Understanding the usability advantage or disadvantage of publishers' implementations of Seamless Access

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Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to evaluate Seamless Access as a cumulative experience, using the implementations of four representative publishers, ACS Publications, Nature, Wiley, and Elsevier.

The goal is to assess if any implementations have a usability advantage or disadvantage for researchers, specifically on their ability to quickly and successfully identify Seamless Access when they are off their campus network.

Research Methodology

Logistics: Unmoderated, task based, First-Click study using Chalkmark from Optimal Workshop

- Users were presented with screenshots of four different SeamlessAccess implementations
- Tested the cold-state only (Access through your institution)
- Used four versions with different ordering of publisher screenshots to prevent order bias

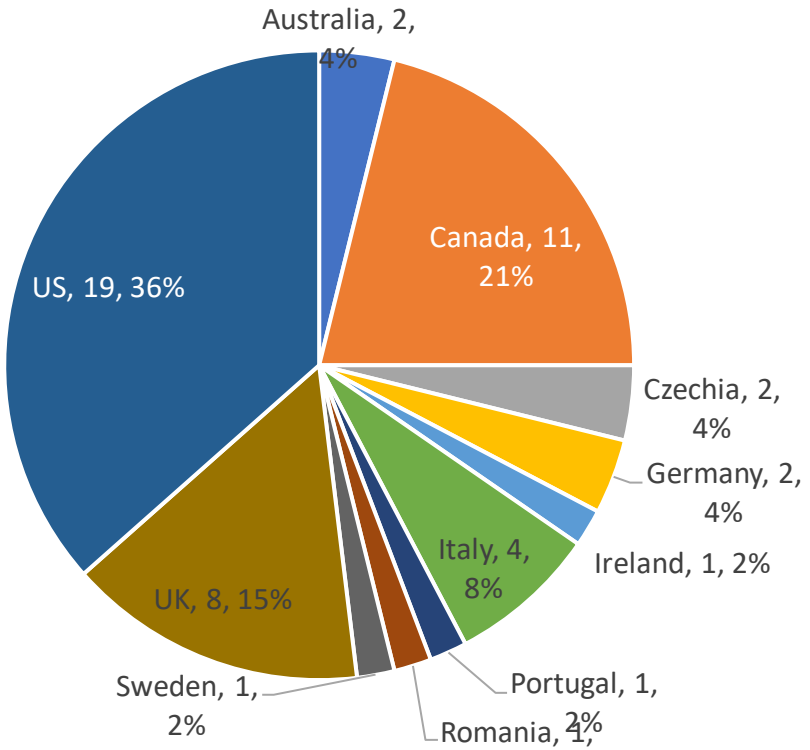
Scenario: Participants were given a scenario where they needed to read the entire article of four scholarly references. They know that their university pays for access, but they are off the campus network. They were asked where on the design page would they click? Participants were told that only their first click on the image will be collected.

Measurement: The task time from seeing the design page to the first click was recorded for each implementation. Task success and failure were also recorded. Additional qualitative and quantitative data collected from questions and recordings.

