

# UW Libraries Search: Primo Usability Study

Sponsored by University of Washington Libraries  
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## Introduction

Since launching in Fall of 2015 as the UW Libraries' main discovery system, Ex Libris Primo has not been subjected to formal usability testing. Additionally, the UW Triennial Survey showed high dissatisfaction and negative feedback regarding the current search experience.

In order to improve user experience, we conducted user testing, analyzed the data, and provided design recommendations that could be implemented before the release of the newest iteration of Primo (Fall 2017).

## Process

User tests were conducted in Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters. In each quarter, 12 participants (6 undergraduates, 3 graduates, 3 faculty/staff) performed a variety of search tasks. Morae was the usability testing software used to record sessions and collect data. The data was then analyzed to inform our team's design recommendations.

Phase 1  
Fall 2016  
Sponsor testing of current system.

Phase 2  
Winter 2017  
Testing Beta  
Our team conducted 12 usability test sessions using Beta

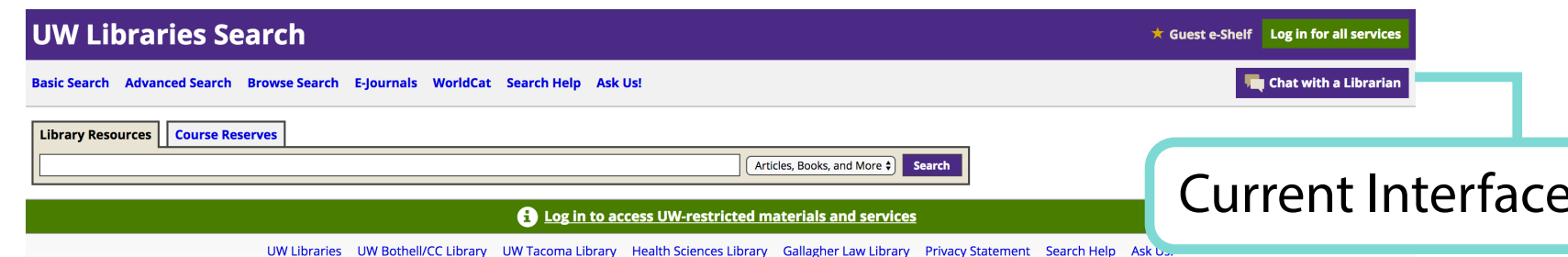
Phase 3  
Spring 2017  
A/B Testing  
Our team conducted 12 A/B test sessions using the current interface and Beta.

The data was then analyzed to inform our team's design recommendations.

