Continual Assessment Leads the Way: Best Practices in Mobile Website Design and Maintenance

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As best practices for designing mobile sites continue to shift along with mobile users' behaviors and expectations, it becomes increasingly important to keep the user at the center of mobile library website planning, implementation, and redesign. Oregon State University Libraries in the United States was in the vanguard of libraries that released mobile versions of their websites in 2009. While initial iterations of our mobile site were based primarily on testing performed by web developers and librarians, more recent changes have been increasingly informed by input from our users. We conducted our first survey of our mobile users' behavioral patterns in 2012-2013. This survey and the resulting redesign clarified how essential the process of continual assessment of our mobile site is. Through the process of analyzing not only the survey responses, but also through examining our web analytics, we realized the types of devices students use to access our site and the tasks they hope to perform via our mobile library site have shifted dramatically since the initial release of our mobile site. As a result, we conducted a similar user survey again in the fall of 2013 to observe how usage patterns and behaviors have changed over the past year.

This paper will report on the results of our user surveys and how we have combined both qualitative and quantitative results from our web analytics to help inform our decision-making. In addition, we will discuss best practices for maintaining a culture of continual mobile website assessment in an efficient and timely manner.