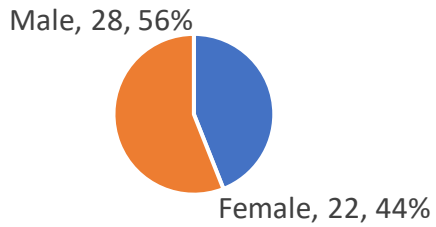
Participant Demographics

Total number of participants = 52

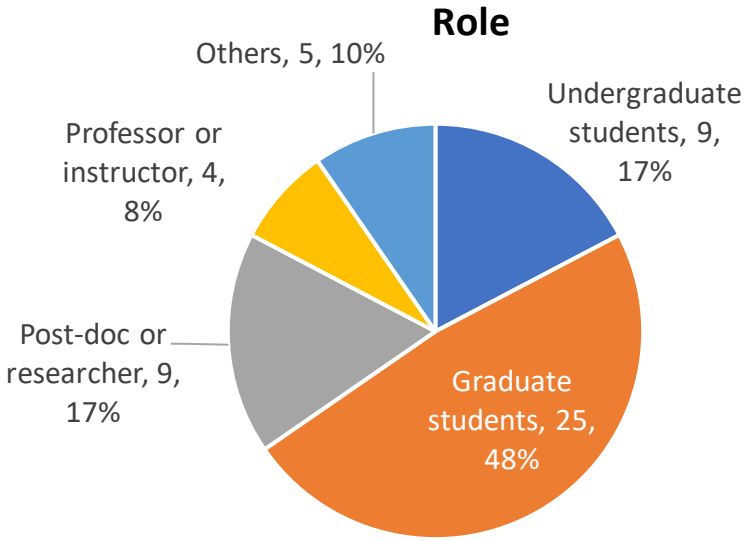
Country



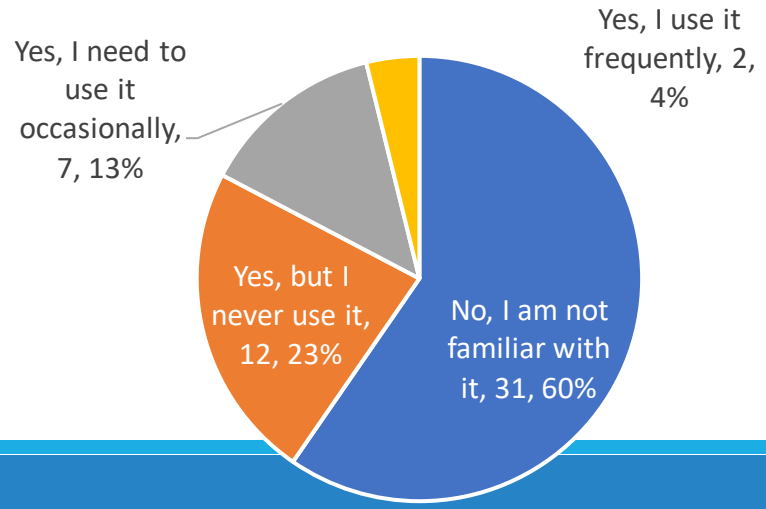
Gender



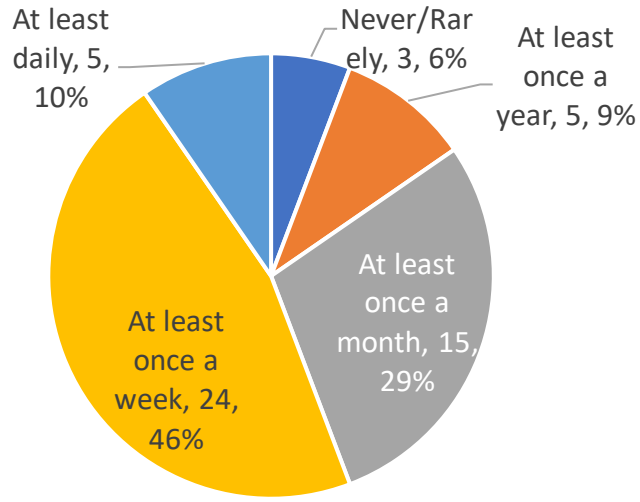
Role



Familiarity with federated access



Frequency of access off-campus

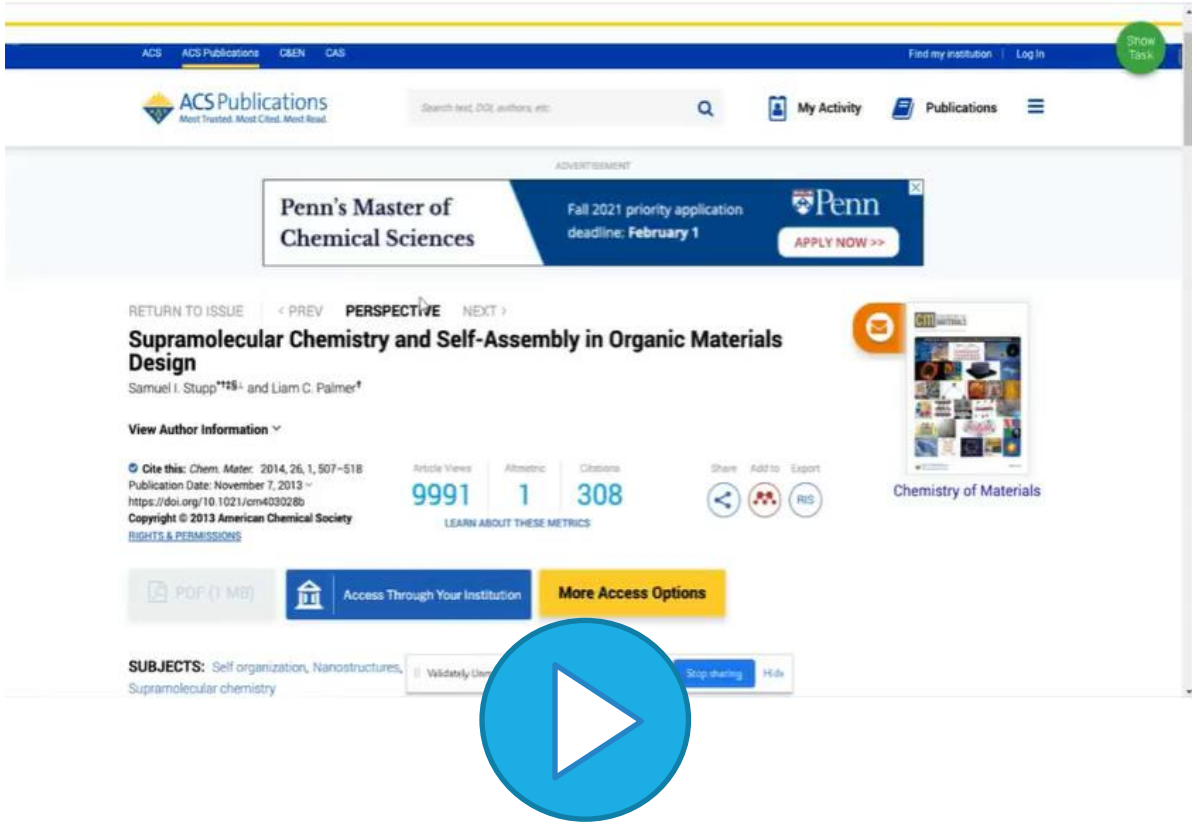


Key takeaways

- Users are offered too many access options.
- Users understand institutional access but choose other options when that access is in question.
