

# Do-It-Yourself Usability Testing: a Case Study from the UC San Diego Digital Collections

Digital Library Federation Forum

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The Library  
UC SAN DIEGO

In usability testing, we observe product use as it's taking place in order to learn where users encounter problems



# UC San Diego Digital Collections (<http://library.ucsd.edu/dc/>) and Digital Asset Management System (DAMS)

The screenshot shows the UC San Diego Digital Collections website. At the top, there is a dark blue header with "DIGITAL COLLECTIONS" on the left and "UC San Diego" on the right. Below the header is a light blue navigation bar with links for "Home", "About", "Browse By", "Help", "Sign In", and "The Library". The main content area has a dark red, starry background. In the center, the "DIGITAL COLLECTIONS BETA" logo is displayed, with the text "Currently totaling 76,628 research data sets, images, documents, video and audio recordings." below it. A search bar with the placeholder "Search..." and a magnifying glass icon is positioned below the logo. Underneath the search bar, it says "Or browse by [Collection](#), [Creator](#), [Format](#), or [Topic](#)". In the bottom left corner, there is a small text block: "From the Santa Fe Light Cone Simulation Research Project Files Collection", "Kinematic Sunyaev-Zel'dovich effect", and "Wagner, Rick, 1972-". The footer is a solid blue bar with a grid pattern, containing the text "The Digital Collections website gathers two categories of content managed by the UC San Diego Library" and two columns: "UC San Diego Library Digital Collections" and "UC San Diego Research Data Collections".

DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

UC San Diego

Home About Browse By Help Sign In The Library

DIGITAL COLLECTIONS BETA

Currently totaling 76,628 research data sets, images, documents, video and audio recordings.\*

Search...

Or browse by [Collection](#), [Creator](#), [Format](#), or [Topic](#)

From the Santa Fe Light Cone Simulation Research Project Files Collection  
Kinematic Sunyaev-Zel'dovich effect  
Wagner, Rick, 1972-

The Digital Collections website gathers two categories of content managed by the UC San Diego Library

UC San Diego Library  
Digital Collections

UC San Diego  
Research Data Collections

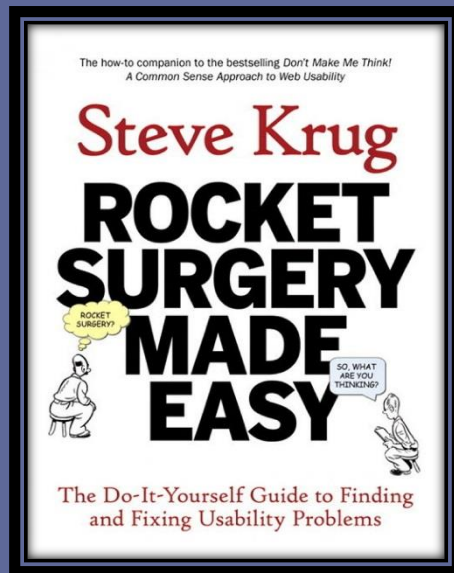
# Digital Collections Usability Testing Team

- ▶ **SuHui Ho** (Digital User Experience Librarian)
- ▶ **Vickie O’Riordan** (Visual Resources Coordinator)
- ▶ **Ho Jung Yoo** (Research Data Curation Analyst)

- ▶ Not developers!
  - ▶ Benefit: Objectivity
  - ▶ Cost: More start up time



# Do-it-yourself usability testing guide – an easy read!



“Three [users]  
is enough”

“You’re mostly in it  
for the surprises”

“There’s no data  
gathering involved”

# Methods

- ▶ 5 UCSD students not familiar with the site
- ▶ “Think-aloud protocol”
- ▶ Participant and screen recording software





## Goals of testing:

- ▶ Can users navigate efficiently?
- ▶ Can users understand content?
- ▶ What are their overall impressions of the website?

Task 6: You heard that the library has scanned the UCSD Guardian. You want to see a copy of the newspaper.


- Without using the search function, see if you can find a copy
- What are the size and format of the file?
- Can you download the newspaper?