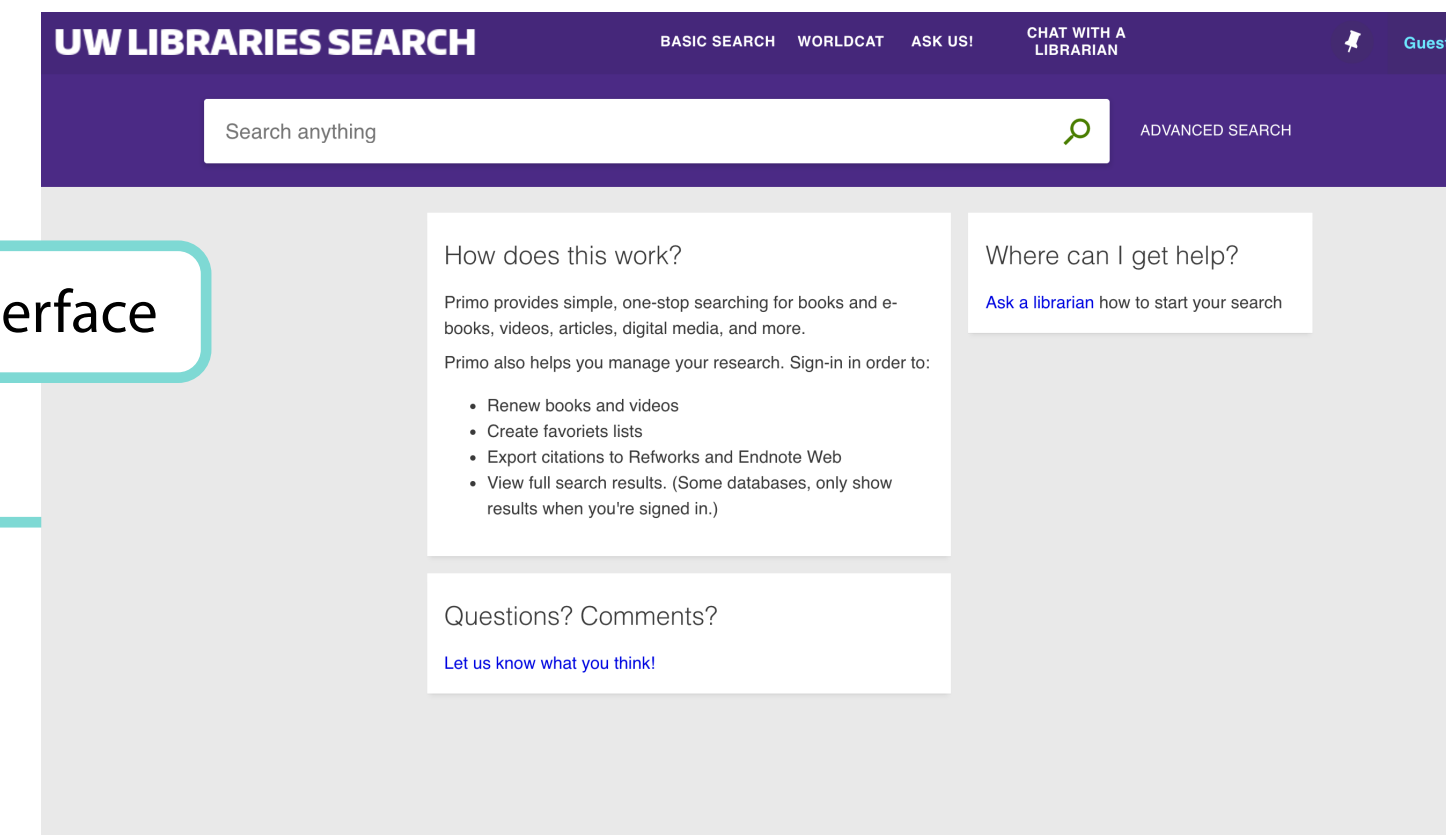


## Results

Most users found the beta interface to be a positive change, and many remarked on the cleaner aesthetics. Pain points were found around the misleading "Articles, Books, and More" dropdown, as well as the oddly placed pushpin, leading to most users missing it entirely.



Beta Interface



Users were asked to choose the version of Primo they preferred to use after each of the study tasks.

Users preferred the Beta Interface  
**77%**  
of the time

Users preferred the Current Interface  
**17%**  
of the time

Users had NO Preference  
**6%**  
of the time

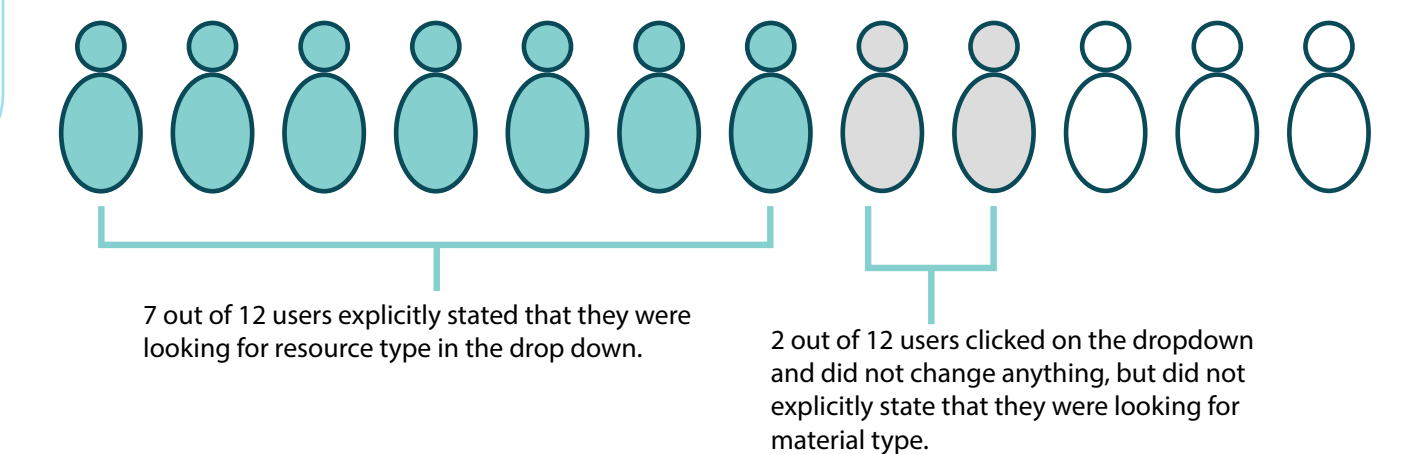
"[The beta version] looks simple. It looks like it's **not complicated**. It doesn't have, like, weird tabs everywhere. It just looks **straight to the point**."  
-User comments

"Looks **cleaner**."

