

## Results of the usability tests on e-book platforms

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In the last issue of Tietue, I told you about the [project](#), a usability test of four different e-book platforms, I was doing during my six-month internship at the Jyväskylä University Library. In this issue, I want to tell you about the results and insights that were gained from this project.

Four different platforms and their functions were tested for usability. They included Ebrary, Springerlink, Ebsco and Dawsonera. The most important part of the tests was a task sheet that was given to eight test persons. They were asked to complete and comment on it. Their work and comments were caught with a video camera, to make the evaluation easier.



E-book with iPad.

### Familiarity helps when using different e-book platforms

Something that was made obvious during the tests is that familiarity helps a lot when it comes to using e-book platforms. As the collection within Ebrary is also included in the library's online catalogue, has been in use for several years and consists of such a big number of publications, most of the test persons were already familiar with this platform and its functions.

Familiarity made working easier and resulted in positive comments

Some of the test persons had used Ebscohost for journals and articles before. This made working with these two platforms easier and might be why comments on them were mainly positive. Also, especially within the lists of results, the layouts of the platforms showed a lot of similarities, making it easier for users to navigate.

All platforms except Springerlink are aggregator platforms that include books of more than one publisher. They also include e-books only and so their search options are optimized for e-books. Springerlink, on the other hand, includes many different document types from one publisher only, so their focus is not on e-books and the search options are much different and more optimized for journal articles. This made some aspects of the search quite difficult, for example searching for publication years. However, Springerlink will launch a new platform later this year.

## **Functions for limiting searches varied significantly**

Once a search has been performed, all platforms but Dawsonera offer possibilities of limiting or narrowing down the search results very easily in a given section. Ebrary offers a list of keywords that can be selected by simply clicking on them to reduce the search results to certain aspects.

If more than one keyword is selected from this list, it is possible to connect them with either AND or OR. In Springerlink and Ebscohost, it is not only possible to narrow down search results using keywords, but also using other criteria.

User experiences on different functions varied from confusing to very helpful

Springerlink lets the user limit the search to results of a certain collection, copyright year, upload date, content type and language. It is possible to combine aspects of the different criteria, but it is not possible to select more than one aspect within one criterion, e.g. results in English and German. Ebscohost offers the possibility of limiting search results to a timespan of publication dates, source types, subjects, categories and databases. All combinations are possible.

While some test persons found the search limits in Ebrary confusing and not very helpful, the majority found the limiting options in Springerlink and especially in Ebscohost very useful.

All four platforms have tool-bars of some sort, offering different functions to the user. They include limiting options within searches, different ways to navigate through books and more. All platforms offer the possibility of bookmarking or saving a book and only Springerlink does not offer the possibility of copying or printing directly from the platform.

# **Results of the project – tools for future work at the library**

This project has been a starting point for very important usability testing at Jyväskylä University Library. It gives useful and important information not only on the content tested, but also on usability testing in general. It will be easier for the library to take on new test projects, using the insights, results and experiences gained during this test project.

Results of the project will be used to improve the use of e-books

Eventually, the results of the usability test concerning e-book platforms will be used to optimize given information on the use of e-books on the library's website, to improve the inclusion of e-books in the library's online catalogue and to enhance the courses and classes on the use of e-books and information literacy the library offers to its users.

While I am writing this, I am already back in Germany to continue my studies. I've learned a lot during the last six months and I can't wait to share this knowledge with my fellow students. This internship and the project have been a great personal gain and I am sure the experience of working and living abroad will help me in the future.

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