- The PDF option competes with “Access through your institution.”
- Layered approach was disorienting for some participants, especially after recognizing the button.
- The rate of success did not increase as participants progressed through the tasks due to the variability in implementation across different publishers.

Users are offered too many access options

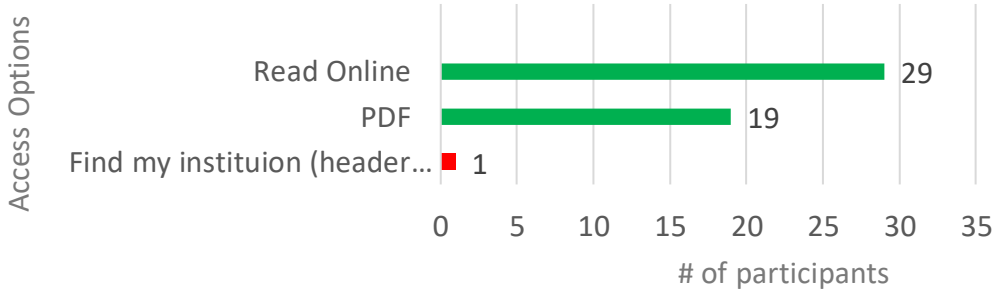
ACS Publications: 5 options



(Video description) This clip shows why participants clicked on “More Access Options” instead of “Access through your institution.”

