

A Usable Moveable Feast: Usability and the Mobile Library Website

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UNIVERSITY *of* NEW BRUNSWICK
LIBRARIES

New Brunswick



University of New Brunswick

- Provincial university
- 12, 000 students
- 12 faculties
- Active research programs
- Two campuses
- Four libraries – one website



Mobile Landscape

- Mobile devices are becoming ubiquitous
- Nearly 4 billion subscribers worldwide (Horizon Report)
- Over 90% of Americans aged 18-29 have a mobile phone (Hu and Meier)
- Mobile cellular has been the most rapidly adopted technology in history (World in 2009)
- The evidence surrounds us on our campuses

Mobile Web Group

- Commitment to working collaboratively
- Culture of usability testing becoming entrenched
- Small(ish) group brings together relevant expertise: Services, Systems, Assessment, Branch perspective
- Meet as needed
- Reports to Web & eResources Committee

Survey: Method

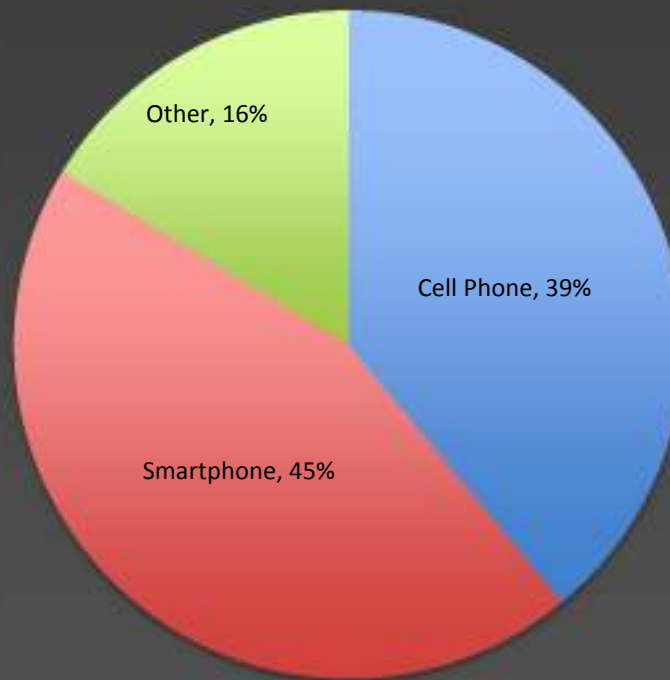
- Brief web-based survey
- Invitation sent to all students
- Open for three weeks
- No incentives

Survey: Response

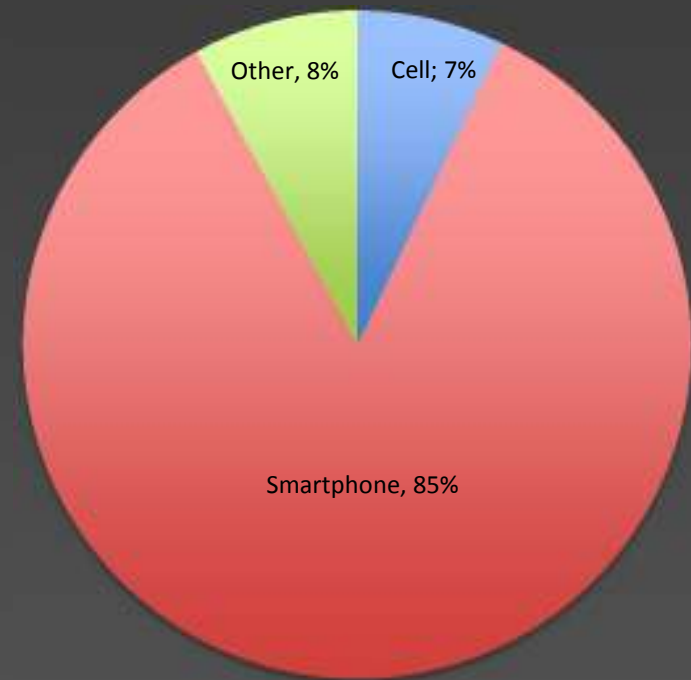
- Encouragement offered
 - “an excellent idea”
 - “even basic options would make a good start”
 - “this is a ‘must do’ thing”
- Nearly half the respondents were grad students
- More grad students than undergraduates owned smartphones