# Users reported a very positive overall experience with the DAMS

- ▶ “This is a pretty easy-to-use website”
- ▶ “Layout looks clean, very modern”
- ▶ “It’s organized neatly”

Easy-to-use digital object viewer  
and understandable metadata  
displays.

**Camp Matthews, Barracks, Building No.209, No.223; Gas Station, Building No.526**



[Hide details](#)

**Creation Date**  
1964

**Digital Source Type**  
reformatted digital

**Format**  
[Image](#)

**Existence and location of originals**  
This digital image is a surrogate of Neg. No. an3\_r4025\_3 from the Office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor. Facilities Design and Construction Camp Matthews Buildings Photographs (RSS 4025)

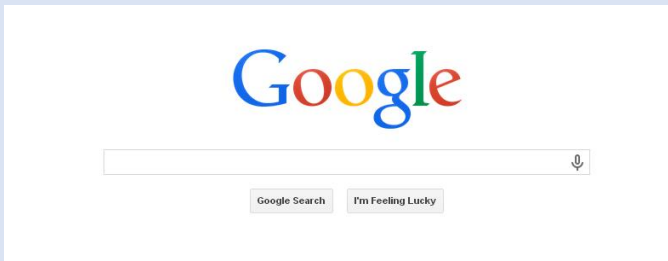
**Identifier**  
an3\_r4025\_3

**General physical description**



# Finding 1:

“Reminds me of Google!”



# Finding 1:

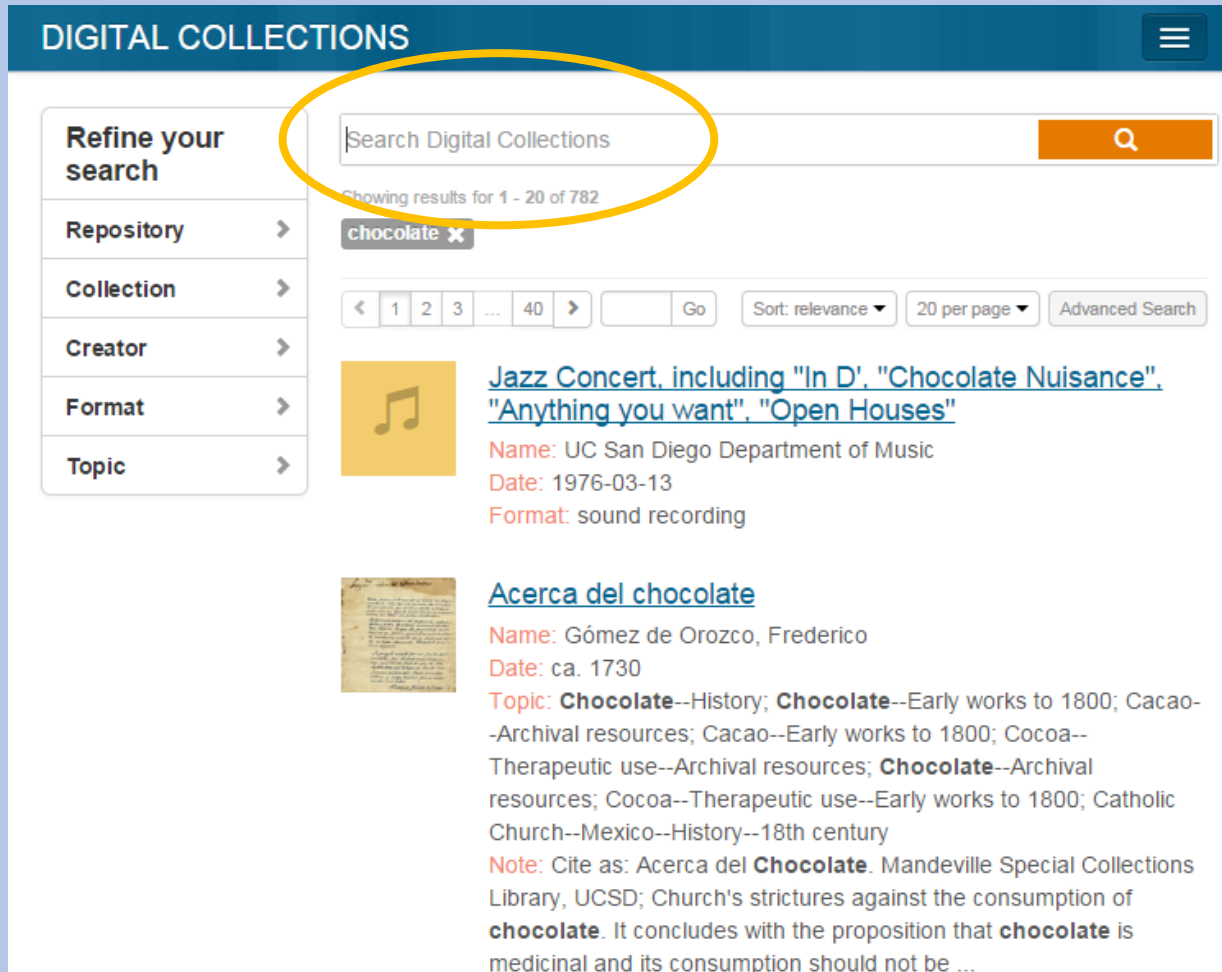
“Reminds me of Google!”



