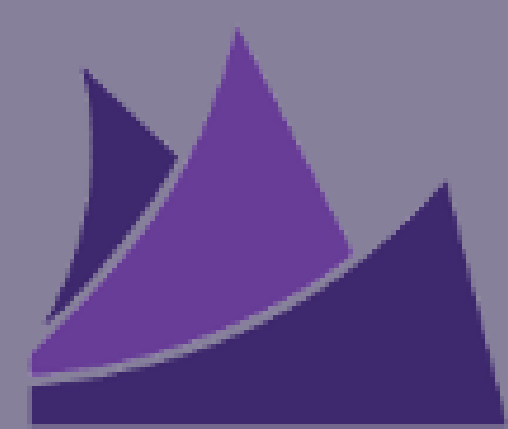# Testing Usability and Information Architecture for the Orbis Cascade Alliance

Background

- The Orbis Cascade Alliance is a learning consortium that pools together the physical and digital resources of its 39 member institutions in an effort to make materials more accessible.
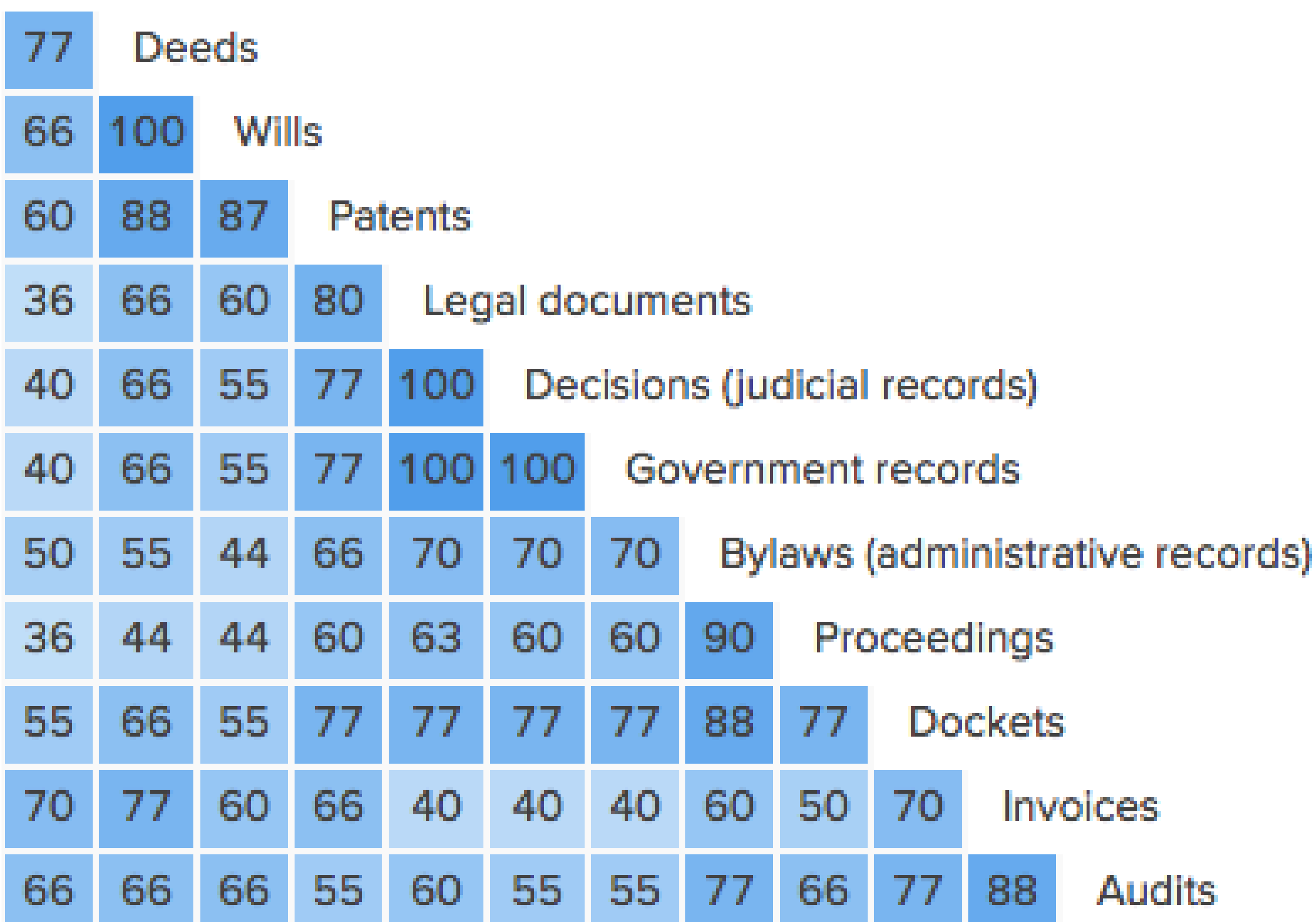

The Orbis Cascade Alliance's member institutions

Objectives

- Enable discovery of all materials held by Alliance libraries.
- Should digital objects behave in the same way as their physical counterparts?
- How do we label digital objects?
- How do our users interact with physical and digital materials?

Methods

- Guided tests to assess how users interact with digital vs physical materials.
- Card sort activities to test how users expect items to be organized, particularly when it comes to digital vs physical object types.
- A questionnaire to determine how users assess their own use of library services.

Results

77	Deeds
66	100	Wills
60	88	87	Patents
36	66	60	80	Legal documents
40	66	55	77	100	Decisions (judicial records)
40	66	55	77	100	100	Government records
50	55	44	66	70	70	70	Bylaws (administrative records)
36	44	44	60	63	60	60	90	Proceedings
55	66	55	77	77	77	77	88	77	Dockets
70	77	60	66	40	40	40	60	50	70	Invoices
66	66	66	55	60	55	55	77	66	77	88	Audits

- A similarity matrix helps us easily see how people organize and categorize things.
  - For example, we can easily see that 100% of our users placed legal documents in the same category as government records.
- By determining how people expect items to be grouped, we can improve our information architecture.

- **68.5%** of respondents stated that physical and digital items should be separated by top level facets.
  - Yet **71%** of our users who completed the cardsorting activity grouped physical and digital objects together.
- **81.5%** of respondents began their queries using the basic search toolbar, rather than using advanced search options or faceting.
- **87.6%** of respondents indicated that they expect to see all available resources when they search the library catalog.
  - Yet **68.8%** of those same respondents said it would be overwhelming if their search results included every type of available library resource.
    - How do we avoid overwhelming them?

Josh Duffy | MLIS Candidate Class of 2018
Special thanks to Ann Lally
Images courtesy of the Orbis Cascade Alliance

Information School
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON