

# Searching for Answers: A Case Study in Pursuit of Best Practices for Library FAQ

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## Abstract

This case study looks at trends in FAQ organization and title composition in corporate and university library FAQ. Similarities and differences between the two groups were noted and analyzed. The patterns discovered in this research prompted changes to one university library's FAQ page to test user engagement and discovery of relevant FAQ articles. User engagement for the library's FAQ page overall and for popular articles was tracked before and after the changes were made. This data was analyzed for the impact the changes made. Recommendations for best practices in organizing and composing titles for library FAQ are developed and presented.

*Keywords:* frequently asked questions, FAQ, websites, users, user-centered design, discovery

Every librarian knows that there is a certain set of questions that comes up over and over from patrons. These have become known as "Frequently Asked Questions" or FAQ. Over the last few decades, the answers to these questions have often been formally documented and shared in a variety of formats, most notably FAQ webpages. However, librarians may often assume that these are easy-to-use, straightforward resources and neglect to give the same attention to organization and discoverability that they dedicate to other informational resources. This study asks, "What are the best

practices for usability and user experience with FAQ pages?” and “How should librarians compose FAQ to improve the discoverability of the information contained within the articles?” It was born from the questions, “Why am I thinking about FAQ differently from other information resources?” and “Shouldn’t I be treating this knowledge base similarly to catalogs, databases, and other information resources?”.

To answer these questions, I looked at the scholarly discourse on the topic of FAQ and analyzed real-world examples of FAQ pages from both corporate websites and university library websites to explore common patterns of FAQ presentation and composition in both contexts. I then applied these findings to the FAQ knowledge base and webpage of my university library and tracked how these changes impacted user engagement with the library’s FAQ articles. This analysis then led to the construction and recommendation of generalized best practices for library FAQ pages, articles, and knowledge bases.

## Literature Review

The literature on how institutions (corporate and academic) should compose, organize, and present FAQ is amazingly sparse. There was some discussion on the topic of FAQ in the early 2000s, with another slight uptick in interest between 2015 and 2019. Only one article specifically about FAQ and published after 2019 was discovered. Most of the discussion of FAQ centers on retrieval models and models for determining and updating answers, rather than on how to present FAQ pages and articles to patrons.

Despite the very limited discussion on the topic, several patterns in standard practice did emerge. The first pattern to emerge is the use of FAQ primarily to support live, existing reference or customer support services. This may be considered an extension of existing virtual reference services during business hours or a method of providing these services after hours (Kaplanseren, 2023; Logan & Gayhart, 2016; LaBrake, 2019; Wallace et al., 2009; Halperin et al., 2006; Anello & Bonfield, 2007; Moreo et al., 2012). The second pattern to emerge from the literature is the suggestion to use data to drive content creation (Jones et al., 2009; LaBrake, 2019; Wallace et al., 2009; Moreo et al., 2012). This data may be gathered in many ways. In fact, the methodology suggested differs drastically depending on time of publication and library context and ranges from using existing library resources to employing technology to analyze transcripts, forums, or other text-based communications. As helpful and as intuitive as these findings are, they supply librarians only with the first steps of creating a knowledge base of FAQ from scratch. They do not guide librarians in how to compose,

organize, or present the articles in an existing knowledge base to best serve patron needs.

