

Web Advisory Group

Archives web site usability test results

Site tested: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/

Nicole Hennig, Web Manager
May 2003

The Test
Two versions of the test were used. 2 users were tested for Records Management and 5 users were tested for Research.

Results Summary:

The following is a draft of the observed problems and brainstormed solutions from a meeting on May 21, 2003. The solutions will be implemented sometime during the Summer or Fall.

Records Management Test: Download Records Management Test-PDF

All 8 testers found the answers to all 9 questions in the Records Management Test, with the exception of 1 person who did not find #7 or #8, and another person did not find #1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>question 1:</td>
<td>-change link on home page to &quot;Reading Room Hours&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- reading room was not a known term</td>
<td>- add a note to the Staff page that says, &quot;Archives staff is available from X to Y hours&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Archives staff is available outside of the reading room hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question 3:</td>
<td>-add a phrase to the bottom of Managing Your Records (managing/index.html) that says, &quot;For more information, please contact X (include phone number)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- users were not clear which staff person was responsible</td>
<td>-add this phrase to sending-archives.html as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- zip codes missing from phone numbers on a few pages</td>
<td>- add zip codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-add a link to the MIT student information policy to archives/managing/sending-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4:</td>
<td>Archives.html</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology problem - users did not associate time cards with financial records or payroll records</td>
<td>Agreed that this was a difficult question. Users could find the page, but didn't see the answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model after <a href="http://libraries.mit.edu/search/">http://libraries.mit.edu/search/</a>, if looking for X, begin here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add examples of different types of records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give a background color to every other row on the chart, change borders, &amp; add cell padding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 5 &amp; 6:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users did the opposite on each question, (for 5 found 6 and vice versa)</td>
<td>Add links from /managing/policies.html to all lower level pages, maybe within the sidebar or as a footer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look at <a href="http://dspace.org/mit/policies/index.html">http://dspace.org/mit/policies/index.html</a> as an example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider a table of contents style list of policies on policies/index.html</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add link to financial records policy to managing/policies.html</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 6:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users confused</td>
<td>This question isn't answered specifically, but is covered throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add heading on managing/sending.html such as &quot;no records can be stored until...&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 9:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not sure if a receipt is a permanent or non-permanent record</td>
<td>- Not a web issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users looking for the word receipt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 10:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users who searched for faculty minutes within the collections expected a live link to the minutes</td>
<td>Add link to minutes from research/archives-list-mit-e-l.html, add phrase like, Faculty Minutes from 1995- are available.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users wanted live links from /archives/mithistory/index.html</td>
<td>Consider adding live links from each item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some users didn't see the link from home page or Digital Documents</td>
<td>Consider changing Digital Documents to Selected Items, Selected Core Publications, or other phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| question 3:  
- links to finding aids on AIP external web site are confusing  
- links on list vs. finding aids confusing  
- linked record numbers confusing | - change link text or add to bullets on top of page: "these links will take you to the AIP..."  
- change top bullets on the manuscript collection lists, have bullet for Finding Aids, with sub bullets for Online Finding Aids and Paper Copies  
- unlink collection numbers, add link to "finding aid" or link to "description" |
| question 4:  
- users had trouble, policy page confusing | - on longer policy pages, highlight the important points at the beginning with bullets at the top of page  
- on policies-practice.html, rephrase list of policies with important words first, like "access"  
- hyphenate "permission-to-publish"  
- list policies in alpha or logical order |
| question 5:  
- links to presidential papers listed differently on different pages  
- users not sure if they are accessing biography, finding aid, or description | - on mithistory/histories-admin.html, change wording from Presidential papers, 1930-1959 (Compton-Killian), to Presidential Papers, linking to /mithistory/histories-offices/papers.html  
- reword links to documents: ex. Karl Taylor Compton-biography, AC4-Finding Aid |
| question 6: | |

**Researcher Test:** Download Researcher Test-PDF

- consider moving link to Digital Documents under MIT History  
- add link to Biographies under MIT History on home page  
- do nothing  
- make Archives Search link permanently yellow, or reverse rollover colors. Consider reversing the colors of Archives Search. [Nicole showed a mockup of this, and it will be implemented on the Archives home page for now]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Users didn't find biographies</td>
<td>- Add biographies under MIT History category on home page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Users didn't see quick links menu</td>
<td>- Consider working on a modified home page layout for Archives with similar look and feel to bring quick links higher on the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Users commented on &quot;wasted space&quot; on home page</td>
<td>- Consider only showing Object of the Month on home page, eliminate image of the Archives itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General:</td>
<td>Add links to Institute Archives Home above horizontal rule at bottom of the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- On longer pages, such as thesis specifications, users get lost</td>
<td>- Link Institute Archives &amp; Special collections image on each page to Archives home on all new pages, and as pages are edited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some pages had no link back to Archives home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Archives Usability Test: Records Management
Observer Worksheet

Name of observer:

Date:

Name of tester:

Email:

Department/Field of study:

Status:
Faculty How many years?
Researcher
MIT Staff
Library Staff
Grad
Undergrad
Other (specify)

Has the tester ever used this website before?  Yes  No

Is the tester's first language English?  Yes  No

Where is the test being conducted?
tester's office/dorm
observer's office/work area
Athena station
Other:

(If the test is being administered on a machine that you control, clear history in the browser before testing the next person, so visited links don't show)

Ask: Have you ever been inside the Institute Archives and used their collections?

