Babe… You’re a Bit of a Know It All

Student Love and Breakup Letters to a Library Research Skills Tutorial

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In February 2018, we launched the Library Research Skills Tutorial

This tutorial can be used to help you achieve academic success and undertake university-level research by providing the necessary skills to find useful information, evaluate it critically, and use it wisely for your various assignments.
Informal user testing gave us very positive results
We had two research questions that we wanted to explore:

1. Is the Library Research Skills Tutorial a useful tool when recommended to undergraduate students with research assignments?
We decided to investigate our question using a UX methodology

"User Experience is everything that happens to your users when they interact with your service in any way (physically or remotely). It includes everything they see, everything they hear, everything they do, as well as their emotional reactions.

- Priestner (2017)"
We chose a novel UX method: the love / breakup letter

A method that reveals how people relate to and are attached to everyday technologies [or services] by asking them to participate in the familiar activity of writing love or break-up letters (...). These letters tend to be playful, but also facilitate emotional expression in a way that can allow users to easily reflect on their attitudes and feelings.

- Walker (2018)
Our second research question relates to the effectiveness of this UX method.

1. Is the Library Research Skills Tutorial a useful tool when recommended to undergraduate students with research assignments?

2. Will the love / breakup letter method work in a library setting? Will students know how to participate? Will it provide helpful feedback, different from our pre-launch user testing?
We worked with four social sciences classes to recruit participants.
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Incorporated tutorial in assignment description.

Did not reveal methodology to students until evaluation day.
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- Incorporated tutorial in assignment description.
- Did not reveal methodology to students until evaluation day.
- Gave students only 20 minutes to write letters.
52 students participated in our study

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<td>(75)</td>
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<td>AHSC 281</td>
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We received 41 usable letters, which we divided into 4 groups.
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- Breakup
- Love
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- **Breakup**
- **Love**

56%
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- **Breakup**: 56%
- **Love**: 22%
We received 41 usable letters, which we divided into 4 groups:

- Breakup: 56%
- Love: 22%
- Swipe left: 15%
- One-night stand: 7%
Dear LRST,

As I am already pretty comfortable looking for articles and research papers I was very reluctant to go on a first date at all.

Seeing how a friend set us up, I decided to give it a chance. I wasn't particularly wowed as the information was pretty basic. Too many links also create stress. I personally would have preferred a webinar style tutorial

Anyway, it was nice to meet you

Take care
Dear Library Tutorial,

I'm sorry I never gave you a fair chance. I am sorry to say I've been using another software. Coming from cégep where I am used to using google scholar to write my papers, I have trust issues using someone new.

I suggest to promote yourself competitively to convince me why I should choose you. Don't be so shy next time, brag about your qualities!

I am not used to new relationships and tend to stick to my old ways.

Maybe in the future I will give you a second chance

I mean it when I say, it's not you it's me.

Love, Google Scholar user
Dear Library Research Skills Tutorial,

Our relationship is kind of like when you try and make a meal for the first time. You already have an idea of how it should be prepared, but you feel somewhat unsure of all the intricacies of how to go about it. Looking at the long list of steps to follow is daunting and makes you question if it's really worth it or if you should just pop a microwavable meal in instead. You muster up all your energy and plow forward. As you continue, you see that it isn't so hard at all, and when the meal is done, it was well worth [it]. The next time you make the meal however, you don't follow the guidelines. You might look at it every now and then for a reminder, but generally you don't need it and want to go forth and try things on your own. You were great at the start (...) However, I've grown since then and want to fly on my own now. We can stay in touch.
We uncovered five major themes in the letters, divided into two frames: tutorial characteristics and student context.
It’s not you, it’s me
Attitude towards library research:
Refers to how students perceive library research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library research attitude</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
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<td>Excerpts</td>
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Confidence: students already know how to do library research or learned it previously

If I have made it to university its because this isn't the first paper I write
Preferred learning or searching style: How students prefer to learn or where they prefer to get library research help or to search for information

I have found other, better, more user friendly resources to have my academic paper writing time with
Is the Library Research Skills Tutorial a useful tool when recommended to undergraduate students with research assignments?
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Gross & Latham (2009)

[S]tudents report that they do not use electronic resources such as help files or online tutorials. Their overwhelming preference is just to ask someone else, whether that is a family member, a friend, a classmate, or the person who happens to be sitting next to them.

[P]eople who have a lot of confidence about their level of ability are unlikely to seek opportunities to build skills they think they already have. (....)
The answer to the second research question is more nuanced.

2. Will the love / breakup method work in a library setting? Will students know how to participate? Will it provide helpful feedback, different from our pre-launch user testing?
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Will the love / breakup method work in a library setting? Will students know how to participate? Will it provide helpful feedback, different from our pre-launch user testing?

30 letters had a love letter structure
The methodology may be more successful if attempted with a technology / service that elicits attachment.

Will the love / breakup method work in a library setting? Will students know how to participate? Will it provide helpful feedback, different from our pre-launch user testing?
Acknowledgements
Andrea Cameron, Dianne Cmor

References


Thank you!