Ethnographically-inspired usability testing

Leah Rosenblum Emary

i3 Conference

Aberdeen, 24 June 2015

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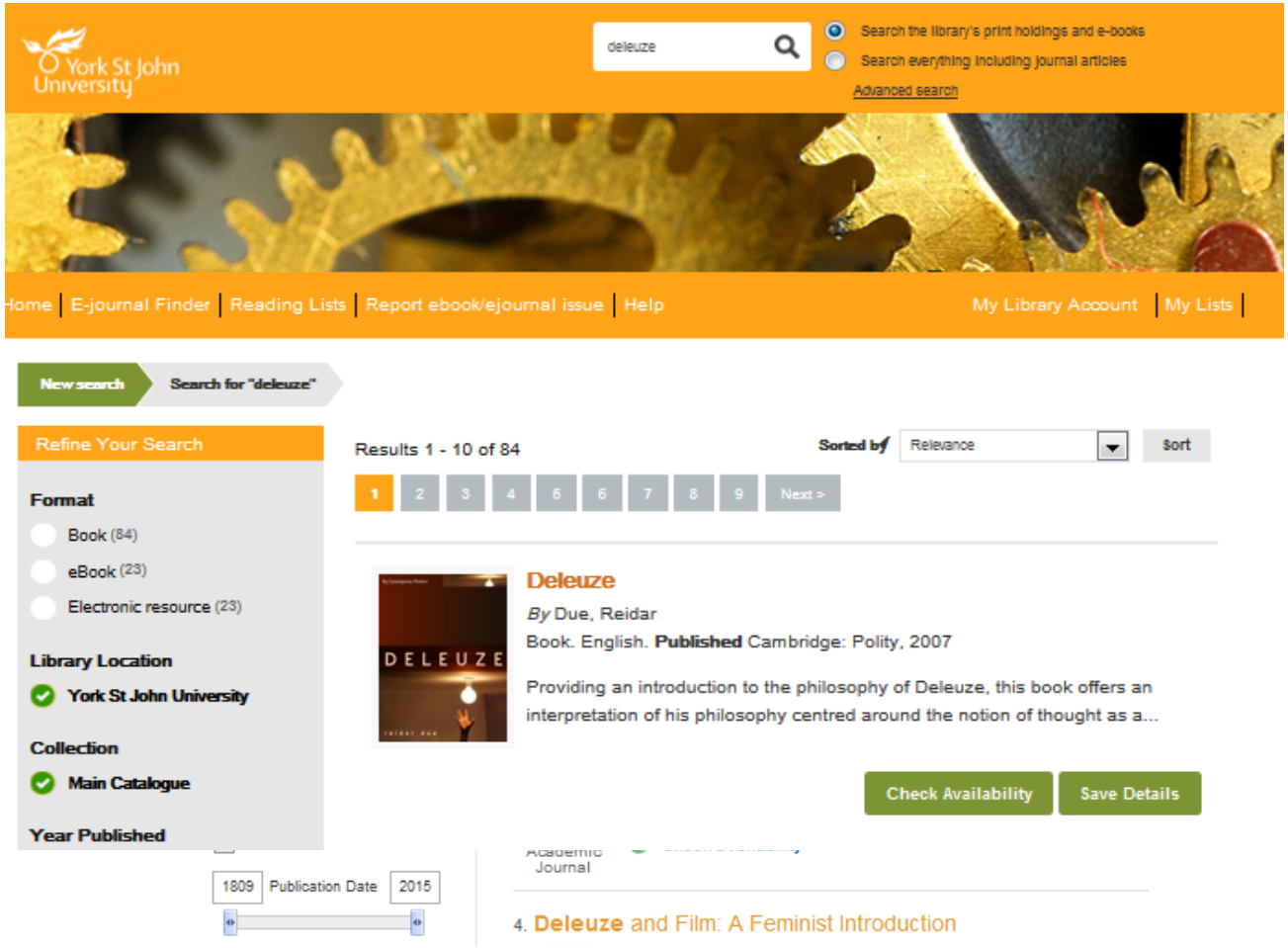
Background



