



Don't Make Me Type

Students' Perceptions of Library Catalogues Using Tablet Computers

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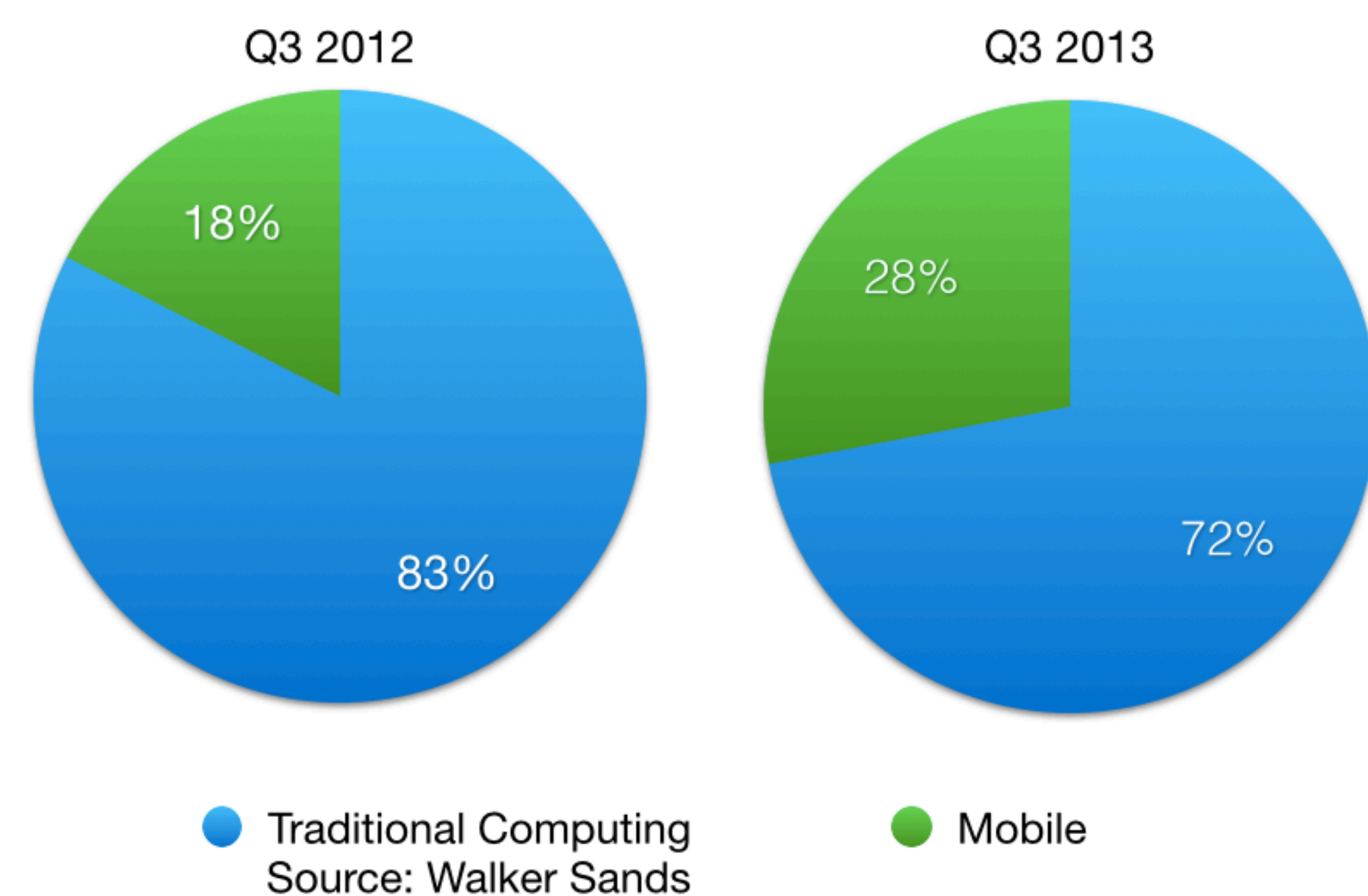
Research Question & Overview

The objective of this pilot study was to ascertain students' perceptions of online library catalogues using tablet computers. Specifically, the NEOS Consortium catalogue was tested.

Why is mobile usability testing important?

The percentage of web traffic from mobile devices continues to grow year-over-year. Increasingly, students are accessing digital materials via a tablet or smartphone, so it is important that library catalogues have interfaces that are optimized for these devices.

Percentage of Mobile Web Traffic



Related Literature

- There are a limited number of studies that focus on tablet usability exclusively.
- Many usability studies regarding mobile computing.
 - Portland State University – 2012
 - Ryerson University – 2011

Data Collection

- Four graduate students from the University of Alberta Education Department were contacted by the primary investigator to participate in the study. The graduates were given the pseudonyms Sonny, Cher, Hall, and Oates.
- The participants were asked to complete seven timed usability tasks on a tablet computer of their choice, using the NEOS catalogue.
- Following the tasks, participants answered a variety of semi-structured interview questions regarding their device usage and Internet browsing habits.