Below screen

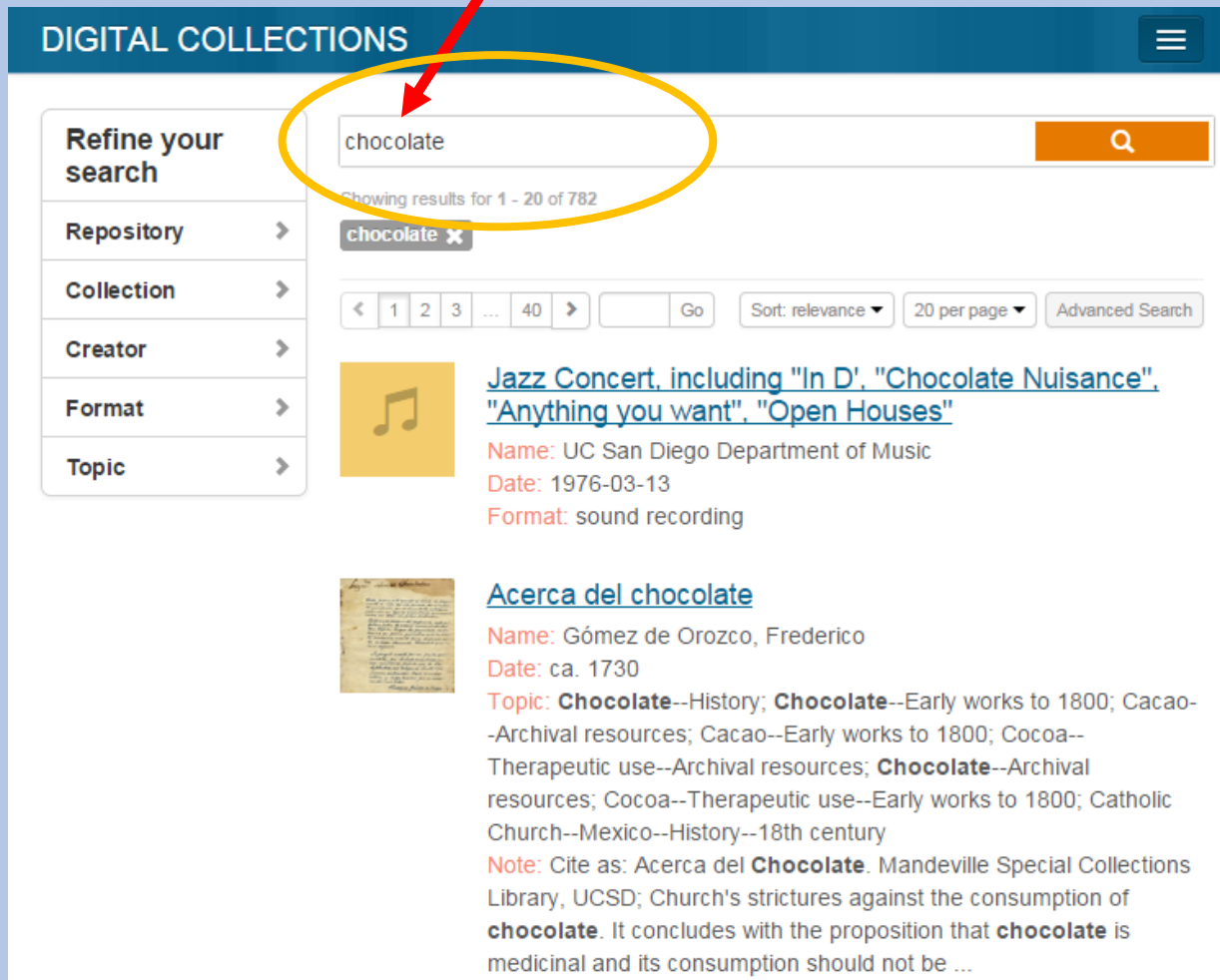
A screenshot of the Digital Collections website. The header is blue with the text "DIGITAL COLLECTIONS" and a menu icon. Below the header is a large illustration of a cartoon character. The main content area is blue and features a search bar with the text "Search..." and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar is the text "Or browse by Collection, Creator, Format, or Topic". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled "UC San Diego Library Digital Collections" and features a circular logo for "The Library UC SAN DIEGO". Below the logo is the text "Digitized versions of selected collections covering topics such as art, film, music, history and anthropology". The right column is titled "UC San Diego Research Data Collections" and features a circular logo for "Research Data Curation Program". Below the logo is the text "Research data generated by UC San Diego researchers". At the bottom of the page is the text "Currently totaling 76,828 research data sets, images, documents, video and audio recordings, we continue to add items over time, and we invite you to search or browse these collections for research or educational purposes." and the UC San Diego logo.