The literature does present some consensus and minimal advice on FAQ composition and retrieval. Among the literature that addresses discovery and retrieval of FAQ, the suggestion or implication that FAQ articles should be searchable is unanimous (Moreo et al., 2012; Hart, 2004; Halperin et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2009). The importance of relevant and useful keywords or metadata to increase the return of relevant search results is recommended consistently (LaBrake, 2019; Wallace et al., 2009; Halperin et al., 2006; Hart, 2004). However, providing an option for users to browse articles efficiently is also highly important. Thus, the literature also notes the importance of a simple and logical structure for grouping FAQ articles, especially as most users browse first by category rather than by individual article (Kaplanseren, 2023; Jones et al., 2009; Wallace et al., 2009; Halperin et al., 2006; Hart, 2004) and literature on website design indicates that user orientation on webpages is paramount and should follow a clear, intuitive, and navigable structure (Alshaheen & Tang, 2022; Perry & Waggoner, 2021; Ochoa, 2020; Makri, 2020; Djonov, 2007). Furthermore, the literature points out that the key to both successful searching and browsing of webpages and FAQ is the composition of links, menus, and titles using simple, jargon-free, user-friendly language (Alshaheen & Tang, 2022; Makri, 2020; Ochoa, 2020; Perry & Waggoner, 2020; Moreo et al., 2012; Shaw, 2012; Hart, 2004; Wallace et al., 2009). A few authors mention other considerations when writing, such as limiting the size of lists or menu options to avoid overwhelming or confusing the user (Kaplanseren, 2023; Alshaheen & Tang, 2022; Shaw, 2012), using writing techniques that facilitate skimming (Perry & Waggoner, 2021; Hart, 2004), and avoiding question words in favor of action phrases in FAQ headings (Hart, 2004). Only two articles in the relevant literature examined explicitly noted that consistency of style is paramount for usability of webpages (Kaplanseren, 2023; Alshaheen & Tang, 2022). While these ideas are good advice and align with well-known principles of writing for the web and of avoiding cognitive overload in users, the lack of robust discussion of these ideas in the context of FAQ makes the formation of consensus on these ideas as they relate to FAQ, or even of emerging patterns of best practices for FAQ composition, difficult.

## Real-World FAQ Practices

### *Organizational Presentation Schema*

**Corporate FAQ.** Because of the lack of clear guidance in the literature, I decided to gather data on real-world practices in the organization, titling, and presentation of both large corporations' and university libraries' FAQ. First, I gathered a list of most-visited websites and largest retailers in the United States. This resulted in a list of 39 retail, news, social media, software, and technology companies, 35 of which had websites that featured help or FAQ pages that were easily accessible from their homepages. As only four websites did not include FAQ pages, these were not considered indicative of corporate practice and were not included in the data analysis. This resulted in the identification of six organizational schema for the presentation of FAQ articles to users (Table 1): a list of categories or topics, a list of featured articles, a list of popular or trending articles, a visible listing of all articles organized under category headings, a listing of all articles without category headings, and a list of new articles.

**Table 1**

*Corporate FAQ List Organization Schema*

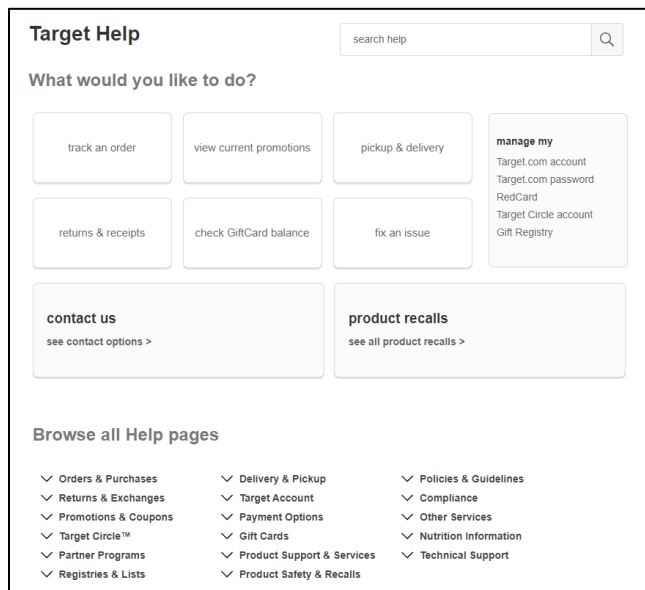
<b>FAQ List Organization Schema</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Total Number of Organizations Analyzed	39	100%
List of Categories	22	62.9%
List of Featured Articles	9	25.7%
List of Popular/Trending Articles	10	28.6%
List of Articles under Categories	11	34.3%
List of All Articles	1	2.9%
List of New Articles	1	2.9%

*Note.* Counts and percentages total more than the number of organizations analyzed because some organizations use more than one organizational presentation for their FAQ articles on their FAQ page.

Overwhelmingly, these FAQ pages were organized so that users could browse FAQ articles by category (see Figure 1, for example). Nearly two thirds (62.9%) of these websites feature a browsable list of categories and one third (34.3%) list their FAQ articles under category headings. These schema have the distinct advantages of orienting the user to the most relevant FAQ articles and serving to avoid cognitive overload in the user by limiting the number of articles that must be scanned to locate the most helpful answer.

