What’s topic modeling?
Topic modeling is a fairly new computer algorithm (in the text and data mining category of algorithms) that can extract semantically similar topics from LARGE collections of textual items. It can run on heterogeneous and homogenous collections, and tends to work very well on items with very little text (e.g., metadata).

What’s unmoderated assessment?
Using Morae software, participants were presented with a series of tasks & were asked to complete each task in the live test interface. There was no moderator present. The software recorded their interactions & provided the team with tools for analyzing & downloading the results. For this study, there was 1 dedicated machine placed in a library public area for several continuous weeks.

Study specifics
• Yale & Michigan each ran 2 studies, 1 image and 1 text based
• 306 participants, mostly undergraduate & graduate students
• Test took 5 - 15 minutes to take
• Each participant was given a $15 Amazon gift certificate

Incentives make a huge difference!

Build your test scripts... carefully...
We created our script and then...
• Revised & revised until it was down to the bare minimum to match our goals
• Tested the test with library staff who were very familiar with both usability testing & web interfaces
• Testing the test is super important but won’t find all potential problems! Always try to pilot the test in the testing environment.

OK, but what’s the goal?
Topic modeling should... make search and discovery easier, more accessible, more powerful, and greatly improve how powerful is organized and accessed in digital libraries.

The goal of the test itself was to find out:
• Did users use topics?
• Did they like them?
• How did they use them?

What?... How did the participants perform the test?
Users interacted with home-built interfaces.
Test = 3 tasks & follow-up questions.
At the end of the semester, your professor asks for a final overview-the architecture of religious buildings.
Use the “Topic” section of the Narrow Search column on the left to do this. Click the title for a book that seems like the best fit.
Did you find the topics column useful in refining your results?

More’s the job but don’t use the perfect tool, for this project.

What’s next...
• Face-to-face testing: moderated testing asking similar questions, also comparing topics to LCSH
• Topic segmentation: both students & algorithm identify topics for sections of books

Results! (preliminary)
• 41% claimed satisfaction with their results, but...
• When they used the facets, this climbed to 78%
• 42% claimed satisfaction with the TOPIC facet, but...
• They also overwhelmingly liked the topic facet.
• Further testing implies users prefer topic facet & subject headings faceted TOGETHER rather than separately

If NOT asked to look at topics, happened 32% of the time. If asked to look at all facets, chose topic facet 77% of the time.

Participant Comments
• “I could not appropriately target results that we’re both specific enough and yet general overviews.
• “It was great to browse by topic. Lots of unexpected and stimulating results.

Don’t forget:
• Decide if you’re going with out of the box or homogenized tools.
• Contact your IT department now. Pivots how you will gather data and send incentives.
• Budget time to do the analytics.

Very important! We tested it twice!

Very hard to design questions when you know you won’t be tested if the participant goes off track!