Research Brief

Preliminary Findings Concerning the Perceptions of the Online Catalog

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Purpose of Brief

The purpose of this work was to illustrate the findings stemming from a brief survey designed to gather preliminary feedback concerning the online catalog.

Summary of Findings

- Classified Staff (nine respondents), continuing students (six respondents), and faculty (four respondents) completed the survey.
- Fifty percent of respondents reported that the online catalog provides them with the information they need and that the catalog is a helpful resource.
- Between 5 and 15 percent of respondents reported a need for improvement on five of the seven scaled survey items.
- Open-ended feedback suggests that respondents are satisfied with the accessibility of the online catalog; however, it also suggests the need for an index in which to be able to search through the catalog.

Overview

Crafton Hills College has developed and published an online catalog as of July 1, 2015. To help ensure that the catalog is meeting the needs of the college community, the Dean of Student Services and Student Development, the Catalog/Schedule Data Specialist, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, and Planning collaborated in developing a survey meant to gather preliminary feedback concerning several facets of Crafton Hill's online catalog.

The resulting findings indicated the following among the 19 respondents:

- All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the online catalog is user-friendly.
- All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the online catalog is a helpful resource.
- Fifteen percent of respondents disagreed with the statement that the online catalog is easy to locate on the CHC website.

Possible Implications and Limitations

These findings offer a preliminary examination of the perceptions concerning the online catalog. Such evidence is largely positive, suggesting that the online catalog is a highly useful resource. On the other hand, such findings are also based on a limited sample; as a result, they should not be taken to be representative of the broader campus community. A broader implementation – one targeting multiple campus stakeholders – is necessary to increase our confidence that the resulting findings are indeed generalizable across campus.

Methodology

The survey contained 11 total items. Seven of the 11 items were scaled items with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Three items were open-ended questions that inquired about what respondents liked most about the online catalog, how they believed the online catalog could be improved, and whether they had any additional comments concerning their experience with the online catalog. Lastly, one demographic item asked respondents to report whether they had accessed the online catalog and a second asked them to report their affiliation with the college (e.g., student, staff member, or faculty member). The survey was exclusively paper-based.

Findings

As illustrated in Table 1, almost half of all respondents were classified staff (47.4%), followed by continuing students (31.6%), and faculty (21.1%). Twenty of 21 respondents reported having previously accessed the online catalog.

Table 1

The College Affiliation of the College Catalog Survey Respondents

College Affiliation	Number of Respondents	Percent
Classified Staff	9	47.4
Continuing Student	6	31.6
Faculty	4	21.1
Total	19	100

Note. Two respondents did not answer this question.

Table 2 illustrates the percentage of responses for each response choice by scaled survey item, and it also identifies the corresponding mean (or average) response on the aforementioned 1-4 scale. Findings indicated that between 85% and 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each of the seven scaled items. The survey item garnering the highest mean rating (3.45) was concerning how easy it is to navigate the various sections of the online catalog, and the item with the highest percentage of *strongly agree* responses was concerning whether the online catalog offers a comprehensive amount of information (45%). While no respondent strongly disagreed with any scaled item, the survey item garnering the highest percentage of *disagree* responses was the one concerning whether the online catalog was easy to locate on the CHC website (15%).

Table 2

The Percentage of Responses Per Response Choice and the Mean for Each Scaled Survey Item

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Mean
It is easy to navigate the various sections of the online catalog	25.0%	60.0%	10.0%	0%	5.0%	3.45
The information provided via the online catalog is accurate	25.0%	70.0%	5.0%	0%	0%	3.20
The online catalog offers a comprehensive amount of information	45.0%	50.0%	5.0%	0%	0%	3.40
The online catalog provides me with the information I need	50.0%	40.0%	10.0%	0%	0%	3.40
The online catalog is easy to locate on the CHC website	45.0%	40.0%	15.0%	0%	0%	3.30
The online catalog is user-friendly	20.0%	80.0%	0%	0%	0%	3.20
The online catalog is a helpful resource	50.0%	50.0%	0%	0%	0%	3.50

Note. The responses for each item were recorded on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) scale. A total of 20 responses were offered per item. Findings are based upon 20 responses.

Tables 3 through 5 detail the specific open-ended feedback offered by respondents. With respect to what respondents liked most about the online catalog, the majority of respondents pointed to the accessibility of the catalog (Table 3). In contrast, when asked about how the online catalog could be improved (Table 4), 4 of the 14 responses pointed to the need of an index, while many of the remaining responses pointed out the need to make further updates to the catalog. As Table 5 illustrates, respondents affirmed the helpfulness of the online catalog.

Table 3

Open-Ended Feedback Concerning What Respondents Liked Most About the Online Catalog

Response Number	Response
1.	Search feature (because the chapter headings are not so useful)
2.	Provides detailed information on the course and its perquisites.
3.	Never
4.	It's outline and easily accessed from anywhere. Changes and corrections are much easier to do online vs paper.
5.	It is accessible and easy to navigate.
6.	It helps me determine classes I want to take before I register
7.	I don't like it.
8.	I liked how it describes each class and also when they are offered
9.	I like the list format and accessible within a couple clicks.
10.	I like my catalog.
11.	I like how I can see everything on one screen including units, prerequisites, & descriptions.
12.	Easy to find what you're looking for. User friendly.
13.	Easy to access & navigate
14.	Easy accessible
15.	I like the search engine. Lt helped find what I'm looking for easy to find
16.	Easy to use

Note. Responses were not altered; as a result, they may contain misspellings.

Table 4

Open-Ended Feedback Concerning How the Online Catalog Could be Improved

Response Number	Response
1.	Think a link to the full course description, and who will teach the course, and links to the bookstore would be helpful.
2.	The online catalog should only have classes that are actually offered at Crafton. ex. Arabic 101/102 => When is the last time that was taught?
3.	Side menu could be more descriptive/detailed
4.	Possibly add in index similar to old paper copies.
5.	Make it easier to locate on the website.
6.	If you make it easier to find that would be great.
7.	I would like an index.
8.	I don't like that it lists languages that are not offered here.
9.	I didn't even know it existed?
10.	Home >> 2015-2016 Catalog >> Courses - doesn't need "Course Abbreviations" since the abbreviations are already fully listed next to them. It's redundant. - Can we change the font? make it stand out more for emphasis. - Instead of "up one level" Just put "BACK", too confusing. Nice try though ... "Kiss" :)
11.	Good question.
12.	Catalog needs to be updated. Better user friendly search engine.
13.	Adding in an index
14.	Index · ability to email a single page

Note. Responses were not altered; as a result, they may contain misspellings.

Table 5

Open-Ended Feedback Concerning any Additional Comments Regarding the Online Catalog

Response Number	Response
1.	Once you find the catalog, It is comprehensive
2.	Great Job!
3.	Every time I find an issue, it gets fixed!

Note. Responses were not altered; as a result, they may contain misspellings.

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