UX

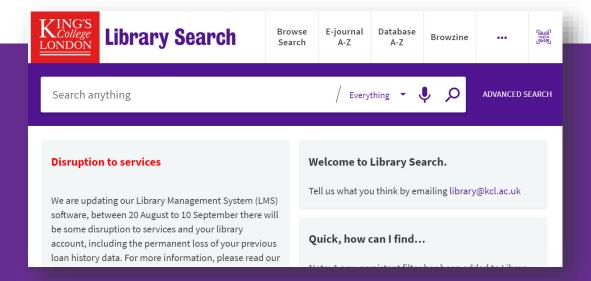# Developing Our Services: Mapping the Online Library from the Student Perspective

By Maria 'Mia' O'Hara, Learning & Teaching Librarian, Libraries & Collections

Even before the COVID-19 Pandemic changed the way King's Libraries & Collections deliver our services, we had begun to investigate our virtual library services – what they are and how King's communities interact with them.

Three of the 2020-21 Library Champions helped us explore the concept of King's Virtual Library Services, both by sharing their experiences of using our online services and conducting research with fellow students to find their perspectives.

To do this we used a User Experience (UX) research method called Touchstone Tours where you ask someone to give you a tour of your spaces (in this case the Library's online spaces) from their perspectives. Some common themes emerged:
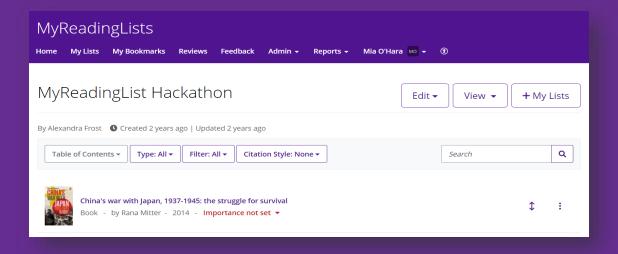
> " *I don't go into the main library site so like, this page I am opening right now is that I've bookmarked. and I always go straight into here, the search engine without going to the Main Library site so actually, I haven't really looked at what's on the main library.*

When asked to give us a tour of the library's online spaces from their perspective, almost all of the research participants started from the Library Search rather than the Library Homepage.

This isn't particularly surprising, but it is an important insight for the library to consider when we think about how we share information. We often highlight key information, big changes and new developments there – yet how many of our library users bypass the Homepage and thus don't see these?

Capturing user behaviour allows us to think about when something needs to be highlighted on Library Search, as with the 'Disruption to services' notice in the screenshot above.
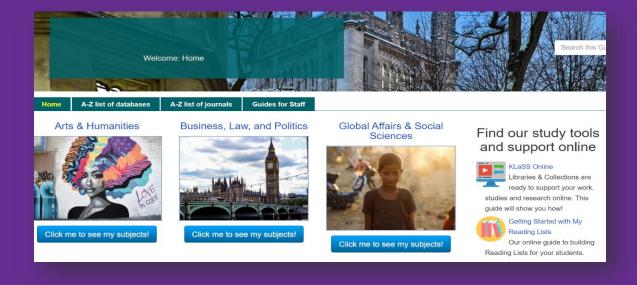

> **"** *Yeah another thing is the reading list. I know it is also coordinated by the library is it? So I actually really appreciate the reading list. I really love it them, because you know at first I think this list are done by my lecturers and then I don't know when I found out it is actually done in...all the links are done by the library, so I think it's very nice.*

UX Research doesn't just aim to find problems, but also to identify things that work well and to understand why, so that the design principles can be applied elsewhere.

The University's Reading List system regularly emerged as an area of strength, a place where faculty and library staff had collaborated to ensure students have ease of access to the core material they use in their studies.

Faculty staff use their expertise to curate the key resources for their students. Library staff then make sure the list is optimised to help students access those resources. Each team brings their unique knowledge and expertise to create a useful learning tool.