**Figure 1**

*Example of Category-Based Organizational Presentation Schema*



Other common schema for allowing users to browse FAQ is to provide a list of popular/ trending articles (28.6%) or featured articles (25.7%) on the FAQ page. However, these types of lists often present a few challenges to the discovery of relevant answers. First, if articles are considered “popular” simply because of the number of views they receive, they may remain “popular” simply because they are presented first to users, potentially creating a feedback loop of popularity that may make more relevant or helpful articles more difficult for users to find. Secondly, featured articles are manually selected by the FAQ manager and, as Moreo et al. (2012) points out, “biased to the knowledge of the FAQ manager. ... it is likely that: (i) relevant information to customers remains out of the domain” (p. 11531). These schema do also have advantages. If an article is “popular,” it may indeed be helpful to a large number of users. Bringing that article to the forefront will help satisfy users’ information needs quickly and easily. Featured articles can have the same advantage, if they are selected thoughtfully and by using data-driven selection criteria.

Very few websites list all FAQ articles or list new articles as a presentation schema for their FAQ. The disadvantages to users in navigating these schema are numerous, and the primary disadvantage, that it does not help users more easily identify the FAQ article relevant to their question, is enough to discourage the use of these schema except for rare occasions.

**University Library FAQ.** Second, I surveyed university libraries' websites to gather data on how they are organizing and presenting FAQ to their users. This survey was limited to two groups, large and flagship schools in the southeastern United States and senior universities and colleges in Louisiana. These university groups were identified because my university is located in this region of the country, making these institutions the most relevant peer-institutions to benchmark against. While this data may or may not be representative of nationwide trends, analyzing this group of institutions would give us an accurate idea of regional practices and the practices of peer institutions. Although the schema observed on university websites is the same as that of corporate websites, university libraries adopt a much more diverse array of organizational schema than that of corporate websites (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*FAQ List Organization Schema of University Libraries in the Southeastern United States*

FAQ List Organization Schema	Count	Percentage	Percentage of Libraries with FAQ
Total Number of Organizations Analyzed	29	100%	68.9%
List of Categories	9	31%	45%
List of Featured Articles	6	20.7%	30%
List of Popular/Trending Articles	6	20.7%	30%
List of Articles under Categories	4	13.8%	20%
List of All Articles	1	3.4%	5%
List of New Articles	1	3.4%	5%
No FAQ	9	31%	

*Note.* Counts and percentages total more than the number of organizations analyzed because some organizations use more than one organizational presentation for their FAQ articles on their FAQ page.

The first thing of note is that over 30% of university libraries did not have an FAQ or help page easily discoverable on the homepage of their library website. Secondly, among the libraries that did have FAQ pages, many, though not a majority, of libraries used a list of categories (45% of libraries with FAQ). Additionally, there was a fairly even distribution of libraries that used a list of featured articles (30% of libraries with FAQ) or a list of popular or trending articles (30% of libraries with FAQ). Another large proportion of libraries with FAQ (20%) opted to list all articles under category headers. Like corporate FAQ, libraries generally avoided listing all FAQ articles on one page and listing new articles.

Interestingly, university libraries in Louisiana show a markedly different pattern of selected FAQ organization schema (Table 3). Following the pattern of university libraries in the region, 47% of university libraries in the state do not have FAQ pages easily discoverable from their homepage. However, 40% of libraries with FAQ pages (at least double the number of any other schema) list all FAQ articles under category headings. The next most adopted organizational schema are listing popular or trending articles (20% of libraries with FAQ) and listing all articles (20%). Very few libraries with FAQ present users with a list of categories or a list of new FAQ articles (10% each). None showcase featured articles.