Survey: Devices

Current Device

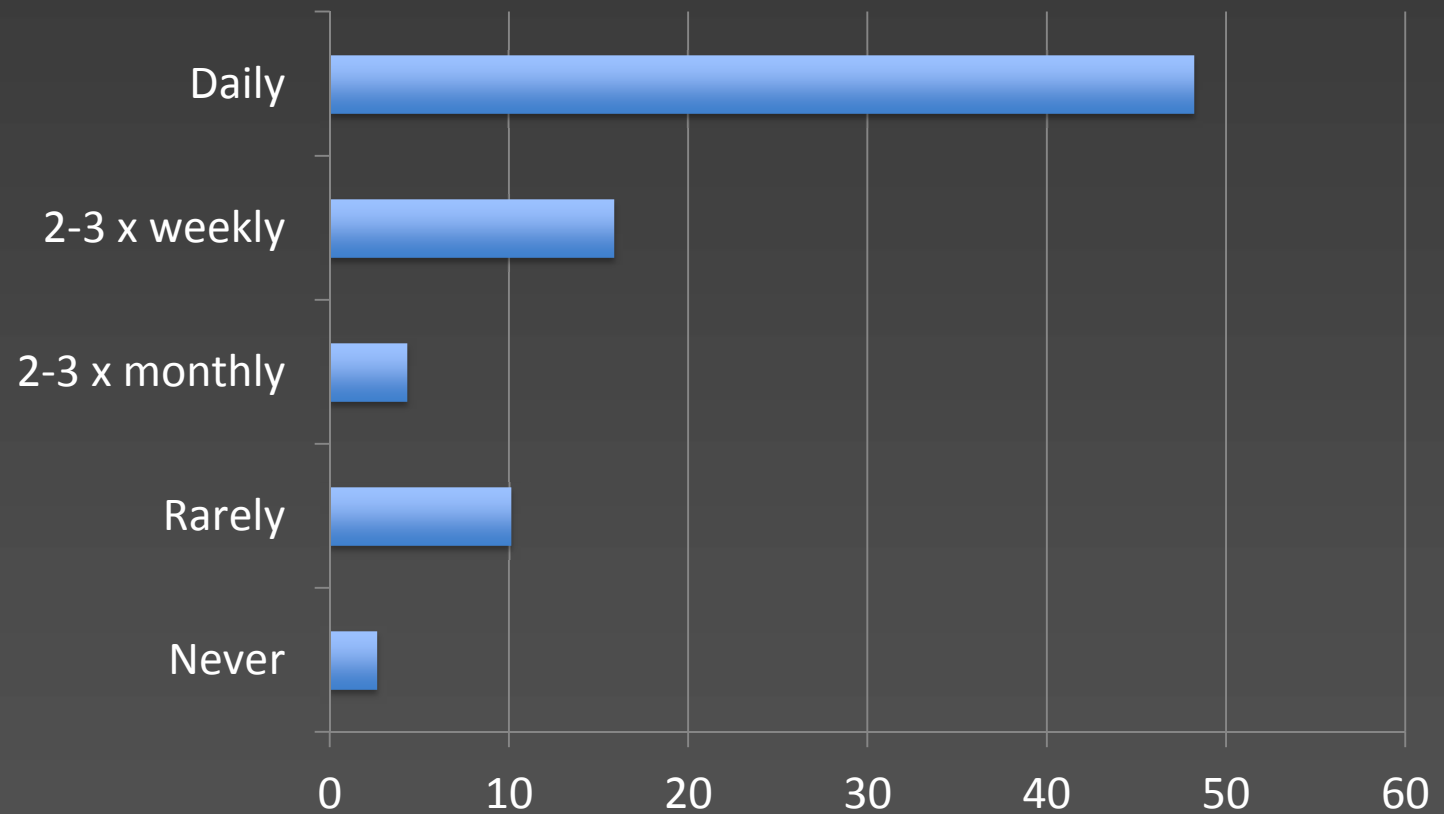


Next Purchase (<2yrs)