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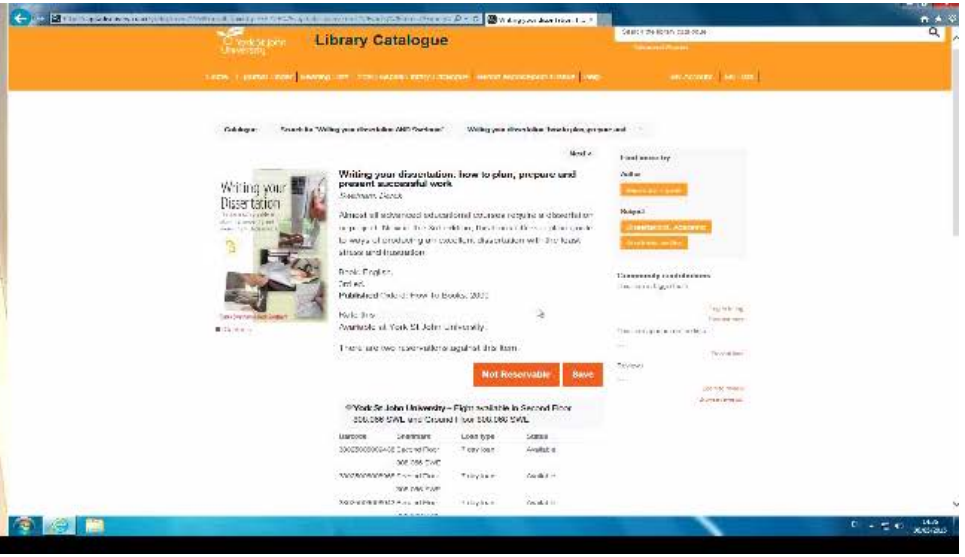
Goals

- 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.

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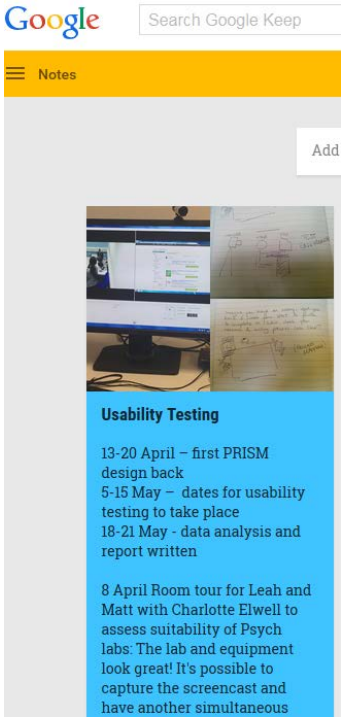
Testing day(s)

- 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

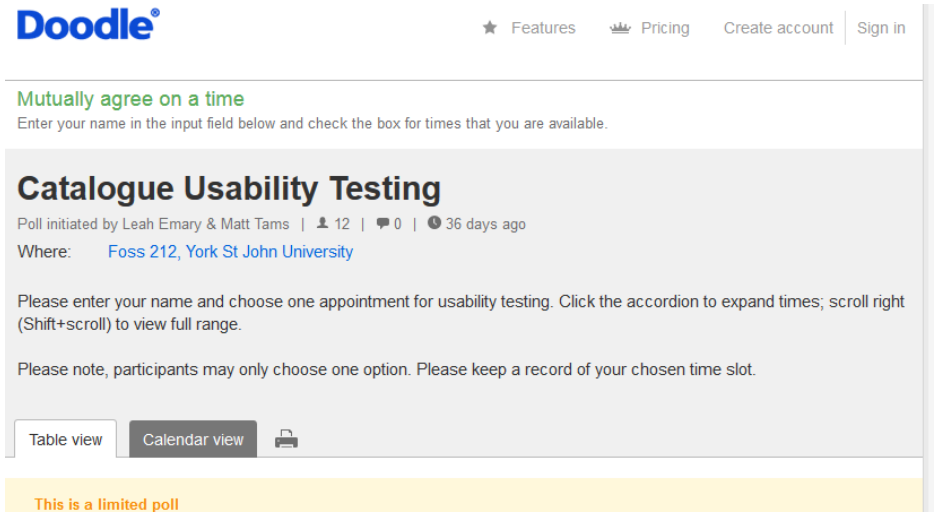
Reception area outside the testing room. Participants also created process maps while waiting for their test to begin.