**Table 3**

*FAQ List Organization Schema of University Libraries in Louisiana*

FAQ List Organization Schema	Count	Percentage	Percentage of Libraries with FAQ
Total Number of Organizations Analyzed	19	100%	52.6%
List of Categories	1	5.3%	10.0%
List of Featured Articles	0	0.0%	0.0%
List of Popular/Trending Articles	2	10.5%	20.0%
List of Articles under Categories	4	21.1%	40.0%
List of All Articles	2	10.5%	20.0%
List of New Articles	1	5.3%	10.0%
No FAQ	9	47.4	0.0%

### *FAQ Title Formatting*

**Corporate FAQ.** A quick review of FAQ on corporate websites showed a strong preference for phrasing FAQ article titles as short, descriptive phrases (see Figure 2, for example) (Table 4). Nearly 63% of corporate FAQ pages used phrases as the primary style of titling FAQ articles while less than 30% of pages primarily phrased titles as questions. Very few (8.8%) used a noticeable mix of phrases and questions. Consistently using only one style of titles may be common practice as uniformity can give the user a sense of professionalism and polish that may be missed when a consistent style is not chosen and applied. Additionally, the pattern of using phrases conforms to common practices in technical writing (Hart, 2004).

**Table 4**

*FAQ Title Format by Corporations*

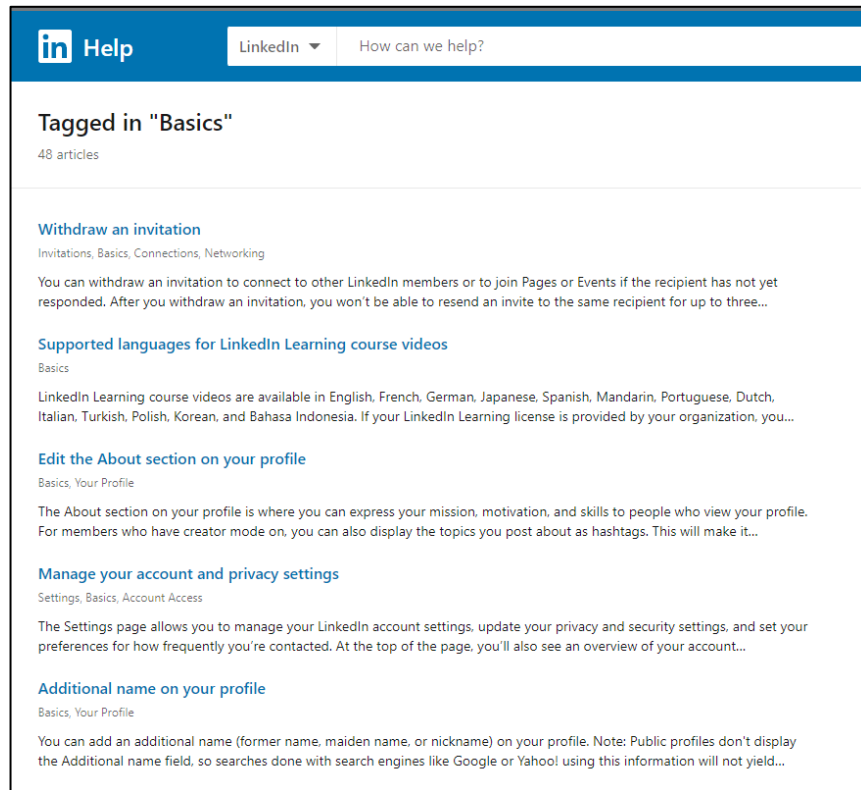
<b>FAQ Primary Title Format by Corporations</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Phrase	22	62.9%
Question	10	28.6%
Mix	3	8.6%



## Figure 2

### Example of Phrases Used as FAQ Titles

**University Library FAQ.** Interestingly, university libraries tend toward the opposite. Regionally, 80% of university libraries have selected to title their FAQ articles



with questions (Table 5). Only 20% of libraries elect to title their FAQ articles as phrases. This pattern holds true for libraries in Louisiana (Table 6). Ninety percent of university libraries phrase their FAQ article titles as questions. Interestingly, not one library used a noticeable mix of phrases and questions when titling their library FAQ.

**Table 5**

*FAQ Title Format by University Libraries in the Southeastern United States*

<b>FAQ Primary Title Format by Corporations</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Phrase	4	20.0%
Question	16	80.0%
Mix	0	0.0%

**Table 6**

*FAQ Title Format by University Libraries in Louisiana*

<b>FAQ Primary Title Format by University Libraries in Louisiana</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Phrase	1	10.0%
Question	9	90.0%
Mix	0	0.0%

## Discussion of Findings

When I set out to do this comparison, I expected a measure of diversity in organizational schema between corporate websites. I also expected the strategies of libraries to follow similar patterns and practices to one another. This, however, was not the case. Corporate FAQ follow a much stronger pattern of alignment in organizational strategy as a group than do libraries. I therefore expected there to be only a minor level of alignment in organizational strategy between the two groups, but this assumption was also proven incorrect.