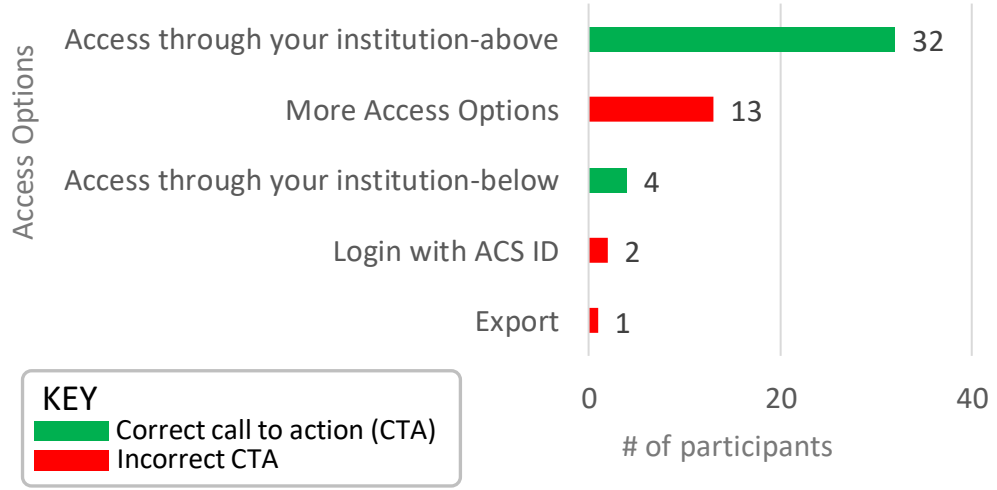
Page 1: landing page

98% success
2% fail

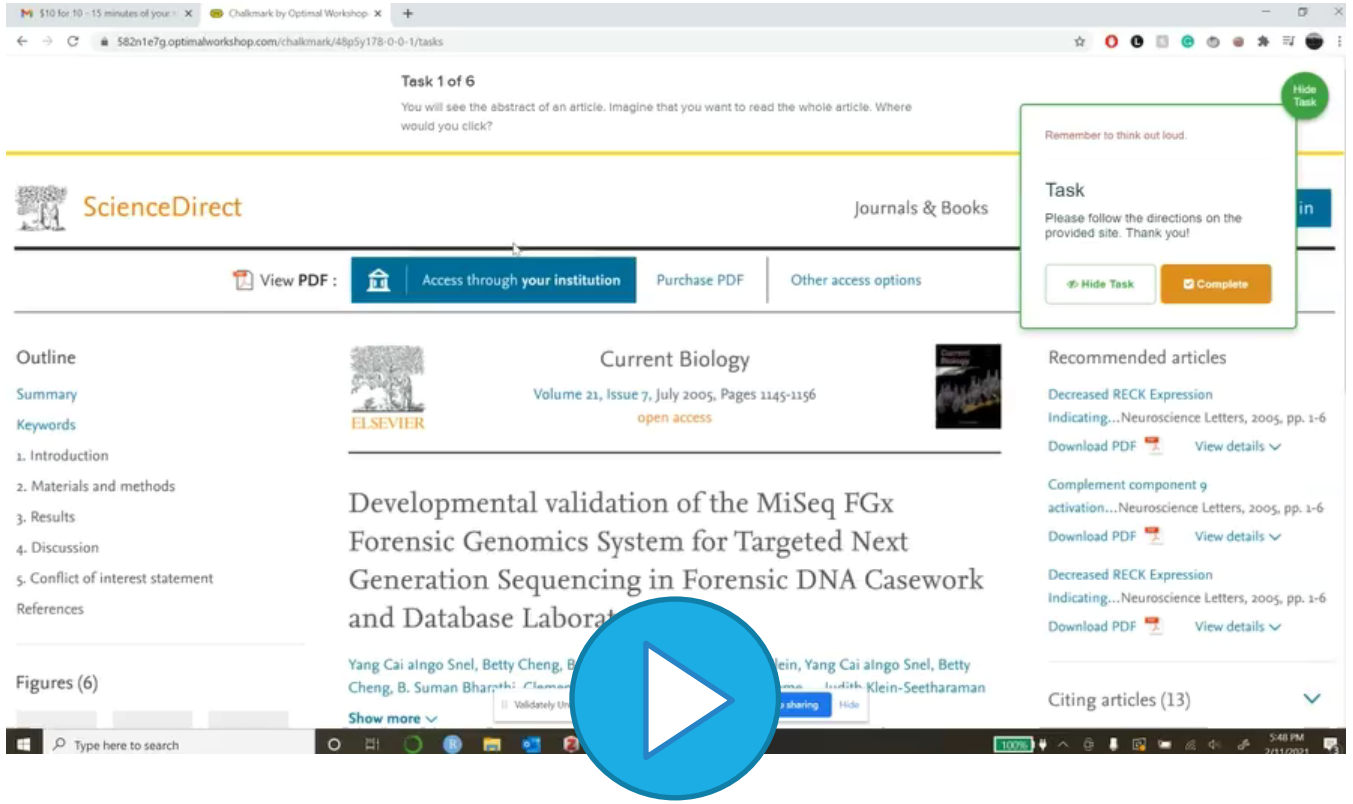


Page 2: selection page

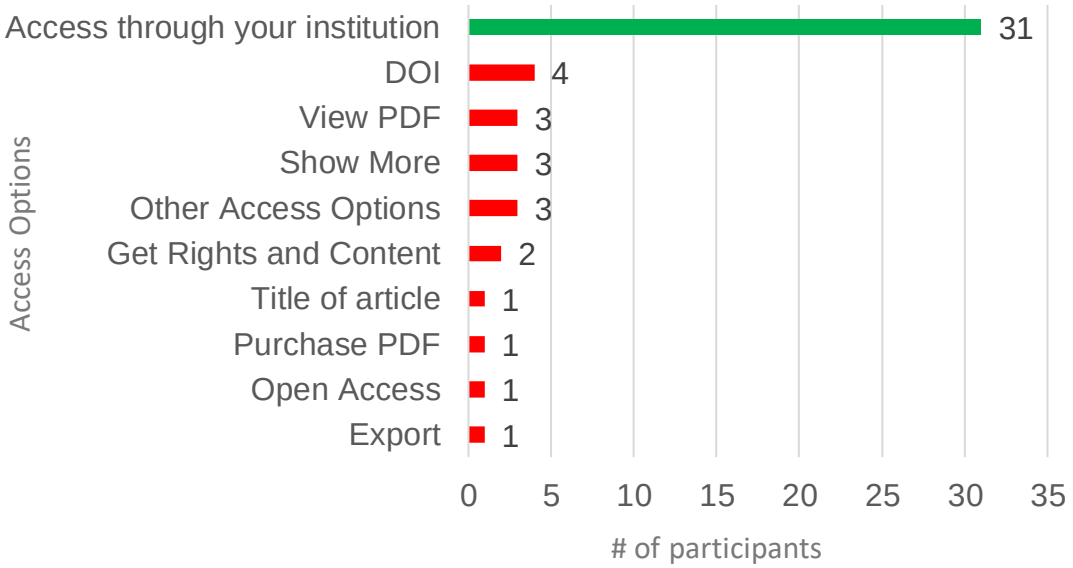
69% success
31% fail



Elsevier/ScienceDirect: 10 options



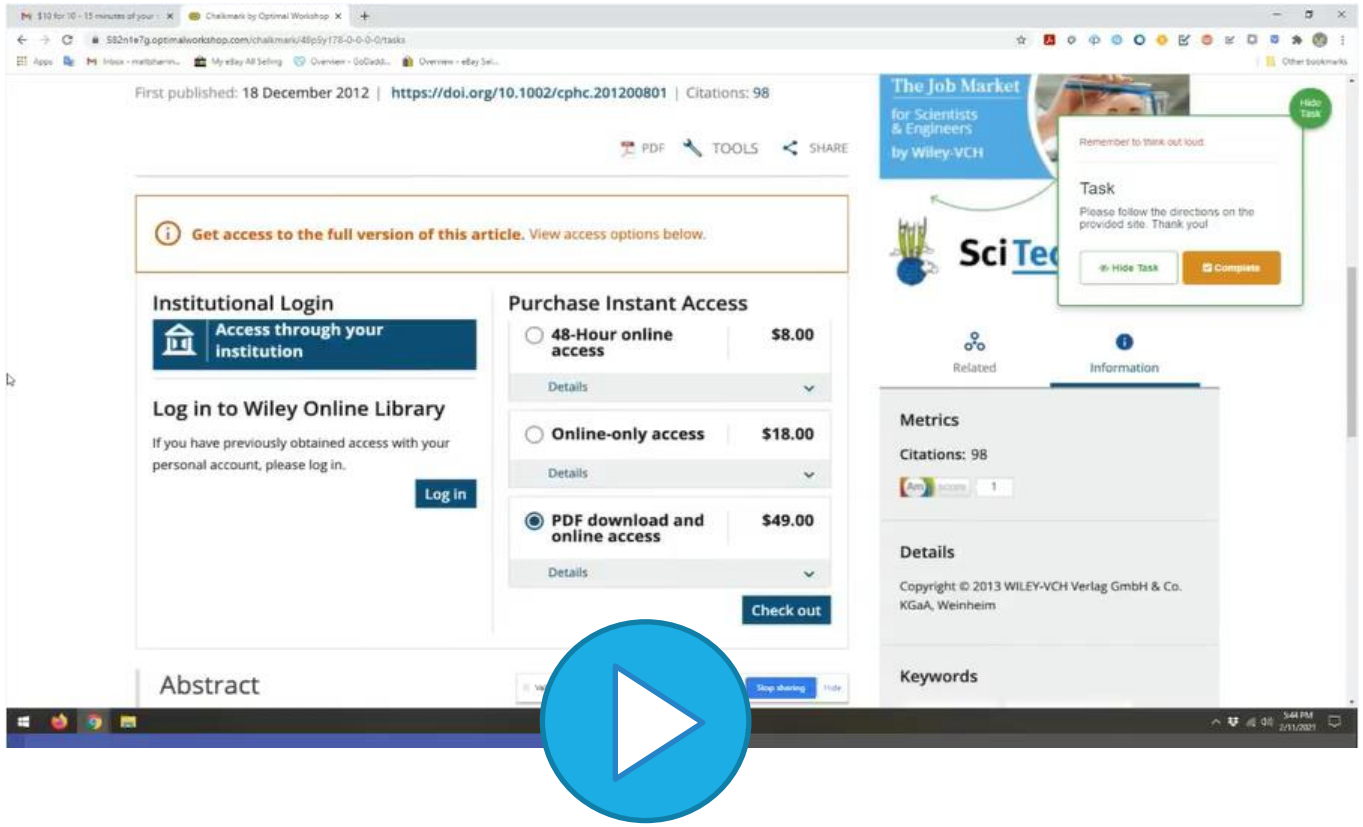
62% success
38% fail



((Video description) This clip demonstrates the number of distracting options that might lead the participant to the full-text. She expects to find this action between the title and the abstract. The graph to the right shows that participants tried many of these incorrect or less efficient choices.

KEY
Correct call to action (CTA)
Incorrect CTA

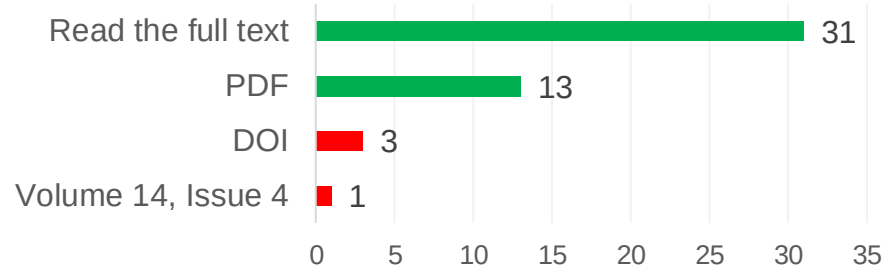
Wiley: 13 options



(Video description) This clip shows why participants clicked on “Log in” instead of “Access through your institution.”