## Finding 2: Users want to narrow their search from the search results page, not start over



The screenshot displays a digital collections search interface. At the top, a dark blue header contains the text "DIGITAL COLLECTIONS" and a hamburger menu icon. Below the header, a search bar is highlighted with a yellow oval. The search bar contains the text "Search Digital Collections" and a magnifying glass icon. To the left of the search bar is a "Refine your search" sidebar with categories: Repository, Collection, Creator, Format, and Topic. Below the search bar, the text "Showing results for 1 - 20 of 782" is visible. A search filter "chocolate" is applied, shown as a tag with an 'x' icon. Below the filter, there are navigation controls: a set of page numbers (1, 2, 3, ..., 40) with arrows, a "Go" button, a "Sort: relevance" dropdown, a "20 per page" dropdown, and an "Advanced Search" button. The search results are listed below. The first result is a sound recording titled "Jazz Concert, including 'In D', 'Chocolate Nuisance', 'Anything you want', 'Open Houses'". It includes a yellow music note icon, the name "UC San Diego Department of Music", the date "1976-03-13", and the format "sound recording". The second result is a document titled "Acerca del chocolate". It includes a small image of a document page, the name "Gómez de Orozco, Frederico", the date "ca. 1730", and a detailed topic description: "Chocolate--History; Chocolate--Early works to 1800; Cacao--Archival resources; Cacao--Early works to 1800; Cocoa--Therapeutic use--Archival resources; Chocolate--Archival resources; Cocoa--Therapeutic use--Early works to 1800; Catholic Church--Mexico--History--18th century". A note at the bottom of the second result reads: "Note: Cite as: Acerca del **Chocolate**. Mandeville Special Collections Library, UCSD; Church's strictures against the consumption of **chocolate**. It concludes with the proposition that **chocolate** is medicinal and its consumption should not be ...".