Overall, the organization and presentation of FAQ pages on live websites is similar between corporations and libraries, with slightly more diversity in strategy in university libraries than in corporations. Both sectors primarily organize their FAQ pages using clear categories. However, libraries also commonly present a list of popular articles to users. Libraries are also more likely to present their users with a list of curated or featured FAQ articles than corporations are. Both sectors rarely use full lists of FAQ or lists of new FAQ.

While the organization of FAQ pages is similar between corporate and library webpages, how FAQ titles are written and phrased is quite different. Corporate FAQ pages tend strongly toward using short phrases for article titles, whereas library FAQ pages tend strongly toward using questions for article titles.

I was surprised by the difference of title composition in corporate FAQ, as I expected that this element would be greatly influenced by discussions of best practices for writing for the web. Libraries, on the other hand, show a shocking level of consistency in FAQ composition. While still not quite conforming to common recommendations for writing for the web, the in-group consistency of strategy is astounding.

### *Hypothesis*

Given the difference between university libraries' standard practices for their FAQ pages and those used by for-profit companies (i.e., corporations are more likely to present categories to their users and title FAQ with phrases), I began to question the standard university practices in organizing and presenting FAQ to patrons. Additionally, given that the scholarly literature on the topic is very sparse and provides little guidance in this matter, I wondered if the majority practices of the commercial sector were more effective than standard library practices. Therefore, I hypothesized that aligning our library's FAQ title composition, organization, and presentation to mirror corporate FAQ practices more closely would accomplish three major goals for my library.

- A. help patrons more easily locate the help documentation and answers they are searching for.
- B. break the cycle of "legacy" popularity for older (potentially less relevant) FAQ entries due to their placement on our webpage.
- C. increase the visibility of the most relevant FAQ entries.

### **Methodology**

To test my three hypotheses, I made the following changes to our library FAQ page in the first week of February 2023.

First, to better align with the majority practices of corporate FAQ, we edited the titles of all but one FAQ article to read as short phrases, rather than questions. For example, "How do I download a chapter of an e-book?" was changed to "Downloading a chapter of an e-book" and "Where can I find scholarly or peer-reviewed articles?" was

changed to “Finding scholarly and peer-reviewed articles.” (Our only exception to this change was a FAQ about services offered to the public, the meaning of which was difficult to capture in a phrase rather than a question). We did not edit, change, or alter the content of the FAQ answers in any way.

Our second major change was adding a list of “topics” or categories to our FAQ homepage, which aligns with both corporate FAQ practices and university library practices. Like many libraries, we use Springshare’s LibAnswers platform to host our FAQ page and were previously using their default settings for our organization and presentation, where the FAQ page features a list of 15 most “popular” or most-clicked FAQ front-and-center and a search box to search FAQ articles is provided at the top of the page.

After changing our page to present a list of categories, when patrons click on a FAQ topic from the list, they are shown a short list of relevant FAQ articles. These lists range from 1 to 14 entries long. These lists are created by tagging FAQ articles with “topics” which come from a librarian-created controlled vocabulary in the LibAnswers system and include topics such as “research,” “how-to,” “policies,” and “services” These topics are applied to FAQ articles as needed. Most entries are tagged with multiple topics to facilitate discovery and access by patrons. Since our FAQ articles were already tagged with topics when this review process began, no changes were made to these tags other than presenting them differently to the user on the FAQ webpage.

We did retain a short list of “popular” FAQ articles on our webpage. However, this list was drastically shortened and moved to the bottom of the page, below the list of topics. Patrons must now scroll to see this list. The list of “popular” FAQ entries now displays the five most-clicked FAQ, rather than 15.

The following data points were compared at the end of the spring semester to assess the effectiveness of these changes on the impact and helpfulness of our FAQ page. All data analyzed is based on “views” of FAQ articles. Views are counted only when a user clicks on an FAQ article; Landing on our FAQ webpage does not count as a view. Total views were analyzed to measure overall user engagement with FAQ articles. The following data sets of total views were analyzed to build a thorough and robust understanding of how the changes impacted overall user engagement with FAQ articles: spring 2022, fall 2022, and spring 2023 (Table 7). Additionally, total views in February 2022 were compared to total views in February 2023 (Table 8) to assess the immediate impact of the changes made to our FAQ page.