"More **modern**."

"The beta interface is more **app-like**, which, I don't know, maybe that's just **sexy** right now. But it seems very **user friendly**."

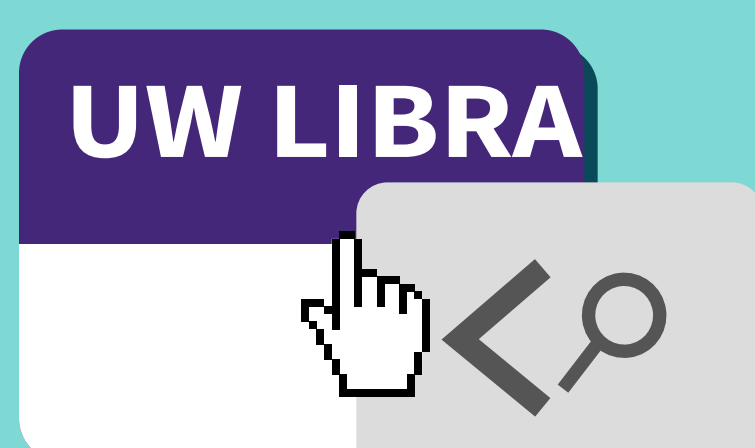
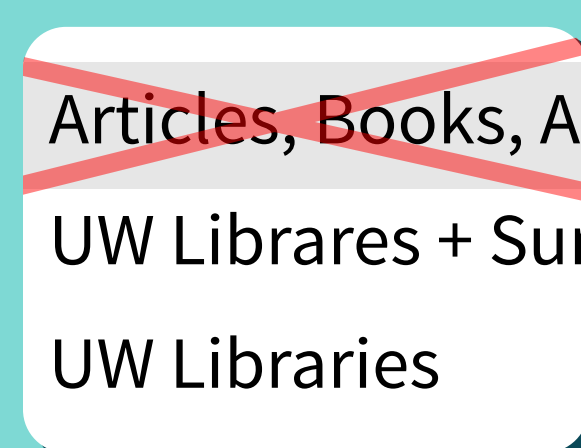
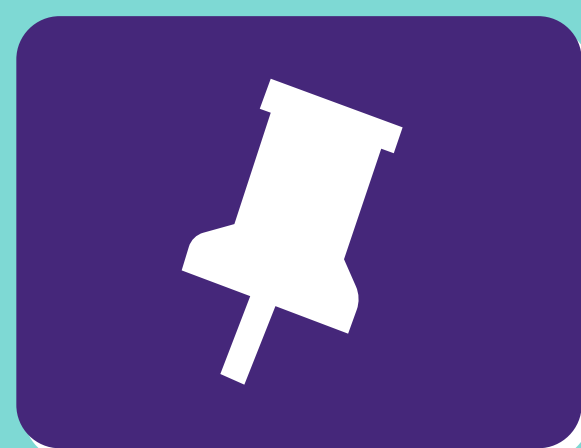
Articles, Books, and Confusion  
Many users expected the "Articles, Books, and More" dropdown to be a filter for material type.



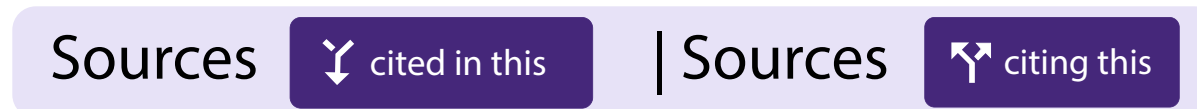
## Recommendations

- 1 Move the pushpin icon from the upper right side to the Share/Save area
- 2 Remove "Article, Books, and More" from location dropdown
- 3 Adhere to accepted usability guidelines and user expectations

TOP  
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## Additional Recommendations

- Change the "References" section to "Find References"
- For clarity, rearrange the "References" area to read:  

- Allow users to choose more than one facet at once, without needing to reload after every click
- Assess pages for unnecessary library jargon, as well as idiomatic phrasing such as "Tweak my results" which could confuse non-native English speaking researchers.

## Next Steps/Further Research

- More users in the hard sciences need to be tested.
- International students were not tested, and thus are not represented in our results.
- Library Instruction consideration: There were several instances of users noting that they weren't even aware that a feature was available for them before. Perhaps more time could be given to the services that are available for students during instruction sessions.