11
THINGS

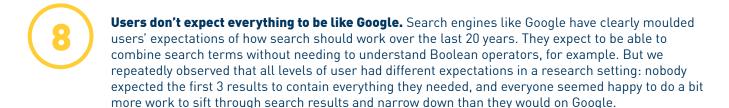we learned from talking to our users about *Gale Research Complete*

At Gale, we believe it's essential to do regular research with users, to understand how students, researchers and librarians currently use our databases. This is such a dynamic area, with library technology constantly changing and new generations of students arriving each year, that we can never rely on assumptions from even a few years ago.

Before starting work on developing the new search experience for *Gale Research Complete*, we spoke to more than 50 users, including students (1st-years through to postgrads), librarians and faculty, across the spectrum of colleges and universities, from junior colleges to premier research-intensive universities in the US, UK and Northern Europe. These were in-depth online interviews, where users shared their screens and walked us through how they navigate library discovery and research databases in their everyday workflows. Here are a few of the things we learned:

1 **We need to keep supporting multiple routes into the content.** Everyone loved the look of the new home page and cross-search for *Gale Research Complete*, but it's also very clear that it's only one amongst many options for users. Many will still access the separate home pages for *Gale Business: Insights* or the *Literature Resource Center*, or will arrive via direct links to articles from discovery services, Learning Management Systems, reading lists or LibGuides. Alongside designing the search, we need to continue to keep optimising our integration with this ever-changing ecosystem of library resources.

2 **Students have embraced discovery services.** All of the students we spoke to were fully aware that their library provides a range of online resources, and the gateway to finding articles is the discovery service (although none of them call it that). Tellingly, one student said 'This is the library' as she arrived on a Primo search results page: the 'online library' has replaced the physical library as the place to go to for your research.

3 **Content needs vary by region.** Example: while US undergrads were generally focused on finding 'articles' (from peer-reviewed scholarly journals), UK students were more likely to notice when contents are grouped into categories like Articles and Books, and had varying views on whether their instructors favoured references to journals or books.

4 **Students don't use the word 'eBook'.** Listening to the language that your users use is a key part of User-Centred Design. Students seem highly unlikely to use the word 'eBook', for the same reason that they don't say 'e-resource' or 'e-journal': the 'e' is redundant, as they take it for granted that resources are available online.

5 **Avoid 'Gale jargon' where possible.** While we all know that *Gale Academic OneFile* is a premier resource containing peer-reviewed journals and authoritative news sources, we need to be humble enough to acknowledge that many of our users do not, and so presenting them with a list of Gale database names can be confusing for them. Instead, it's much clearer to present options using the terms that users would actually use and recognise, such as 'Journals, News and Magazines', 'Primary Sources', 'Literature Resources' or 'Books'.

6 **Almost all labels are potentially ambiguous.** For *Gale Research Complete*'s interdisciplinary and international user base, even these broad descriptive labels might need explaining. Historians will know that 'Gale Primary Sources' means historical documents, but for literary scholars or anthropologists, 'primary sources' means something completely different. One psychology student saw 'Gale Literature' and thought this would be the place for doing 'literature reviews' of scientific publications. A constant challenge for our User Experience designers!

7 **Known item searches:** we were surprised how many undergraduates are frequently searching for a specific article or book. This could be a citation from a course reading list, a footnote in another article, or from Google Scholar - and they know to come to their library resources to see if the full text is available to them. We're going to offer tools on the home page to assist with this use case.

(8) Users don't expect everything to be like Google. Search engines like Google have clearly moulded users' expectations of how search should work over the last 20 years. They expect to be able to combine search terms without needing to understand Boolean operators, for example. But we repeatedly observed that all levels of user had different expectations in a research setting: nobody expected the first 3 results to contain everything they needed, and everyone seemed happy to do a bit more work to sift through search results and narrow down than they would on Google.

(9) Search filters are not popular. Users were much more likely to keep redoing their search with modified search terms than they were to narrow down using filters: the exceptions were the Date filter and 'peer-reviewed' checkbox.

(10) HTML full text is welcomed by dyslexic users. In one round of testing, 3 out of 12 students told us (unprompted) that they were dyslexic and so preferred the HTML version of an article to the PDF, as they could easily use their preferred third-party screen-reader software (in one case, the student just used Siri). The PDF version of a scholarly article has other obvious advantages too though (one user tellingly referred to the PDF as 'the actual document'), and so users appreciated how we generally offer both.

(11) Users of all levels appreciate a helping hand! Our proposed interface involves more user-friendly features than a lot of our competitors offer: topic pages, display panels grouping results by type of content, recommendations, visual cues, and a very pared-down results page with only the most useful search filters included. This was as big a hit with faculty and librarians at major research universities just as it was with junior college students.

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