**Table 7**

*Total FAQ Views by Semester*

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Total FAQ Views</b>	<b>Average Views Per Day</b>
Fall 2020 (August-December)	335	2.2
Spring 2021 (January-May)	224	1.5
Fall 2021 (August-December)	478	3.1
Spring 2022 (January-May)	570	3.7
Fall 2022 (August-December)	712	4.6
Spring 2023 (February-May)	750*	6.2

*\*Note. Spring 2023 is calculated February-May to better examine the impact of the changes made in this study.*

**Table 8**

*Total Spring FAQ Views By Month*

	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>
2021	45	45	20	38
2022	94	147	86	109
2023	179	221	152	198

Furthermore, the change over time in ranking of entry “popularity” as measured by views of individual FAQ articles was also analyzed to measure the change in visibility and discovery of relevant FAQ articles. The following data sets of views of individual FAQ articles were analyzed to determine if the changes made an impact on the visibility and discoverability of relevant FAQ articles: spring 2022, fall 2022, and spring 2023 (Table 10, Figure 3).

Upon making these changes, I expected that our engagement with FAQ articles (measured by views) would increase. I believed that organizing and presenting FAQ in better alignment with corporate practices would make information discovery easier for our users, since our FAQ knowledge base would better reflect other FAQ pages our users may be familiar with. I also expected that this organizational schema would break the “legacy” popularity of some FAQ articles that may be popular due in part to their placement on the webpage, rather than their relevance to our users. Likewise, I also expected to see new articles rise in popularity due to their new discoverability by users.

## Case Study

### *University and Library Background*

My library serves the faculty, staff, and students of a regional university in the southeastern United States. As reported by our university, the full-time equivalent (total number of student credits enrolled divided by 12) of both graduate students and undergraduate students at our institution in the academic year of 2021-2022 was just over 6,700 students (Louisiana State University Shreveport, 2022, p. 8). Compared to other senior, public institutions in our state, we have a larger enrollment than six of 14 senior, public institutions and a smaller enrollment than five of 14 senior, public institutions (by a margin of at least 10% of our enrollment) (Louisiana State University Shreveport, 2022, p. 29). A minority of our students (26%) are traditional 18- to 24-year-old undergraduates. The average student at our university is nearly 32 years old (Louisiana State University Shreveport, 2022, p.1). Fifty-four percent of our students report their ethnicity as "white," 22% report their ethnicity as "black," 10% report their ethnicity as Hispanic, Asian, or multi-ethnic, and 14% report their ethnicity as other, unknown, or non-resident alien (Louisiana State University Shreveport, 2022, p. 1). Sixty percent of our students are female and 40% are male. (Louisiana State University Shreveport, 2022, p. 1). Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of these students take courses online or commute to campus daily. Only a small percentage of students reside in campus housing. Therefore, the university's online resources are of paramount importance for these students.

In August 2021, our university and our library launched a newly re-designed website. This enabled us to provide increased visibility for all library services. While our library has maintained an FAQ page for several years, the new library webpage enabled us to change the placement of the link to our FAQ and help webpages and prompted us to create new FAQ entries and update existing entries. These changes doubled the use and visibility of our FAQ entries by patrons during the 2021-2022 academic year (Table 9). However, while views and visibility of FAQ increased, the popularity of FAQ articles displayed a measure of stability even with the creation of nearly 30 more FAQ articles. Half of the most popular articles remained among the most popular articles for both years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 (Table 10, Figure 3), demonstrating that the increased visibility of the webpage impacted total use, but simply making the FAQ page itself more visible had little to no impact on the discoverability of new or relevant help documentation.

