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Kicking the Tires: A Usability Study of the Primo Discovery Tool

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Abstract

Discovery tools offer users a powerful way of searching library holdings as well as external databases and indexes. They are becoming an increasingly common part of the library user experience, and research on the usability of such tools is expanding. In 2012, a mid-sized academic research library implemented Primo Discovery and Delivery by Ex Libris and conducted a diagnostic usability test to investigate how the tool is used without instruction, to discover patterns in searching behavior, and to uncover how compatible Primo is with user search behavior. This article will describe the design and implementation of the usability study. Despite some design flaws, users adapt to the tool over time and can perform effective searches. This article also provides recommendations for future usability studies in specific targeted areas where problems were detected.

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