Ask: Have you ever asked for help or information from a member of the Archives staff, either in person, by phone, or by email?
REMEMBER: DO NOT HELP THE TESTER. Also, do not instruct the tester to return to the Archives Home Page between questions, though it is fine if s/he wants to.

READ THIS TO TESTER BEFORE BEGINNING:

The goal of this test is to evaluate how users find information on the Institute Archives web site. I will ask you a series of questions and we would like you to THINK OUT LOUD WHILE YOU LOOK FOR THE ANSWERS. Some questions are easier than others, and some may seem difficult. Don’t worry if you can’t find the answer every time. Remember, it’s not your fault if you have trouble: it’s a design problem with our web site, and that’s what we’re testing, we’re not testing you.
Do you have any questions?

Show them the set of questions, with only the first question visible.
1. Find the Institute Archives' reading room hours

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/about/hours.html

Browsing path:
Home / hours

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:  

Yes  No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  

Yes  No

Describe issues/problems:
2. Find the fax number for the Institute Archives

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/about/contact.html

Browsing path:
Home / contact information or
Home / about us

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:      Yes      No
Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?      Yes      No

Describe issues/problems:
3. Your office is physically overwhelmed with old records that are no longer currently needed. Find the name of the staff member at the Institute Archives to contact about getting help with this

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/about/people.html

Browsing path:
Home / staff [Elizabeth Andrews]

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool: Yes No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? Yes No

Describe issues/problems:
4. You're a new administrative officer. Your predecessor left several boxes of time
cards. How long do you need to keep them?


Browsing path:
Home / managing your records / guide to retention of MIT's Financial Records /
records retention schedule [scroll through]

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:       ____Yes       ____No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  ____Yes       ____No

Describe issues/problems:
5. Find out which of your office’s records can be stored at the Institute Archives

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/managing/policies.html

Browsing path:
Home / what are MIT’s record policies? or
Home / managing your records / what are MIT’s record policies?

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool: ___Yes ___No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? ___Yes ___No

Describe issues/problems:
6. You have 20 boxes of records that you want to send into storage. Can you just send them anytime? [Answer is not overly clear but is - no, you have to make an appointment] 

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/managing/sending.html
Browsing path: 
Home / how do I store MIT records

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool: Yes No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? Yes No

Describe issues/problems:
7. The Institute Archives has created histories of many departments and offices at MIT. Find a history of the Treasurer's Office

Time started:
Time stopped:


Browsing path:
Home / MIT history / administrative / histories of MIT administrative and academic units / office of the treasurer or Home / histories / administrative / histories of MIT administrative and academic units / office of the treasurer

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool: Yes No
Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? Yes No

Describe issues/problems:
8. Professor Smith in your office is retiring and wants to know if MIT is interested in his personal papers. Would the Institute Archives take them?

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/managing/donating.html

Browsing path:
Home / managing your records / what about my personal papers?

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool: Yes No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? Yes No

Describe issues/problems:
9. Your office is being audited and you need to get a financial receipt that is in storage. Find the page that describes how to get it from the Archives

Time started:
Time stopped:


Browsing path:
Home / how do I retrieve MIT office records?

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool: ____Yes ____No
Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? ____Yes ____No

Describe issues/problems:
10. The minutes of MIT faculty meetings are available online from the Institute Archives web site. Locate them

URL of answer: https://web.mit.edu/dept/libdata/libdepts/d/archives/facmin/

Browsing path:
Home / MIT faculty minutes or
Home / digital documents / MIT faculty minutes

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool: Yes No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? Yes No

Describe issues/problems:
1. Find the Institute Archives’ reading room hours

2. Find the fax number for the Institute Archives

3. Your office is physically overwhelmed with old records that are no longer currently needed. Find the name of the staff member at the Institute Archives to contact about getting help with this

4. You’re a new administrative officer. Your predecessor left several boxes of time cards. How long do you need to keep them?