**Table 9**

*Total FAQ Views by Academic Year*

<b>Academic Year (August -May)</b>	<b>Total FAQ Views</b>	<b>Total Number Of FAQ Articles</b>
2020-2021	560	25
2021-2022	1048	57
2022-2023	1644	57

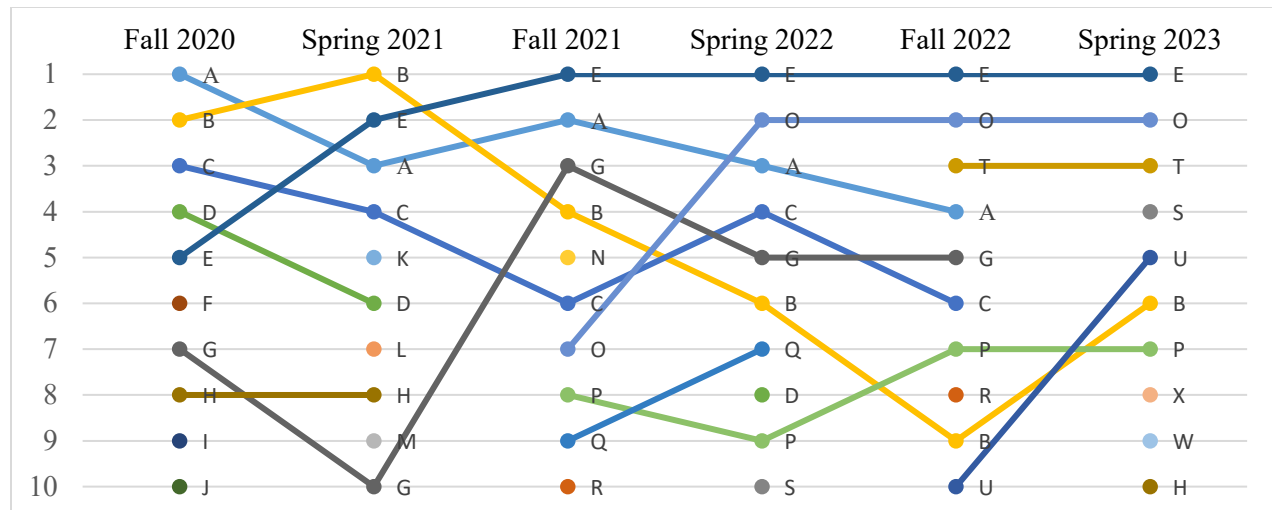
**Table 10**

*10 Most Popular FAQ Articles by Semester (August to May)*

<b>Rank of Article Based on Views</b>	<b>Fall 2020</b>	<b>Spring 2021</b>	<b>Fall 2021</b>	<b>Spring 2022</b>	<b>Fall 2022</b>	<b>Spring 2023 (Feb- May)</b>
1	A	B	E	E	E	E
2	B	E	A	O	O	O
3	C	A	G	A	T	T
4	D	C	B	C	A	S
5	E	K	N	G	G	U
6	F	D	C	B	C	B
7	G	L	O	Q	P	P
8	H	H	P	D	R	X
9	I	M	Q	P	B	W
10	J	G	R	S	U	H

**Figure 3**

*Movement of Top 10 FAQ by Semester*



At the time of the website launch, our FAQ and help pages were organized very similarly to the other university FAQ pages both in the southeastern region of the United States and in our state. We presented users with a list of popular articles and had formatted the titles of our FAQ articles as questions, following suit with the majority of universities both regionally and statewide and as prompted by LibAnswers defaults. While this organization and presentation schema seemed to be the standard in university libraries, it differed starkly from the patterns in use by major retail, news, and social media companies.

## Discussion

Changing our FAQ organization and composition to align with corporate practices by presenting users with a list of FAQ topics and using phrases for article titles had an immediate, positive impact on user engagement with our FAQ. In February 2023, total views of library FAQ nearly doubled from 94 views in February 2022 to 179 views in February 2023, a 90% increase (Table 8). While FAQ views were trending slightly up semester-over-semester in general, this is an astounding increase, as January 2023 had less than 50 more views than January 2022, only a 35% increase.



This growth in user engagement with the library's FAQ pages continued across the semester (Table 8). Like February, March 2023 saw nearly double the engagement with library FAQ as compared with the same month in 2022 (221 views in 2023 vs. 147 in 2022, a 50% increase). While April followed the usual pattern of a drop in FAQ engagement as compared to March, with nearly double as many FAQ views as in the year before, April 2023 still showed a significant increase in views compared to the previous year (152 views in 2023 vs. 86 in 2022, or a 76% increase). Likewise, May showed an astounding increase in FAQ views (198 views in 2023 vs. 109 in 2022, an 81% increase). Total views for spring 2023 were 63% higher than for spring 2022 (Table 10) and our average engagement increased from 3.7 views per day in spring 2022 to 6.2 views per day in spring 2023 (Table 7).