Library Guides

> ❝ *The interface is… It's so different and it just makes you think "Am I on the right kind of page? Is this what I'm meant to be using?" And I just wonder if that has some kind of effect also on how people use their resources.*

UX Research is useful for finding areas for further research and development and areas for quick wins. The Library Champions gave us a great example for that when they talked about our online Library Guides. On one hand they highlighted a quick, cosmetic change we will be making in August 2021 so our Library Guides look more like the other Library webpages.

On the other hand, it gave us plenty of food for thought on why our Library Guides exist, how we should use them and what our community needs from them. We're going to be doing further research next year concentrated on developing and improving this online resource.

Booking slots on campus

> **KING'S College LONDON**
>
> **BOOKING**
>
> King's College London / LibCal
>
> Booking Your Library Visit
>
> **Should you visit?**
> - King's will be maintaining existing on-campus restrictions from 19 July to 1 September. To ensure we continue to provide a Covid-safe study environment we will be maintaining our current library services as stated on our Coronavirus update webpage, these include bookable study spaces available in all the campus libraries and there are informal study spaces outside the libraries.
> - On-campus services are open to King's students, staff and NHS members of the library.
> - Our online resources are your first port of call for readings, research and support. Are you new to King's or need a refresher? See our Getting Started guide.
> - Where access to a book is essential and not available electronically then the Reserve & Collect service is available.
> - If you are coming to campus, please follow the latest university guidance to protect your own health and the health of those around you.
>
> **General booking information**
> - Your King's ID card is required to visit the library and books cannot be issued without it. If you need to collect a King's student ID card then please contact Student Services Online.
>
> **Booking a study space**
> - You can book a minimum of an hour and a maximum of 8 hours per day, with 50 hours allocated per week. For further information, please see Why is there a limit on how many hours I can book?
> - Your **50-hour weekly allocation** runs from Sunday to Saturday, and unused hours are not rolled over. However, you are able to book sessions up to a week in advance by using your allocated hours for the following week.
> - All libraries are open Monday to Friday, 10.30-19.30 (except at the IoPPN and the Wills libraries, which are temporarily closed).
> - The Franklin-Wilkins Library is open on Saturdays and the New Hunt's House Library on Sundays, both between 10.30 - 17.30.
> - You may make a booking at any time during the day.
> - If you no longer require your booking, please cancel via the email link to allow other people to make use of the study space.
>
> **With this new flexible model, we ask you to:**
> - Arrive and leave on time to allow for changeovers (you will be unable to enter the library before the start of your session for this reason).
> - Please ensure you clean your desk and equipment at the start and end of your session with the wipes provided in the wall dispensers around the libraries.
> - Not to eat or drink in the libraries (except for bottled water) and only book study space for the time you will be located within the library. This will maximise the use of your 50-hour weekly allocation and allow spaces to be free for other students. If you do leave the library for a break, please remember to take your belongings with you.

> **"** *All this text, you have to read all of it. Okay, so right now where should I click to go and book a space? like this part should be more prominent. Okay, so like the three of us, at least two of us had the problem when we visited this page. We don't know what to do but we can't like, so where should we go next. That's half an hour gone.*

Sometimes when you do research into your user's experiences, you get really strong and clear feedback that they want something to change and you just can't change it.

When we looked at our research data together, the 2020-21 Library Champions felt really strongly that booking to come on campus to use a physical library should be easier. They talked about how the information page students are required to read before they can book is too long and caused many of them confusion when they first tried to use it. Some of the research participants said they didn't read this at all.

Unfortunately, the information page is there for a reason, and while there was a bit of a debate within Libraries & Collections there was ultimately a decision to keep the page and hope that, as we return to more normal times, booking to come on campus becomes a problem of the past.

So what next?

This has just highlighted some of the things we discovered during this project, we're still working on unpacking all of the data gathered and using it to make improvements to our services.

We will continue to use this research project to inform the development of the virtual library, and as we do we are planning some follow-up research with the next Library Champions in 2021-22, why not come and get involved?