Susan Harum
sharum@illinois.edu

Federated Search Option
American Social History Online

Preliminary Findings from Usability Interviews
Historian’s Search Preferences

• Specific to general
  “I don’t use the internet until I’ve developed a framework for teaching a class and then I incorporate primary sources into the outline to validate points and engage students.”

• Search and browse within Collections

• Used every date feature available on the site and even asked for additional features.

• Look for controlled vocabulary to choose from, especially for narrowing search.
Users began by either browsing by date or limiting by date after browsing collections or using the quick search box.

- Begin with very specific keywords (begin narrow and broaden only if no relevant hits).
Thumbnails

• Thumbnails on results pages loved (and commented on) by all and used for determining usefulness of resource.

• “The great strength is the visuals. There are lots of ways to get text, but not a lot of easy ways to get images.”

• Good look and feel - very inviting and useful way to determine value of site quickly. “
Displaying 1-10 of 2,300 records < Previous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ... 229 230 Next >

1. Immigration Restriction League (U.S.) Immigration. Collection of Prescott Farnsworth Hall (Harvard College Library)
   Harvard University Library Virtual Collections: Immigration to the United States (1789-1930)
   tag this | full record | mods record (xml)

2. Do our states desire further immigration? what classes of immigrants do they want?
   Immigration Restriction League (U.S.), creator Immigration. Collection of Prescott Farnsworth Hall (Harvard College Library)
   Harvard University Library Virtual Collections: Immigration to the United States (1789-1930)
   tag this | full record | mods record (xml)

3. Bulletin of information for immigrants
   California, Commission of Immigration and Housing., creator Harvard University Library Virtual Collections:
   Immigration to the United States (1789-1930)
   tag this | full record | mods record (xml)

4. The law and regulations of Canada respecting immigration and immigrants
   Immigration Act Canada, creator Canada, Superintendent of Immigration. Harvard University Library Virtual
   Collections: Immigration to the United States (1789-1930)
   tag this | full record | mods record (xml)

---

Report on Fresno's immigration problem: with particular reference to educational facilities and requirements

Fresno's immigration problem California, Commission of Immigration and Housing., creator Harvard University Library Virtual Collections: Immigration to the United States (1789-1930)

tag this | full record | mods record (xml)

---

Immigration: statistics and charts illustrating the proposals of the National Committee for Constructive Immigration Legislation

National Committee for Constructive Immigration Legislation, creator Harvard University Library Virtual Collections: Immigration to the United States (1789-1930)

tag this | full record | mods record (xml)
Federated Search Feature

• “You know what I love – Google Books is beginning to digitize the key text sources for American History that are published. When I was putting together a reading packet for my students I was able to download many of the sources from Google books.”

• “I actually use Amazon books in a number of different ways – to remember a quote, check a footnote, or to check the way someone’s talked about a topic.”
Federated Search continued...

• “I like this. Amazon has changed my whole life. That, and programs like Ancestry.com that allow you to search newspapers across the country with keyword searches. It means I can really quickly access a much broader source.”
• “You might want to divide the secondary and primary sources in this.”
• “This could be useful in teaching undergraduates about the difference between primary and secondary..."
Use (or not) of tools

- Don’t use tagging services
- Don’t use Zotero but asked for the services Zotero provides (need the ability to download image and metadata.)
- Don’t use Collectus
- Don’t use OpenID
- Would use the Timeline and Maps view for teaching
Future tasks for improvement of the ASHO site:

• Homepage must be redesigned so that users can determine the usefulness/reliability of the site within a few clicks:
  
  – I’m going to spend about 5 minutes looking at a new source and the main thing I want to see is its breath and depth.”
  – “With all digital collections, I’m like – what’s in there?”
  – “I would probably ignore all this stuff on the home page and go right to the collections.”
• Quick search box too small/not in a prominent place and use is not clear (does it search individual collections or the ASHO web site?)
• Current subject clouds not useful because terminology is too general and not grouped together by related topics (Ex: campaign can mean presidential campaign or military campaign).
• Unclear terms need to be disambiguated (Ex: subject, topic for winnowing facets; name under advanced search drop down box choice.) Users would like a popup boxes to explain limiting search facet terms
• Users want suggestions for controlled
Value of Aggregated Collections

• “I think there’s merit to providing collections that have an intellectual coherence.”

• “Here’s my dream resources – the LoC digitized materials, the Google books stuff like these documentary histories that have been digitized, and you put them together and say here is the key edited primary sources that are digitized for Early American History….suddenly you have a resource that early American historians will find useful. All this stuff exists out there already, but it’s not organized.”

• “I’m less bothered by if they’re organized by collection than if they’re organized by theme.”

• “Good way for undergraduates to develop topic from within, especially since the resources are readily available.”

• “This is neat stuff – I got 40 hits and I didn’t expect anv. I
Value of Facets for Browsing and Winnowing

• “This is good if you were interested in a narrative of events for a particular year”.

• “You could use this for post hole research – if you wanted to check sources for 1900, then 1910. You don’t worry about the in between years, you’re looking for characteristics over time.”

• “What I really like is being able to browse by time, by decade and by individual times within decades. You could even add months to this feature”.

• “Historians usually know when someone died, so