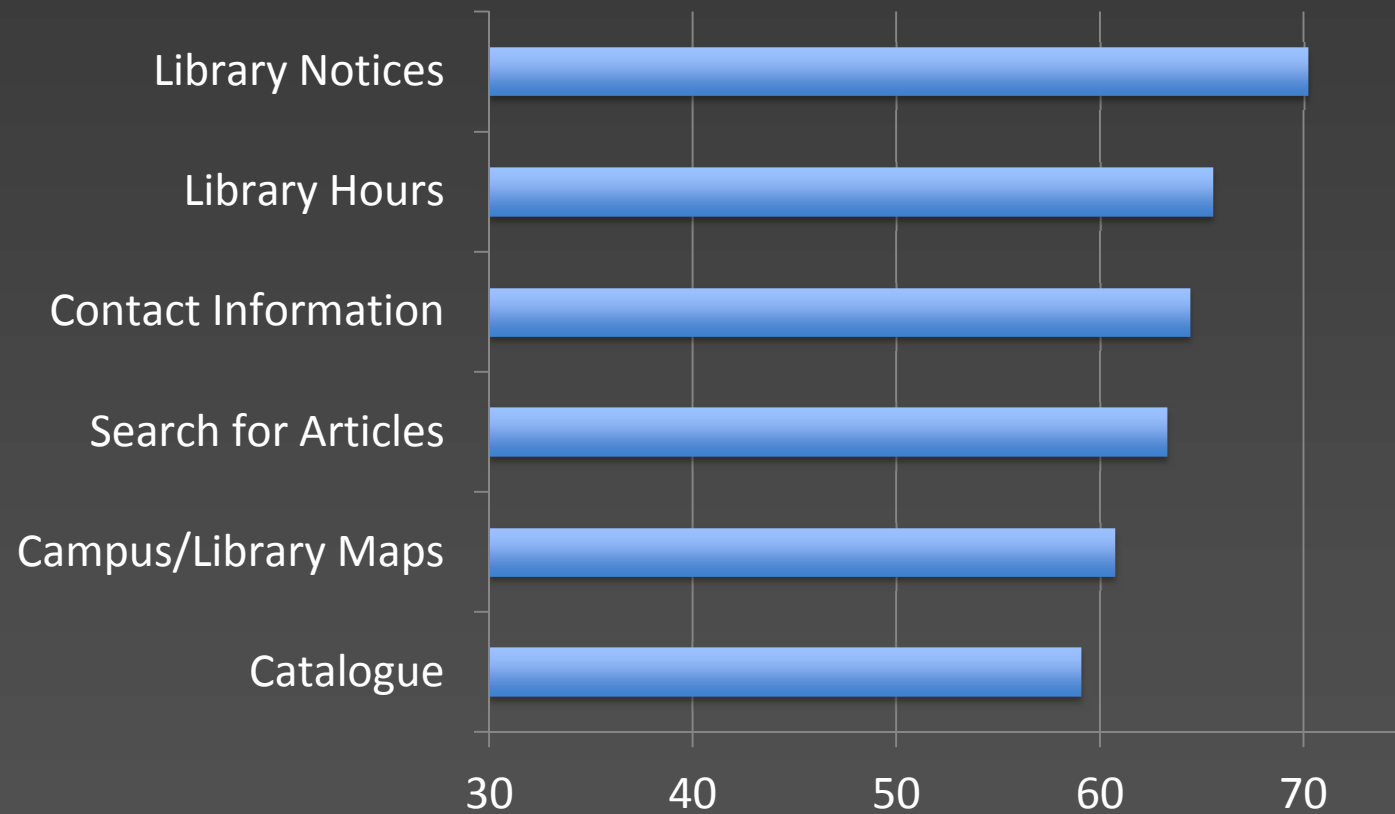
Survey: Mobile Web Use

How often do you access the mobile web?



Survey: Services of Interest

If available, how likely would you be to use...



Prototype Development

- Focus on common devices
- Limited number of resources and services:
 - Hours
 - Locations
 - Contacts and Help
 - Mobile databases
 - Web and apps



Mobile Usability Factors

- “It is neither easy nor pleasant to use the Web on mobile devices” (Nielsen, 2010)
- Mobile is a different (not smaller) web
 - Design, don’t scale, for mobile (Fling, 2009)
- Variety of mobile devices / capabilities
- Context is critical to understanding
 - Locations, network limitations
 - Usable does not equal useful

Test Design

- Two part test design
 - Off-site (independent) test and questionnaire
 - Intended to capture an element of context
 - Prompt users to think about use *in situ*
 - On-site (observed) test and interview
 - “Traditional” usability testing
 - Debriefing interview
- Graduate students (8)
 - Personally owned devices

Off-Site (Independent) Testing

- Unobserved
- URL provided to testers in advance