This increase in engagement indicates that users are more easily finding the FAQ articles that fit their information needs. The changes in FAQ organization (presenting categories of FAQ topics and composing titles as short, actionable phrases) which lead to this increase indicate that this approach to organizing, presenting, and composing FAQ articles is a better methodology for communicating relevance and content to users than the previously adopted schema. This improvement prompts users to click and view relevant answers rather than scroll past looking for articles that appear more relevant. This seems to confirm hypotheses A and C, that these schematic changes do indeed help patrons more easily find the most relevant help documentation and answers to their questions.

Changing the organizational schema and titling conventions of our FAQ also had an interesting effect on the top 10 most popular FAQ articles in our knowledge base (Table 10 and Figure 3). Six of the top 10 most popular FAQ articles remained in the top 10 from the previous semester, two re-appeared after having been off the top 10 list for a semester or more, and two appeared on the 10 most popular FAQ list for the first time. Three "legacy" articles which had been included in the top 10 for three or more previous, sequential semesters did not appear on this list in spring 2023. Additionally, one article that had maintained a high degree of "popularity" or engagement since our FAQ knowledge base was created dropped off our list of popular FAQ articles.

While some patterns in FAQ popularity are beginning to emerge, such as the popularity of certain articles in one semester over another (e.g., fall vs. spring), the popularity of FAQ articles in our knowledge base seems to still be in flux. Only a moderate amount of stability in the popularity of specific articles has been demonstrated over the last three years. Although some changes in the popularity of articles were demonstrated in the most recent semester after changes to the title

composition and organizational structure were made, the changes that occurred are not enough to lead to definitive conclusions. So, while making changes to the titling conventions, organizational schema, and presentation of FAQ articles seems to indicate that these changes *can* indeed break the cycle of “legacy” popularity for older FAQ entries (Hypothesis B) by increasing the visibility of more relevant FAQ entries (Hypothesis C), more longitudinal data is needed to confirm these hypotheses.

## Conclusion

Academic libraries’ composition, organization, and presentation of FAQ and help documentation on their websites varies greatly, whereas there is much more consistency in these elements in the corporate sector. FAQ from corporate websites overwhelmingly tend to be composed so their title is a short phrase containing relevant keywords and organized by categories, allowing the user to quickly browse a limited list of potentially relevant articles. Changing the composition of library FAQ titles and the organizational schema by which articles are presented to users to reflect the standardized practices of the corporate sector appears to greatly increase patron engagement with and discovery of relevant FAQ articles. While one case study is not a definitive proof of concept, the impact of these changes at this library point toward best practices for discovery and engagement. Therefore, libraries should strongly consider adopting this compositional, organizational, and presentation schema:

- Use short, key-word heavy phrases for FAQ titles.
- Avoid question construction in FAQ titles.
- Present a list of categories or topics on FAQ home pages.
- Do not present users with long lists of articles to choose from.

These changes will likely improve users’ experiences with their websites and increase the visibility of needed information.

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## Appendix A

### Comparative Tables

**Table A1**

*Comparative Table of University and Corporate FAQ Organizational Schema*

<b>FAQ List Organization Schema</b>	<b>Percentage of Corporate FAQ</b>	<b>Percentage of University FAQ</b>
List of Categories	62.9%	31%
List of Featured Articles	25.7%	20.7%
List of Popular/Trending Articles	28.6%	20.7%
List of Articles under Categories	34.3%	13.8%
List of All Articles	2.9%	3.4%
List of New Articles	2.9%	3.4%
No FAQ	Not Analyzed	31%

*Note.* Counts and percentages total more than the number of organizations analyzed because some organizations use more than one organizational presentation for the articles on their FAQ page.

**Table A2**

*Comparative Table of University and Corporate FAQ Title Format*

<b>FAQ Primary Title Format by Corporations</b>	<b>Percentage of Corporate FAQ</b>	<b>Percentage of University FAQ</b>
Phrase	62.9%	20.0%
Question	28.6%	80.0%
Mix	8.6%	0.0%