How we managed things



One Page Project Plan

NVIVO 10 for Windows



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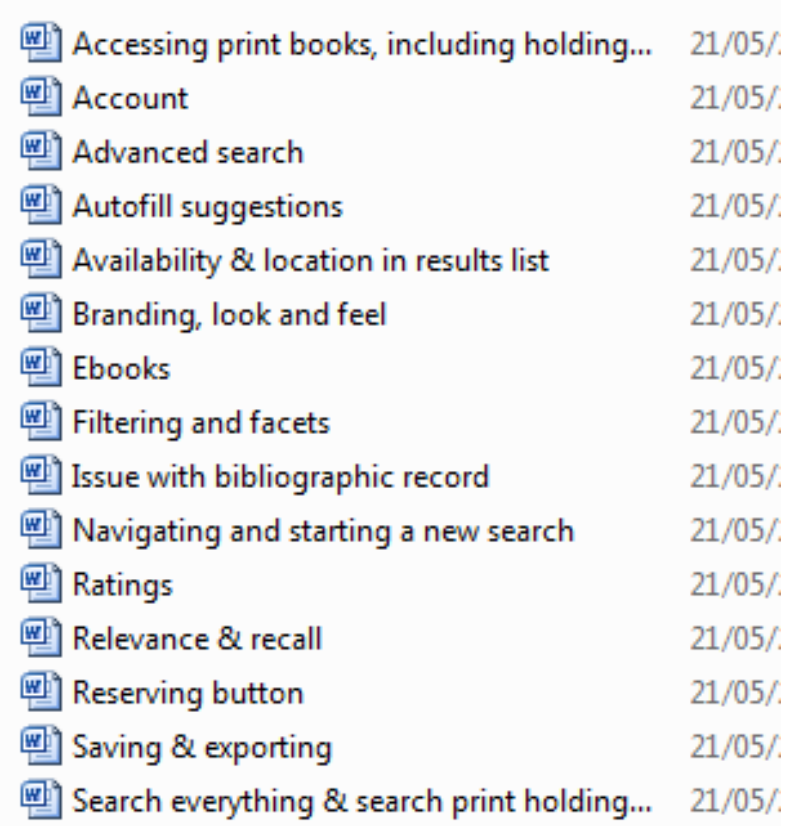
Initial results

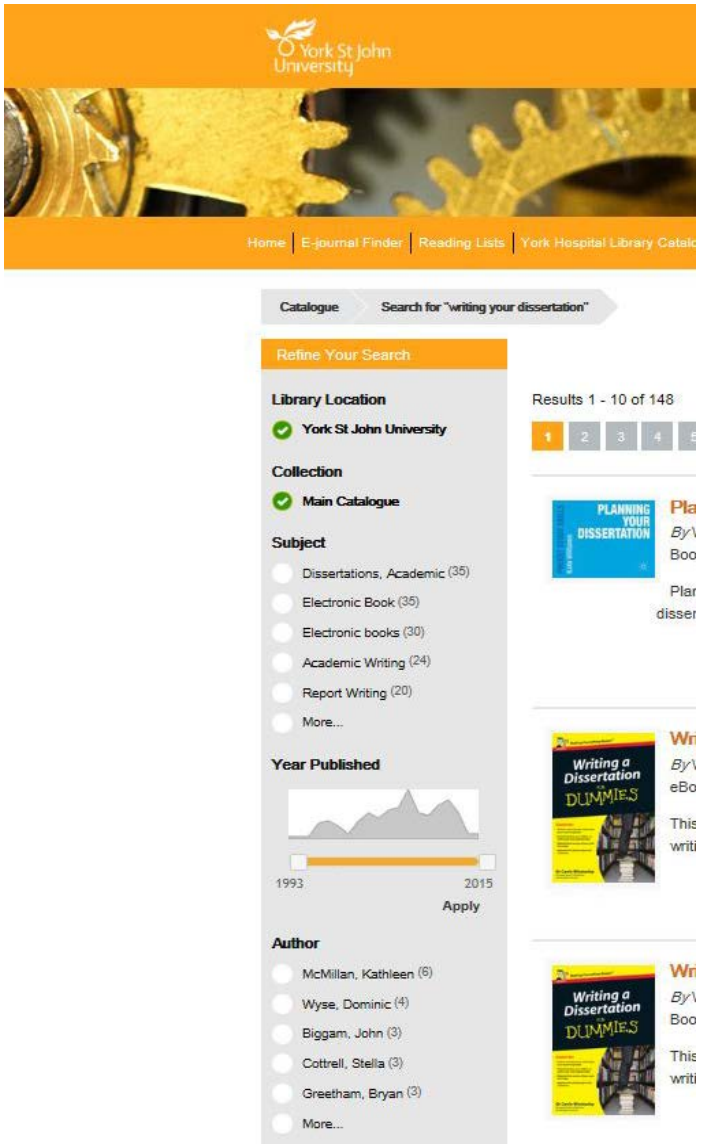
- Major and minor problems led to changes in:
  - layout
  - colours
  - link prominence
  - language
  - advanced search
- Confident that users will like the ‘look and feel’ of the new catalogue



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’



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?

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Want to talk or reuse?

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Thank you

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