

The usability issues of faceted navigation in digital libraries

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Context

For more than five years, the project ACCEPT, a subproject of a Swiss national initiative e-lib.ch, analyzed the usability & usefulness of digital libraries, by using quantitative as well as qualitative methods for user centered design. Several design issues returned regularly. This poster illustrates the latter, based on an assemblage of all lessons learned during every evaluation. Furthermore, it gives recommendations to prevent common mistakes in the future.

Methods

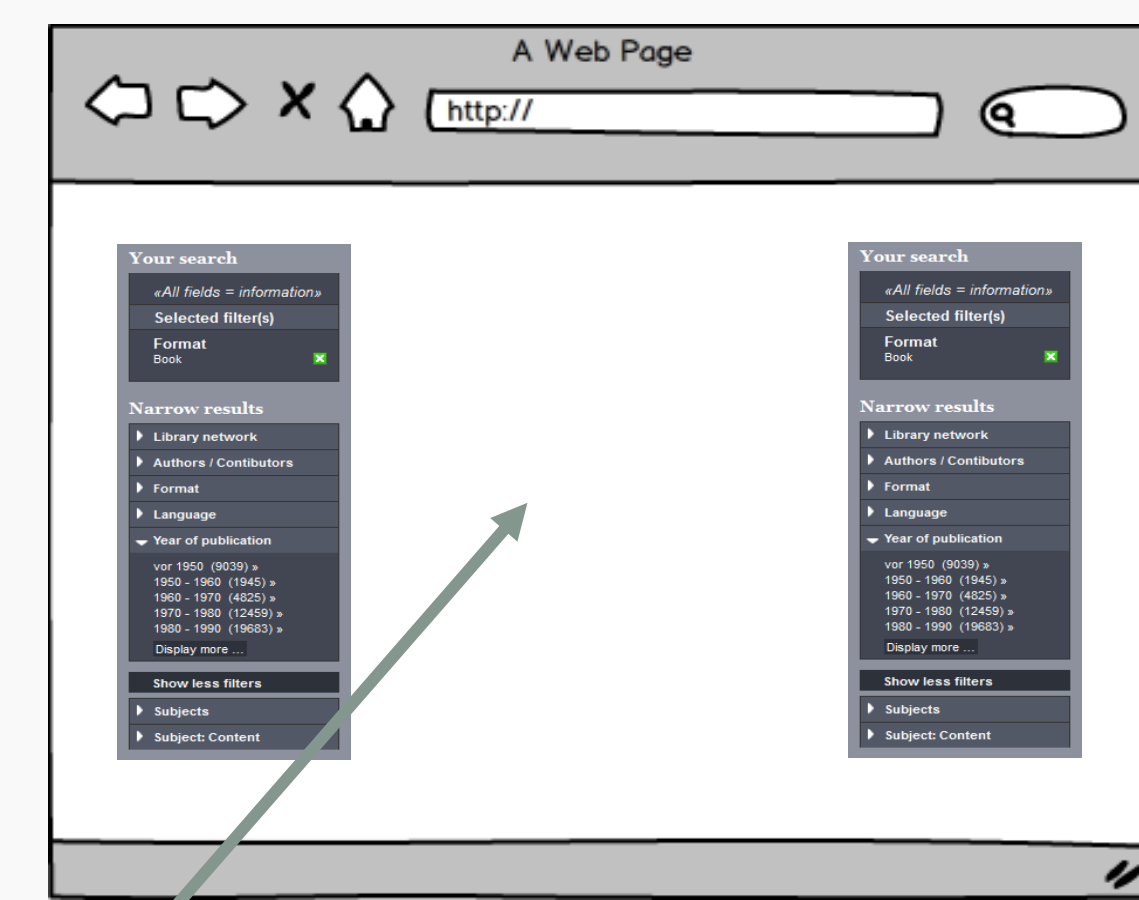


Most common identified design issues

Left/right

There is no preference for right or left. User's eyes have to be guided to faceted navigation.

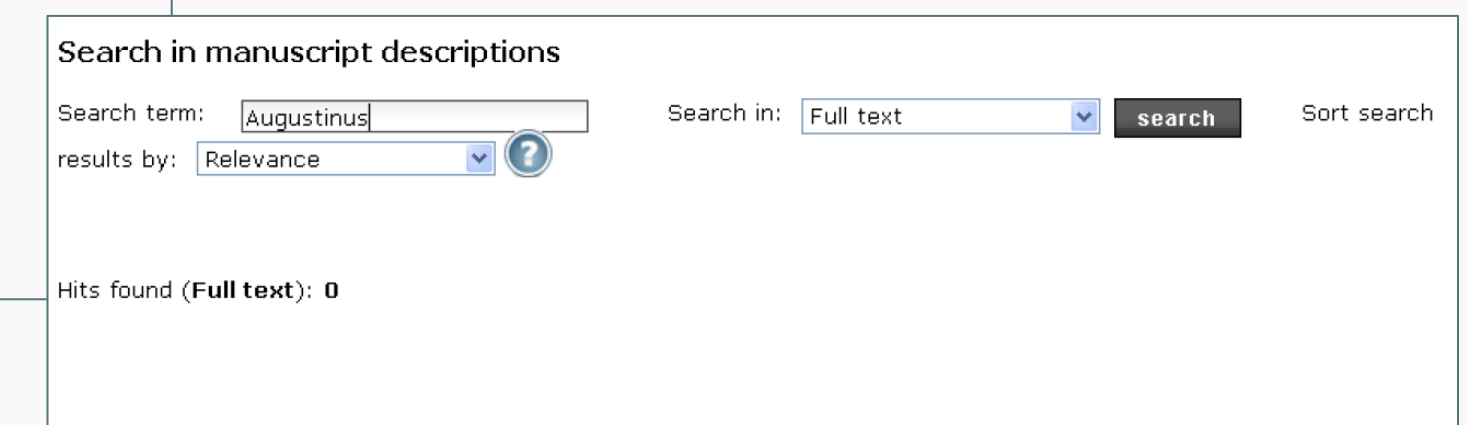
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When introducing a new search term, facets should be reset. If this is not the case, there may be no results.