Conclusions

Of all the usability tasks, 4, 6, and 7 took the most time on average. Each of these three tasks involved some type of text input by the participants, which included conducting searches and authentication.

Usability Task Times

Tasks (seconds)	Sonny	Cher	Hall	Oates	Averages
1	9	39	7	17	18
2	5	9	5	7	6.5
3	4	3	5	4	4
4	41	42	27	20	32.54
5	4	3	6	3	4
6	49	31	29	45	38.5
7	37	19	30	36	30.5
Totals (seconds)	149	146	109	132	134

Themes

All qualitative interview data was coded and organized into three major themes

1. Catalogue design and functionality

- Searches were slow, and participants felt a tablet was not ideal for text entry.
- Scrolling through lists was tedious on a touchscreen.
- Participants unanimously disliked authenticating using their library barcode and PIN, as the process is slow and required multiple sign-ins.

2. Participants' device usage habits and preferences

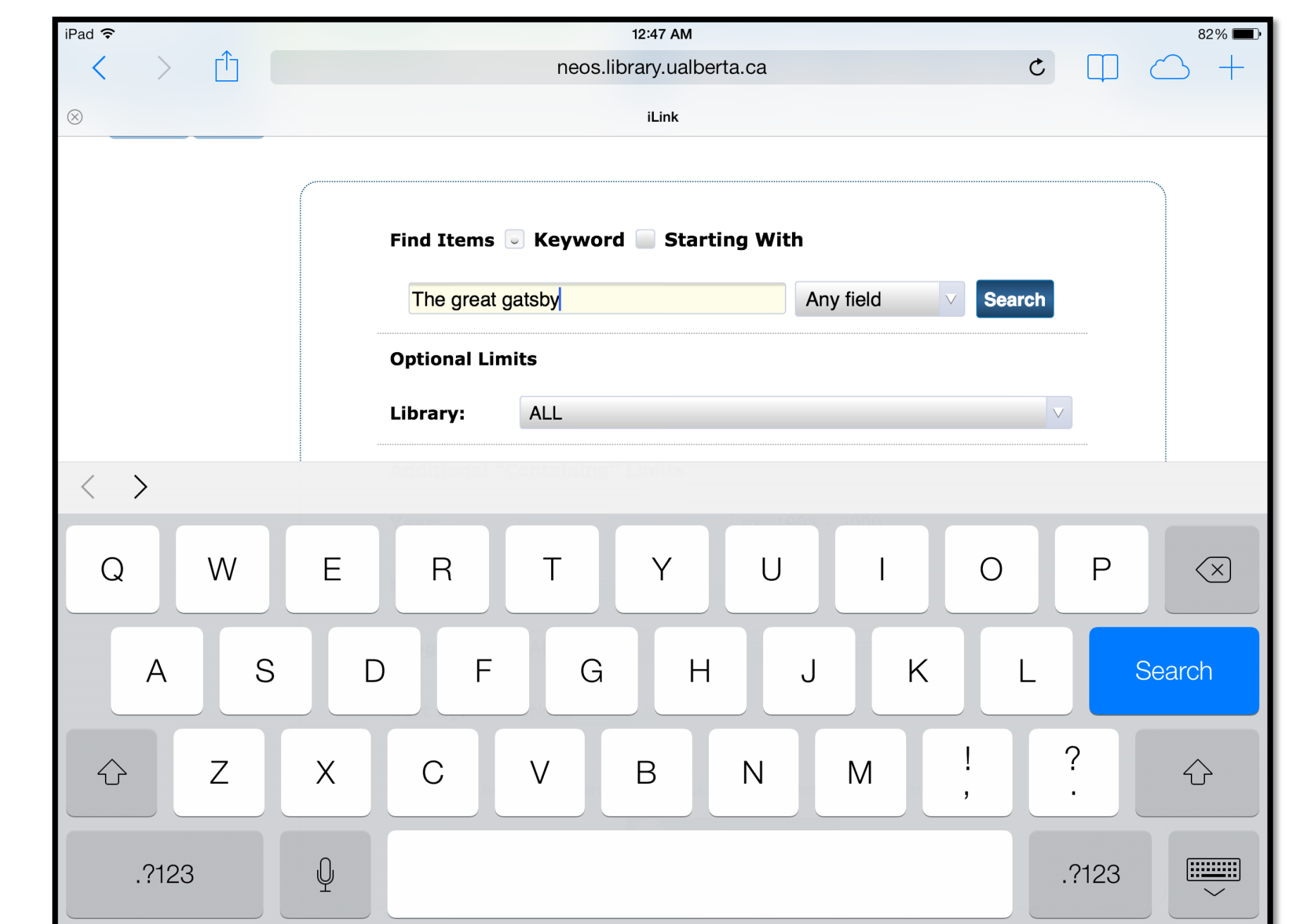
- Three of the four participants did not use a tablet as their primary device.
- Tablets were primarily used for web browsing and entertainment.
- Laptops were largely preferred for research intensive tasks and catalogue searching.