- Prompted to visit at a mobile location
- Questionnaire (web based)
 - Location
 - Technical difficulties
 - “What’s missing?”
- Prep for the visit

Off-Site Experiences

- On campus, home, work
- Expectations
 - Location information
 - Hours, maps, contacts
 - Search
 - absence of the catalogue noted
 - some technical issues with database access

On-Site Testing

- Scheduled < 1 week after off-site test
- Personal devices, personal preferences
- Six tasks
 - Location information (maps and hours)
 - Contact information (help and directory)
 - Search and access
- Debrief interview
 - Challenges
 - Accessing scholarly content

On-Site Testing: Recording



Findings: Interaction

- Network Preferences:
 - Most used mobile carrier's network
 - Cost a factor for some
- Text:
 - Short text entry not problematic
 - Search queries, IM
 - Long passwords not fun

Findings: Structure

- Simple structure
- Limited choices
- Immediate need



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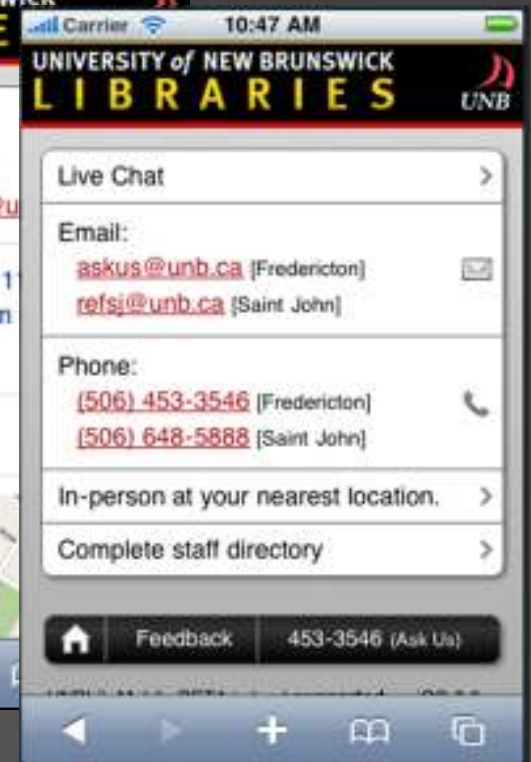
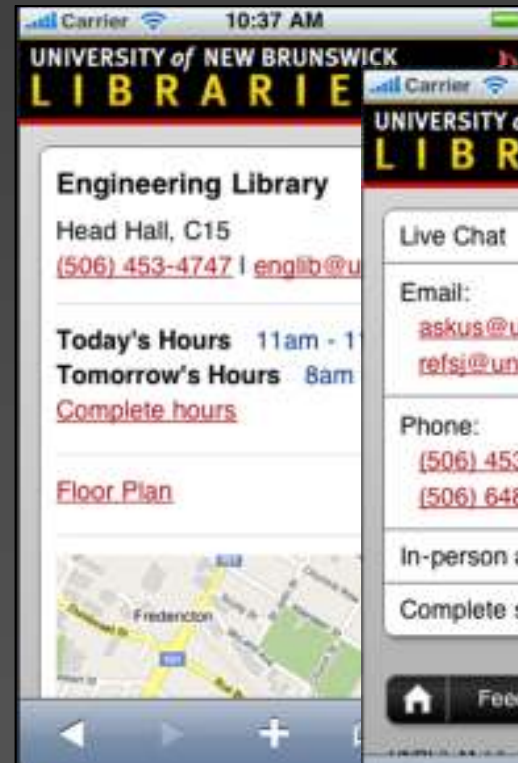
Today's Hours 10am - 11pm