Restart

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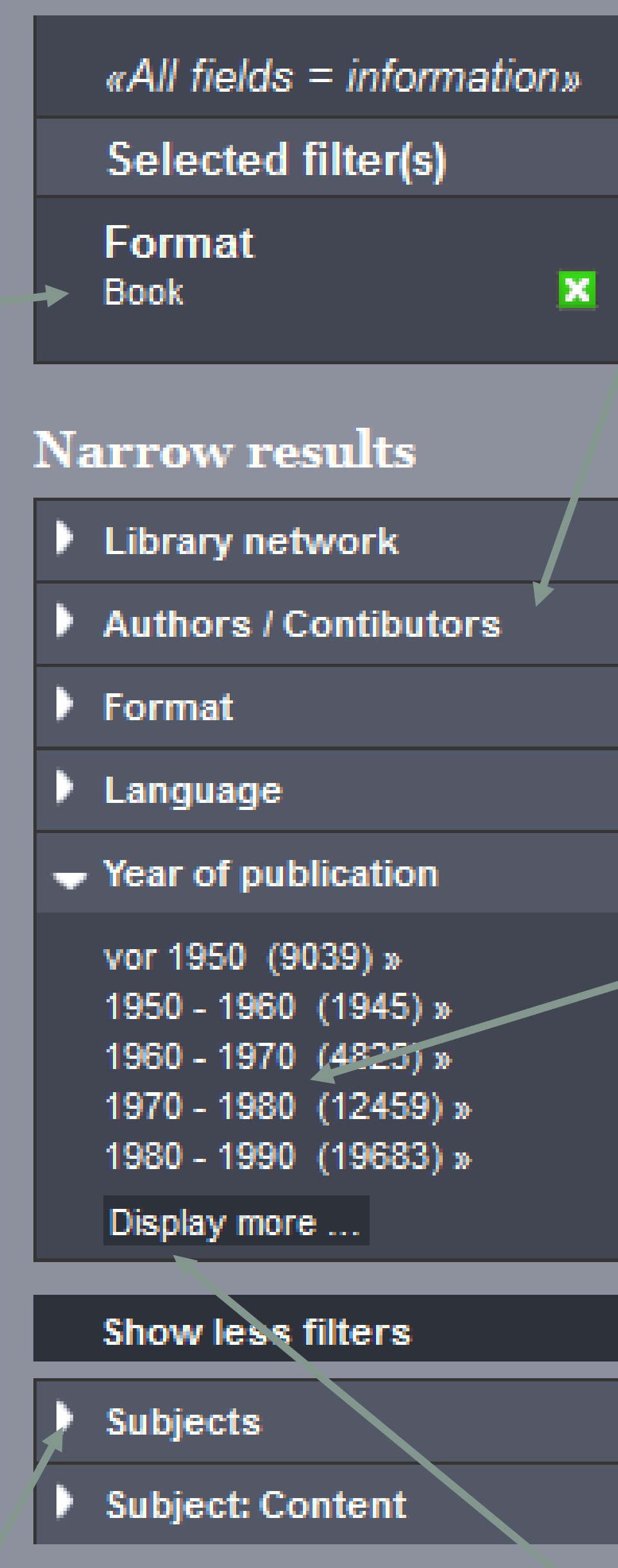


Breadcrumbs

Once a facet has been selected by a user, a breadcrumb appears indicating the selected value. Experience has shown that breadcrumbs are often not looked at, because of small font styles or an unclear design. It would be preferable to display them in a different visual display and slightly adapt the design.

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Your search



Labelling

For every facet, it is vital to have a clear and concise labeling. The facet "authors/contributors" makes no distinction between authors and contributors. In this case it is recommended, for the sake of simplicity, to only use one label, i.e. that of "authors".

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Year range

Another facet which often leads to problems is the year. First of all, no year should be used in double, as shown in the picture. A solution would be: 1971-1980 etc. Furthermore, ranges should get smaller when filtering more into detail. An alternative option are chronological sliders.

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Size

Size is an important matter. Due to information overload, digital libraries tend to use too small font size. Consequently, users are not able to read the content of a website properly and won't be satisfied. The font size should at least be 12ptx on digital resources.

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Accordion

A so called «accordion» may be a possibility to hide or display facets. Furthermore, result numbers must be enlargeable by implementing a «display more» option beyond every facet.

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Sources

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