## Finding 2: Users want to narrow their search from the search results page, not start over



The screenshot shows a digital collections search interface. The header is "DIGITAL COLLECTIONS" with a menu icon on the right. On the left, there is a "Refine your search" sidebar with categories: Repository, Collection, Creator, Format, and Topic. The main search area has a search bar containing "chocolate" and a search button. Below the search bar, it says "Showing results for 1 - 20 of 782". A filter tag "chocolate x" is visible. The search results are displayed in a list format. The first result is a sound recording titled "Jazz Concert, including 'In D', 'Chocolate Nuisance', 'Anything you want', 'Open Houses'" with a date of 1976-03-13. The second result is a document titled "Acerca del chocolate" with a date of ca. 1730. A red arrow points to the search bar, and a yellow circle highlights the search results area.

DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

Refine your search

Repository >

Collection >

Creator >

Format >


Topic >


chocolate

Showing results for 1 - 20 of 782

chocolate x

< 1 2 3 ... 40 > Go Sort: relevance 20 per page Advanced Search

 [Jazz Concert, including "In D", "Chocolate Nuisance", "Anything you want", "Open Houses"](#)  
Name: UC San Diego Department of Music  
Date: 1976-03-13  
Format: sound recording

 [Acerca del chocolate](#)  
Name: Gómez de Orozco, Frederico  
Date: ca. 1730  
Topic: **Chocolate**--History; **Chocolate**--Early works to 1800; Cacao--Archival resources; Cacao--Early works to 1800; Cocoa--Therapeutic use--Archival resources; **Chocolate**--Archival resources; Cocoa--Therapeutic use--Early works to 1800; Catholic Church--Mexico--History--18th century  
Note: Cite as: Acerca del **Chocolate**. Mandeville Special Collections Library, UCSD; Church's strictures against the consumption of **chocolate**. It concludes with the proposition that **chocolate** is medicinal and its consumption should not be ...

## Finding 3:

Users felt the list of Topics is too specific too early on

“I would like to see a simple subject heading – a place to begin my search.”

The screenshot shows a website titled "DIGITAL COLLECTIONS" with a navigation bar containing "Home", "About", "Browse By", "Help", "Sign In", and "The Library". Below the navigation bar is a "Refine your search" sidebar with three sections: "Creator", "Format", and "Topic". The "Topic" section is expanded, showing a list of specific subjects with their respective counts. To the right of the sidebar is a "Browse by Collection" section with a button to "View current collections below. Click an image" and a pagination control showing pages 1, 2, and 3. Three collection items are visible, each with a thumbnail image, a title, and a description.

Refinement Category	Refinement Item	Count
Refine your search	Creator	
	Format	
	Topic	
	University of California, San Diego--History	10
	University of California, San Diego--Buildings	7
	University of California, San Diego--Faculty	5
	University of California, San Diego--Pictorial works	4
	Seuss, Dr.	3
	Spanish mission buildings--Mexico--	

**Browse by Collection**

View current collections below. Click an image

< 1 2 3 > Go

- **Baja California**  
Images of Baja California digitized. Includes landscapes, missions, etc. 1938-1997
- **Camp Matthews Photographs**  
Photographs and plans of Camp Matthews. 1964-1967
- **Center for Music Experimentation**  
Audio recordings from the Center for Music Experimentation, music, and performances.

# Takeaways

- ▶ Task writing was the most time consuming and challenging step. Important to communicate with stakeholders early to learn their specific goals.
- ▶ Both task development and the final report yielded actionable items for improving the site
  - ▶ Discovered bugs and usability issues
  - ▶ Specific action items for improving search function, navigation, and information delivery
- ▶ Keep reports as short as possible
- ▶ Make recommendations that are easy to implement, or the fix may not happen at all

# Thank You

Learn more:

- <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/about/digital-library/>
- <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/services/data-curation/>

Digital Collections Public Beta:

- <http://library.ucsd.edu/dc>

Contact Us:

- Digital Library Development Program  
Email: [dlp@ucsd.edu](mailto:dlp@ucsd.edu)
- Research Data Curation Program  
Email: [research-data-curation@ucsd.edu](mailto:research-data-curation@ucsd.edu)

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- Judy Samatmanakit