Our Study

In November 2016, we conducted a small-scale usability study with seven Glenbrook South High School students who were chosen for their range of technical skills and grade levels. Each student completed a series of three activities that required them to navigate our resource portal to locate different electronic resources. These activities simulated research tasks that they are extremely likely to encounter during their GBS coursework. We recorded the students’ interactions with our site using a screencasting tool and asked them to “think aloud” as they searched.

What we Learned

- Students had a hard time identifying the right databases for their tasks
- Students navigated the portal differently than librarians and teachers do
- Our use of graphics was confusing/distracting to students
- Our use of language was confusing to students
- Our site was not well designed for novice searchers

Usability Testing Basics

- Usability testing can show you where your users are having trouble with a product
- You are testing the product, not the users. If they don't behave as expected, they aren't “doing it wrong”
- Your testers should reflect your intended user population
- Focus on what users do, not just what they say
- Be sure to get appropriate permissions from all parties (administration, participants, any other requirements) before you start

Screencasting Tools

Here are some tools that you can use to see how users interact with your web resources:

- Screencastify
- Camtasia
- Jing
- Screencast-O-Matic
- iMovie/Quicktime (can record from iOS devices)

Free prototyping Tools

Good for trying out layouts and observing how users interact with your design before you commit to a final product:

- Moqups
- Mockplus

See https://gbslibguides.glenbrook225.org/idealab2017 for more information.