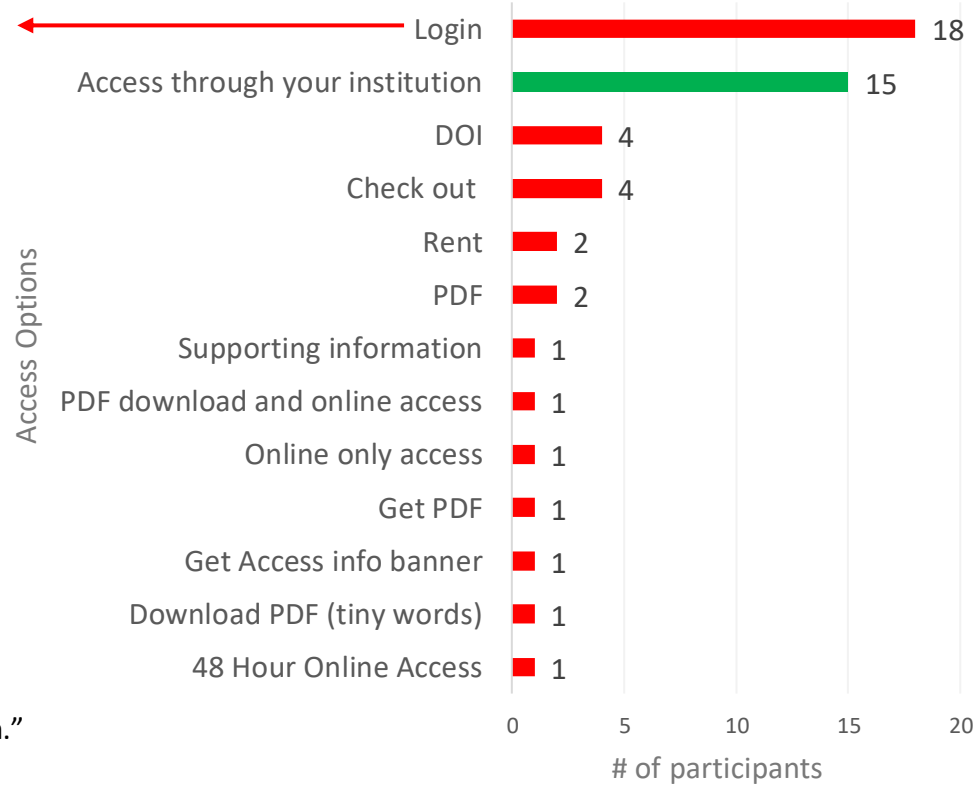
Page 1: landing page

92% success
8% fail

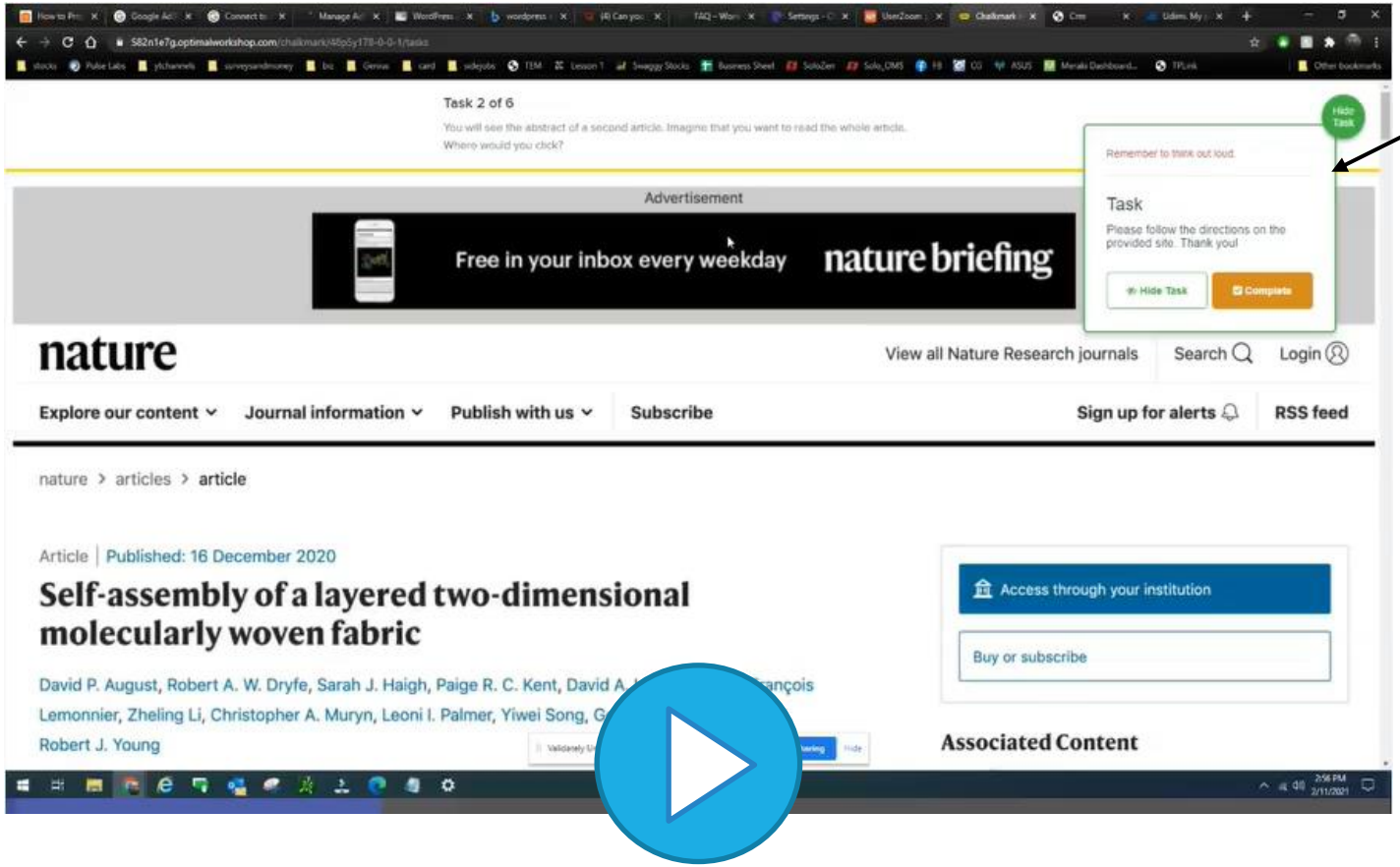