3. Information seeking behavior

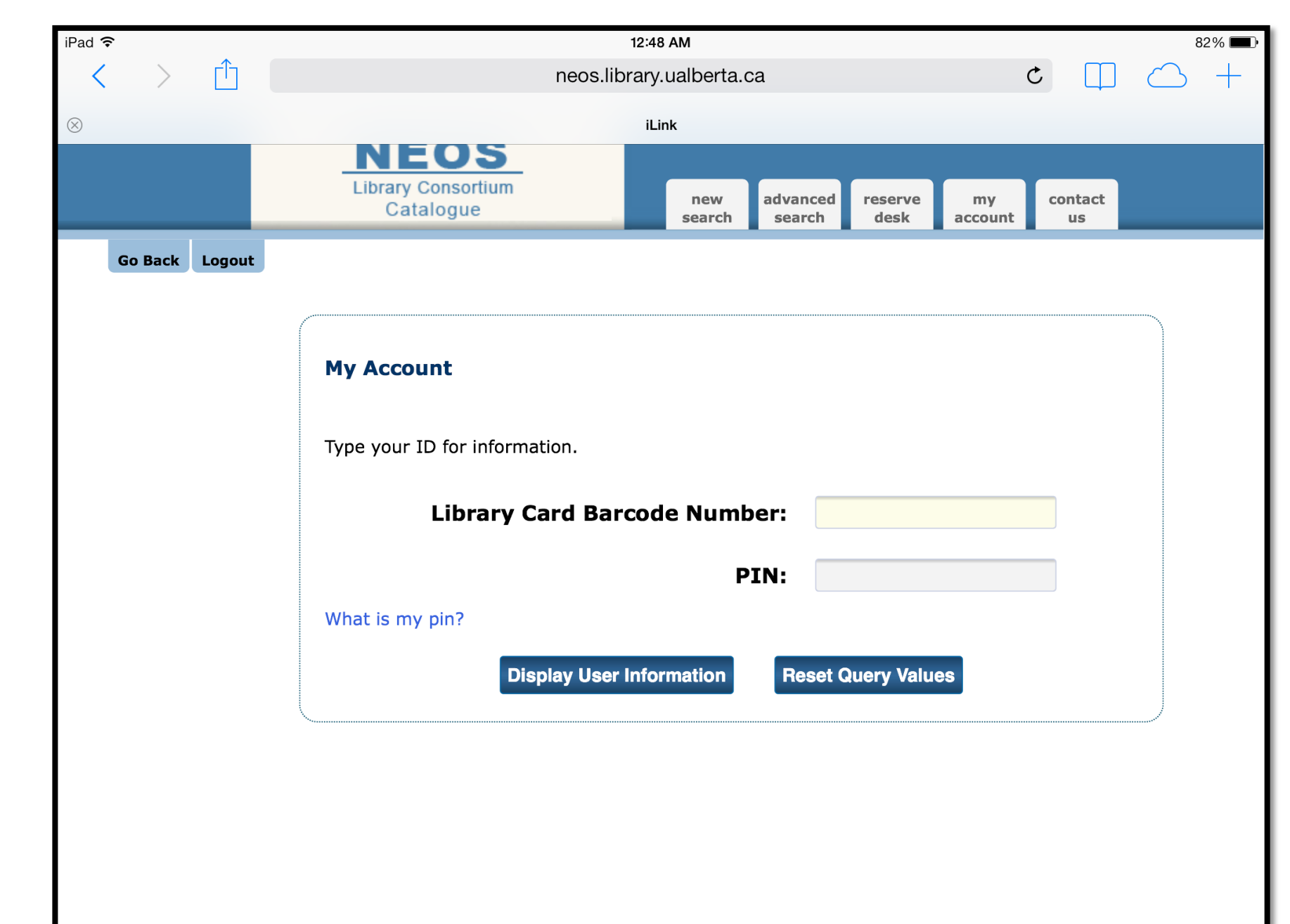
- Two of the four participants did not regularly consult NEOS, and instead they preferred to use the University of Alberta's integrated search system.
- NEOS was used most heavily when participants had to conduct research for an assignment.
- Participants felt NEOS was well promoted by the University of Alberta librarians.

Mobile App?

- Participants were asked if they would be interested in using a NEOS mobile app.
- Reactions were mixed, and participants were generally happy using a web-based version of the catalogue.



Conducting searches in NEOS



Authentication via library barcode and PIN