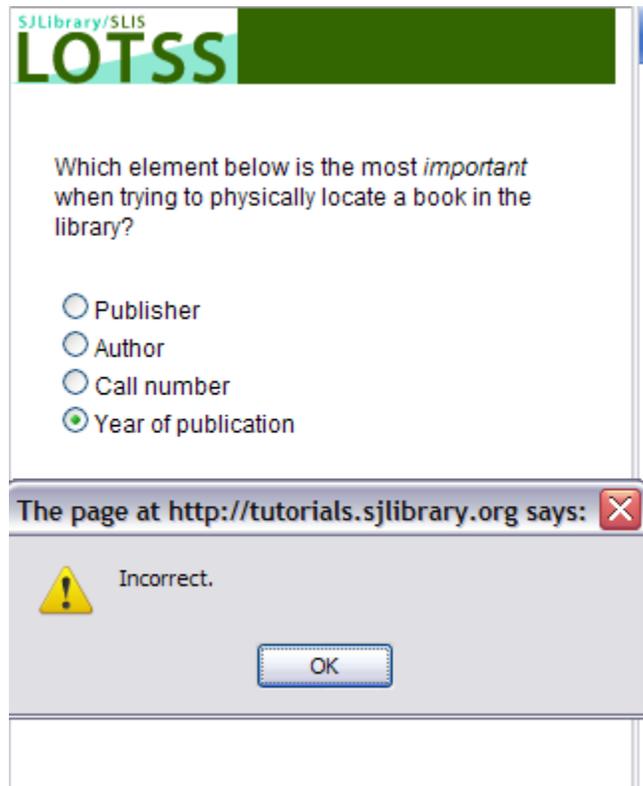


In completing the LOTSS tutorial, I noted several areas of concern with its usability. The three I will discuss here are all drawn from Nielsen's *10 Heuristics for User Interface Design*.

### 1. User control and freedom

As I completed the three modules of the LOTSS tutorial, the site utilized multiple windows. The left window contained instructions for performing tasks, and the right window displayed databases from the library's collection in which I performed the tasks instructed. As I moved through a module, I was often asked to answer a multiple-choice question by selecting a radio button next to one option among several. However, rather than being able to select a radio button and then click "submit," as soon as I selected any radio button I would receive a submission alert that required me to choose "OK" to acknowledge the alert:



If I inadvertently clicked the wrong radio button, I did not have a chance to change my answer before receiving the alert, which I would then have to acknowledge. The *user control and freedom* heuristic states that "Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked 'emergency exit' to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue." The designer could have allowed more user control and freedom by adding a "submit" button, which would allow the user to change answers as many times as needed before receiving an alert.

## 2. Consistency and standards

The instructions in the left window did not always match what was displayed in the right window. For example, while conducting a search in Module 1, I was instructed to "click on the gold icon in the record," and the instructions included a gold icon. But when I looked for the gold icon in the record, it looked different from what displayed in the instructions:

The screenshot shows the SJLibrary/SLIS LOTSS search interface. On the left, a sidebar contains instructions for searching for Lotsee Patterson. The main content area displays search results for 'Lotsee Patterson' in the 'Library Lit & Inf Full Text' database. The results are sorted by 'By Subject' and show a list of records. A red circle highlights a 'Get Text' button in the record for 'McCook, K. d. I. P. Women p.'.

**Instructions in the left window:**

1. Click on the **Modify Search** button at the upper left side of the frame to return to your search.
2. Select **Subject(s)** from the pull-down menu.
3. Click on the **Start** button.
4. Look at the entry by McCook. Click on the gold icon  in the record. A "Get Text" pop-up window should appear. The first listing indicates that this item is not available in full text in an SJSU database.

**Search Results:**

5 Records found for (Patterson, Lotsee) <in> Subject(s)  
In **Library Lit & Inf Full Text**

[Modify Search](#) [Create Alert](#) [RSS Feed](#) [Link To Search](#)

**ALL RESULTS** | **FULL TEXT** | **FULL TEXT PDF** | **PEER REVIEWED** | **NO**

**Content Discovery Keys** | Get Marked (0) | Clear Marks | Save To My Will

**Narrow These Results** | Brief Display | Full Display

By Author	<<	100%	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Camp, T. <a href="#">ChangeMasters A Twenty-first Century: An Ir</a>
By Subject	<<				21 no. 1 (Winter 2007) p. 5
By Date of Creation	<<				<a href="#">Full Text HTML</a>  
By Document Type	<<				
<b>New Search By Subject</b>					
Patterson, Lotsee					<a href="#">Get Text</a>  <a href="#">Save to My Will</a>
ALA equality award					
Minority librarians					
Baker, Augusta, 1911-1998					

According to the *consistency and standards* heuristic, "Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing." The designer could eliminate any wonder or doubt by simply using the same icon in the instructions as the one that appears in the entry in question.

### 3. Help and documentation

By its nature as a tutorial, one of LOTSS's most vital components is its instructions, for they guide the user through the tutorial. The *help and documentation* heuristic states that "Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large." Unfortunately, while the instructions often provided lists of concrete steps to be carried out, this was not always the case. Sometimes the instructions encouraged further exploration, but I wasn't sure if I was supposed to do the exploration right then and there or after finishing the tutorial, and I was unsure whether I had reached the end of the module:



Take time to explore Library Lit's **Thesaurus**. Try searching for the term **wage**. Notice that wage is not a recommended Subject Heading. The thesaurus recommends that you search for other terms, such as **Salaries and Budgets**. Explore these links to see where they lead. Consider using the thesaurus when you do not retrieve any documents on a keyword search.

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Perhaps this type of instruction, encouraging further exploration, would be better to place on a page at the end, after the user has completed the module. If it is an essential task, then it is probably worth guiding users through step-by-step or pointing them to another module which does.