Tomorrow's Hours 8am - 11pm

[Complete hours](#)

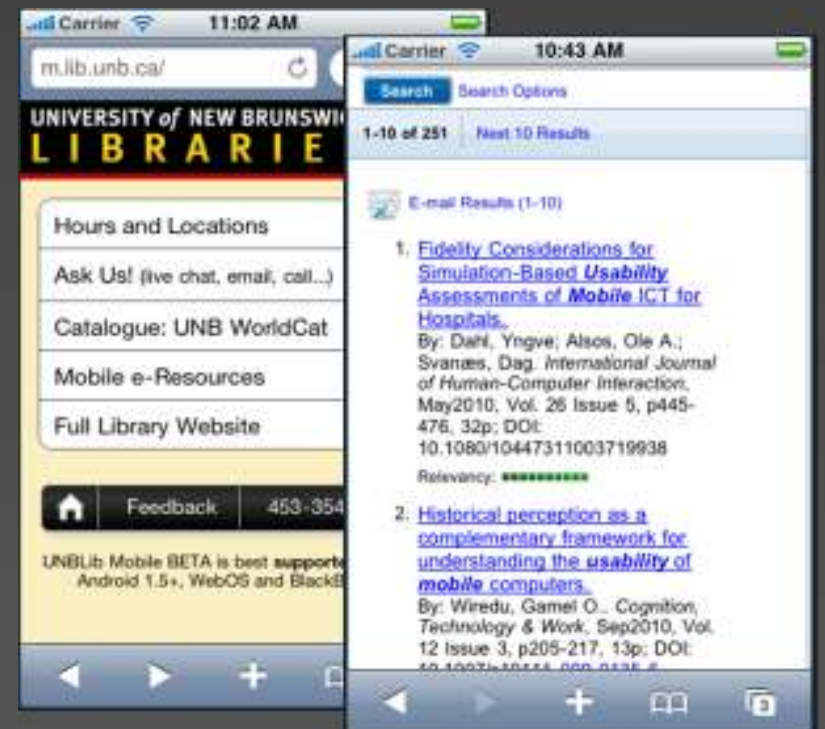
Findings: Communication

- Clearly label or contextualize links
- Flexible communication options



Findings: Search and Access

- Strong interest in search (cat & db)
- Low interest in extended reading
- Variables affecting experience
 - Authentication
 - Large files
 - Applications
- An app for that?



Moving Forward

- Continued focus on “web”
- Extending support
- Testing
 - Undergrads
 - Field testing
 - Catalogue
- Strategize for the mobile web



Thank You!

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