Introduction

Problem:
How can we ensure that online library research guides are both accessible and usable for students with disabilities?

Solution:
An accessible user experience study identifies accessibility barriers that are not discovered by a rubric alone. In addition, testing users with disabilities can reveal general usability issues that impact all users.

Methodology

Participants:
Guided by usability testing methods, we conducted an accessible user experience study with 6 undergraduate students with the following diverse disabilities:

• ADHD
• Autism Spectrum Disorder
• Cerebral Palsy
• Generalized Anxiety Disorder
• Major Depressive Disorder
• Visual Impairment

Procedure:
The study included (1) three task scenarios using concurrent think aloud and (2) a retrospective interview.

Assistive technology and alternative communication methods were made available to participants. The tasks and interviews were recorded using screen and audio recording tools (Morae), and these recordings were later analyzed by the team.

Findings

Accessibility:
The study revealed that not all content on the library research guide was fully accessible. The participants identified accessibility barriers including hard to read links (color contrast, font size) and embedded objects that could not be read by the assistive technology provided.

Usability:
In general all participants found the guide to be well organized, easy to navigate, and effective for learning.

The study revealed the following areas for improvement:
• Adding instructional videos
• Adding visual design elements
• Modifying examples
• Adding headings
• Expanding content

Research Guide

Screenshot of the Library Research Guide including cursor path tracking.