Optimizing Academic Access: The LibKey Integration Project at UW Libraries

Winter 2023, March Video Updates
Sabrina Hsu, Matt Yan

Team/Sponsor Introductions
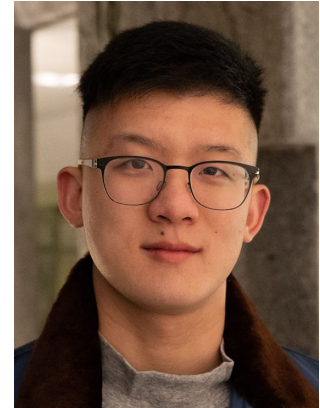
Marketing Strategy Changed

Anne M. Pepitone

Head of Integrated
Library Systems

Sabrina Hsu

MLIS, UX Researcher

Matt Yan

MLIS, UX Researcher

About the Project

Background about Our Project

This UX capstone project aims to ensure that LibKey is not only accessible to UW faculty and students but also effectively **enhances their research experience**. Additionally, the project focuses on **strategizing the marketing** of LibKey to the faculty, staff and students, ensuring widespread awareness and utilization.

Information Problem Context

- **Problem Identification:**
    - Academic research often hampered by complex and inefficient access to scholarly articles.
    - Traditional library systems and link resolvers involve cumbersome steps, leading to user frustration.
- **Solution: LibKey Implementation**
    - University of Washington Libraries Initiative: To streamline and speed up the access to academic content.
    - LibKey Discovery: Integrates seamlessly into library systems to provide faster access to full-text articles.
    - LibKey Nomad: A browser extension that facilitates direct access to journal articles across the web, bypassing traditional barriers.
- **Project Goals:**
    - Eliminate inefficient processes involved in article retrieval.
    - Enhance user experience by reducing the time and effort required to access scholarly materials.

Research Insights

Throughout the user testing phase, significant insights were gained about the impact of LibKey on the academic research process:

- Participants who used LibKey Discovery appreciated its one-click access to articles, noting a substantial reduction in the time required to access research materials.
- There was a notable lack of awareness about LibKey's capabilities among the majority of users.
- While privacy concerns were minimal, they were not absent, highlighting a need for clearer communication regarding data handling practices.

These insights underscore the necessity of not only technological solutions but also robust user education and effective communication strategies.

Key Findings

Awareness and Usage

- Limited awareness among users; sparse adoption.
- Usage varies from frequent to occasional, mainly for specific assignments.

Research Workflow Impact

- Users report that LibKey Discovery streamlines research, enhancing access to PDFs and integration with tools like Zotero.

User Experience

- Appreciation for the direct access method's speed and simplicity.
- Confusion over functionalities of buttons like "Download PDF," "Online Access," and "View Issue Contents."

Challenges and Concerns

- Minimal privacy concerns, primarily about data collection by extensions such as LibKey Nomad.

Key Findings - Continue

Challenges and Concerns

- Minimal privacy concerns, primarily about data collection by extensions such as LibKey Nomad.

Comparisons with Other Tools

- Faster access compared to traditional library navigation or Google Scholar.
- Preference for combining LibKey Nomad with Zotero for organized research.

Installation and Learning Curve

- Installation straightforward; initial use complicated by inadequate guidance.
- Need for clear, concise instructional materials to improve adoption.

Future Considerations

- Interest in continued use with better information on functionality and privacy.
- Recommendation for marketing strategies focusing on educational guides and tutorials.

Approach Towards a Solution

- The approach to resolving the identified information problems involved integrating LibKey's advanced linking capabilities and straightforward browser extension, which **directly connects** users to available content from UW libraries with minimal clicks.
- UX interview sessions:
  - Recruit 7 eligible participants (2 grad 2 undergrad 3 faculty)
  - 2 searching tasks

Surprises

A surprising aspect was the extent of user unfamiliarity with the tools, despite their presence and some usage within UW libraries.

This highlighted the importance of targeted educational initiatives to increase user engagement and tool utilization.

Evaluation of Project Experience

Evaluation of Project Experience

Evaluating the project experience revealed several key achievements and areas for improvement:

- The integration of LibKey into UW Libraries was successfully received in terms of **functionality and the potential to improve research workflows**.
- The project also identified critical gaps in **user awareness** and **comfort with the new tools**, suggesting that the successful deployment of technological solutions must be accompanied by comprehensive user education and support.
- The feedback from participants has been instrumental in understanding how to better align the tool's capabilities with user needs and expectations.

Next Steps Beyond Capstone

Information Problem Context

- **Expand User Education and Engagement:**
  - Enhance awareness and comfort levels among all potential users regarding LibKey's features and benefits.
- **Develop Educational Resources:**
  - Create a series of informative guides and tutorial videos that:
  - Detail each aspect of LibKey's functionality.
  - Address common user concerns, particularly regarding privacy.
- **Continuous Feedback Monitoring:**
  - Regularly collect and analyze user feedback to iteratively improve the tools and enhance the overall user experience.
- **Explore Academic Partnerships:**
  - Partner with other academic institutions to:
  - Gain further insights into user needs and expectations.
  - Refine and adapt LibKey's capabilities to meet broader academic needs.