

NETWORKED RESOURCES REDEFINITION IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

NRRIG FOCUS GROUPS

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Final Report

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PURPOSE

In an effort to find out how the redefinition of the CU Library Gateway Networked Resources would impact library patrons, NRRIG conducted Focus Groups to gauge reaction. The three main objectives of the sessions were to:

1. Identify any insurmountable PR obstacles. Is there a strong reaction against the proposed changes?
 2. Determine how much training will be needed.
 3. Determine how much publicity will be needed.
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METHODOLOGY

On Tuesday, July 10th, five focus groups were conducted with a total of twenty people. There were 6 faculty members, 3 undergraduates, 1 staff member and 10 graduate students who participated. Participants, excluding faculty, were offered \$10 and lunch for their time. The groups were composed as follows:

- Group A** - 6 faculty members
- Group B** - 4 graduate students
- Group C** - 4 graduate students
- Group D** - 2 graduate students
- Group E** - 3 undergraduates and 1 staff member

Flyers, posters and a notice on the Library Gateway were used to solicit students. Faculty members were contacted directly by NRRIG. Each group was led by one facilitator and had one note-taker. Library staff, including the NRRIG members acted as facilitators and note-takers. The focus groups were held for one hour where six questions were asked. *See attached document for the questions.*

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

FACULTY (GROUP A):

Faculty revealed a variety of search patterns; many rely on their own subscriptions and peer relationships, some use databases such as ERIC, PubMed, Biosis or catalogs, two mentioned Internet searching. Two faculty members indicate they use Networked Resources, though mainly as an additional source of information as opposed to a first stop. Most did not use the Subject Browse feature of Networked Resources. Many seemed to confuse Networked Resources with the Catalog.

Faculty agreed that there should be a comprehensive single source of information, i.e., the catalog, serving their needs. There was some concern when told what changes we were planning to make (Question 6), but more because they did not want to lose anything rather than having become habitual users of Networked Resources.

GRADUATE STUDENTS (GROUPS B,C,D):

The students in these groups began their research from many directions; some went straight to known online indexes such as Medline, others used the Internet, and some relied on bibliographies or references from faculty. Most of this group did use Networked Resources to find indexes for article searching. Two also mentioned using the shortcuts to particular databases from the Mann pages and the Hotel Library pages. Several students used the Subject Browse feature to find other databases in their field.

For locating particular journal titles many used the Catalog though two did use Networked Resources for this. Several also bypassed both the catalog and Networked Resources in locating e-journals and went straight to the journal's homepage.

When asked what they thought of the proposed changes to Networked Resources most were comfortable though 4 voiced some concern. Most were concerned that they would have to check two different places for things and were confused over when to use Networked Resources and when to use the Catalog. Everyone agreed that clear definitions of what can be found in the new Networked Resources are critical, as is publicizing these changes.

Other comments from these groups:

- Desire for more online journals and e-books.
- Concern that there is not enough cross-disciplinary access to materials.
- Would prefer to go to one place to search all topics.
- Would like to see an obvious icon for the new NR.

UNDERGRADUATES / STAFF (GROUP E):

This group was the least familiar with Networked Resources. Two of the students had never seen the Networked Resources page, while one uses it but only to go to Greatest Hits for BIOSIS. None of the participants in this group had ever actually looked at what is on the Networked Resources page, and did not notice the subject organization. None of our participants turned to Networked Resources as their first stop. Instead, the students search online using Google or some other search engine. They go directly to the online site for the journal, bypassing the Library Gateway completely. The students find articles by browsing journals rather than searching online. None of the focus group E participants could explain what they would find when searching in Networked Resources. Many confused the Library Catalog with Networked Resources. Some students thought it would work like Google, searching across resources and presenting the hits. All participants felt that our proposed change was a good one. (They won't be impacted much, which probably explains why they are not more hesitant.)

Other general comments from this group:

- It is difficult to research multidisciplinary topics.
- All journals should be available online in full-text.
- Clarify the difference between the Catalog's relevance and command searches.
- Make it easier to search the catalog for foreign language items.

SUMMARY

- There are no overwhelming objections to the proposed changes.
- Faculty were generally supportive of the change.
- Undergraduates particularly need more training in how to do library research.
- Many people use the subject captions somewhat regularly, although several people pointed out that they are difficult to use because there are too many resources in some subjects.
- Two out of the twenty subjects look in Networked Resources to find an individual journal title. The rest used either the online catalog or try to find a direct link to the journal through an Internet search engine.
- Advertising the changes is essential.
- Very few of the subjects have ever used "greatest hits".
- The main reason people like having the journal titles in Networked Resources is to be able to browse journal titles in a particular subject area.
- There is a lot of confusion about what Networked Resources really is and what items are and are not available there.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Move ahead with the changes.
- Make sure we adequately advertise the changes.
- An alphabetical list of e-journals is not useful since participants who did like to browse e-journals

wanted to browse by subject. Advertise how to search in the catalog for e-journals in a particular subject.

- Increase training for undergraduates in using the new Networked Resources.

CONCLUSION

Based on the focus groups, NRRIG concluded that no insurmountable public relations obstacles would prevent the implementation of the redefinition. The committee, therefore, moved ahead with the changes as planned. NRRIG implemented as much advertising as was feasible on the CU Library Gateway and a PR committee was formed to handle additional advertising of the newly named e-Reference Collection.

Due to the short timeline for the implementation, the focus groups were necessarily smaller than would be ideal. In general the Library staff members who conducted the focus groups reported that they found it to be an enjoyable and informative experience as it provided an opportunity to learn how patrons use the library's resources outside of a reference setting. User expectations can change as rapidly as the technological environment. The library can learn a lot by regularly sitting down with patrons in focus groups or in other usability sessions. NRRIG recommends that a formalized and regularly scheduled program of user studies be considered as one way to determine patron understanding of the information landscape.

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