5. Find out which of your office’s records can be stored at the Institute Archives

6. You have 20 boxes of records that you want to send into storage. Can you just send them anytime?

7. The Institute Archives has created histories of many departments and offices at MIT. Find a history of the Treasurer’s Office

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10. The minutes of MIT faculty meetings are available online from the Institute Archives web site. Locate them
Archives Usability Test: Researcher
Observer Worksheet

Name of observer:

Date:

Name of tester:

Email:

Department/Field of study:

Status:
Faculty ________ How many years? ______
Researcher __________________
MIT Staff ____________
Library Staff ____________
Grad ________
Undergrad ____________
Other (specify) ____________

Has the tester ever used this web site before? ______Yes ______No

Is the tester’s first language English? ______Yes ______No

Where is the test being conducted?
______tester’s office/dorm
______observer’s office/work area
______Athena station
______Other: ____________

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Ask: Have you ever asked for help or information from a member of the Archives staff, either in person, by phone, or by email?
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Do you have any questions?

Show them the set of questions, with only the first question visible.
1. Find the Institute Archives’ reading room hours

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/about/hours.html

Browsing path:
Home / hours

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:  Yes  No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  Yes  No

Describe issues/problems:
2. Find the fax number for the Institute Archives

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/about/contact.html

Browsing path:
Home / contact information or
Home / about us

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (Indicate path)

Used the search tool: Yes No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? Yes No

Describe issues/problems:
3. Locate the online finding aid for the papers of Albert Hill

**URL of answer:** http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/research/manuscripts-list-g-m.html
(then click on MC365)

**Browsing path:**
Home / about the collections / manuscript collections / list of collections / G-M / MC365

---

**Indicate what the tester did:**

---

**Browsing:** *(indicate path)*

---

**Used the search tool:**

---

---

**Search words used:**

---

---

**Did the tester find the answer?**

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---

**Describe issues/problems:**
4. You are interested in using some official records of the Institute that are less than 20 years old (a standard period of restricted access). How do you get permission to use these records?

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/managing/policy-access.html

Browsing path:
Home / policies and practices / Institute records access policy or
Home / what are MIT's records policies? / Institute records access policy

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:  
___ Yes  
___ No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  
___ Yes  
___ No

Describe issues/problems:
5. You would like to consult the papers of the Office of the President over the course of several administrations. Find out what papers are available at the Institute Archives


Browsing path:
Home / about the collections / institute records / list of collections / MIT M-O or
Home / about the collections / pres papers

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:       ____ Yes       ____ No
Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  ____ Yes  ____ No

Describe issues/problems:
6. You are working on a biography of Ellen Swallow Richards (first woman to receive a degree from MIT and Instructor in Chemistry for many years) and you want to find out what publications the Archives has by or about her


Browsing path:
Home / mit history / biographical / ESR / Publications by and about ESR

Indicate what the tester did:
Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:  _____Yes   _____No
Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  _____Yes   _____No

Describe issues/problems:
7. The Institute Archives keeps the record copies of all MIT theses. Find out how you can look at a particular thesis

URL of answer: http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/research/theses-using.html

Browsing path:
Home / about the collections / theses / using MIT theses

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:  
Yes  No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  
Yes  No

Describe issues/problems:
8. You are about to submit the final version of your thesis to your department. Is there a particular type of paper you should print it out on?


Browsing path:
Home / specifications for thesis preparation / production - paper

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:  ____Yes  ____No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  ____Yes  ____No

Describe issues/problems:
9. The Institute Archives has created histories of many departments and offices at MIT. Find a history of the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics


Browsing path:
Home / histories of MIT administrative and academic units / department of aeronautics and astronautics or
Home / histories / administrative / histories of MIT administrative and academic units / department of aeronautics and astronautics

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool:  ____ Yes  ____ No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer?  ____ Yes  ____ No

Describe issues/problems:
10. The minutes of MIT faculty meetings are available online from the Institute Archives web site. Locate them

URL of answer: https://web.mit.edu/dept/libdata/libdepts/d/archives/facmin/

Browsing path:
Home / MIT faculty minutes or
Home / digital documents / MIT faculty minutes

Indicate what the tester did:

Browsing: (indicate path)

Used the search tool: ____Yes _____No

Search words used:

Did the tester find the answer? ____Yes _____No

Describe issues/problems:
1. Find the Institute Archives' reading room hours

2. Find the fax number for the Institute Archives

3. Locate the online finding aid for the papers of Albert Hill

4. You are interested in using some official records of the Institute that are less than 20 years old (a standard period of restricted access). How do you get permission to use these records?

5. You would like to consult the papers of the Office of the President over the course of several administrations. Find out what papers are available at the Institute Archives

6. You are working on a biography of Ellen Swallow Richards (first woman to receive a degree from MIT and Instructor in Chemistry for many years) and you want to find out what publications the Archives has by or about her

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