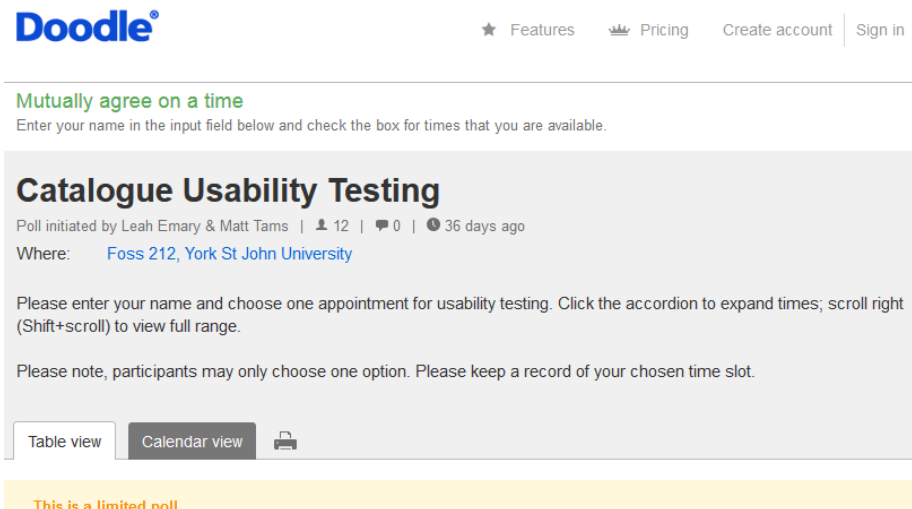
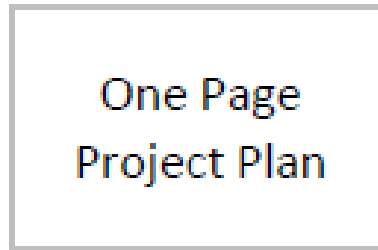
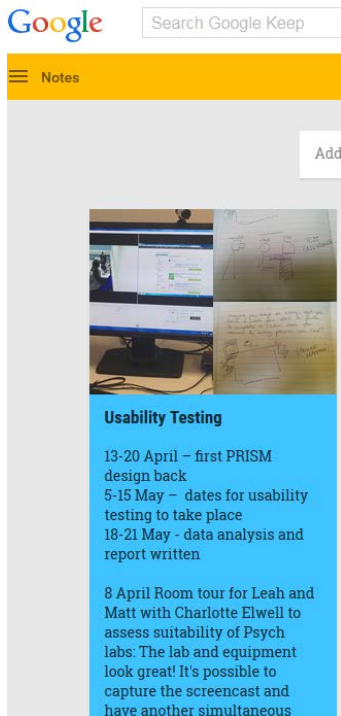
- Everyone showed up, engaged and enjoyed themselves
- Sweets, arts and crafts and discussion
- Voucher for a free hot drink from Costa Coffee
- Tests took place over the course of 2 weeks



Reception area outside the testing room. Participants also created process maps while waiting for their test to begin.


















# How we managed things



# Initial results

- Major and minor problems led to changes in:
  - layout
  - colours
  - link prominence
  - language
  - advanced search
- Confident that users will like the ‘look and feel’ of the new catalogue

 Accessing print books, including holding...	21/05/.
 Account	21/05/.
 Advanced search	21/05/.
 Autofill suggestions	21/05/.
 Availability & location in results list	21/05/.
 Branding, look and feel	21/05/.
 Ebooks	21/05/.
 Filtering and facets	21/05/.
 Issue with bibliographic record	21/05/.
 Navigating and starting a new search	21/05/.
 Ratings	21/05/.
 Relevance & recall	21/05/.
 Reserving button	21/05/.
 Saving & exporting	21/05/.
 Search everything & search print holding...	21/05/.

Comments and problems coded in NVivo

# Initial results

- The think aloud protocol is powerful
- The user believing they were doing the 'right' thing when they had actually made an error
- This happened consistently and pointed to a 'major error'



The image is a screenshot of a library search results page. At the top, there is a search bar containing the text 'writing your dissertation'. Below the search bar, there are several filter sections: 'Library Location' with 'York St John University' selected; 'Collection' with 'Main Catalogue' selected; 'Subject' with a list of categories like 'Dissertations, Academic (35)', 'Electronic Book (35)', etc.; and 'Year Published' with a line graph and a date range from 1993 to 2015. On the right side, the search results are displayed, showing 'Results 1 - 10 of 148'. The first result is 'PLANNING YOUR DISSERTATION' by a user named 'Byl'. Below it, there are two more results for 'Writing a Dissertation DUMMIES' by 'Wri', also by 'Byl'. Each result includes a small thumbnail image of the book cover.

# Initial results

*'Thank you for testing us properly. So many times we're asked for feedback on something in a way that's not productive.'*

–RA1

# Challenges



- Time, time, time
- Qualitative data is voluminous
- No undergraduate participants
- Prioritizing what we change
- Managing user expectations
- Balancing consistency with a natural, relaxed environment

# What next?



Through a Jungle by andywon. <https://flic.kr/p/6XrXyT> Used under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/)

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# Thank you

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