Page 2: selection page

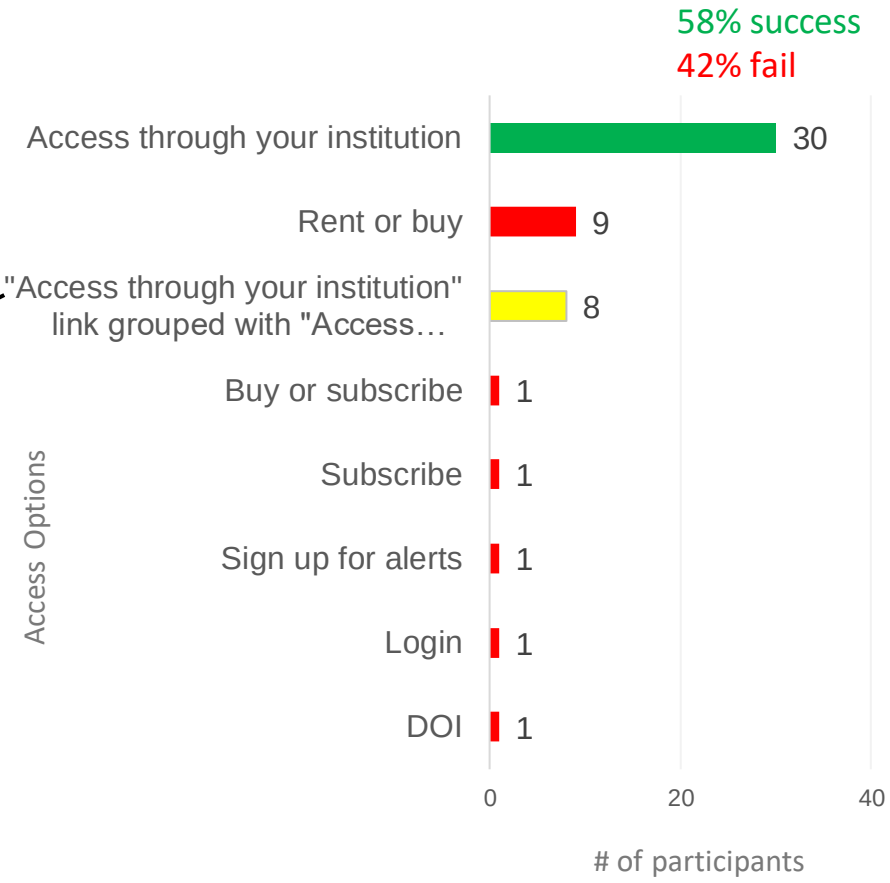
45% success
55% fail



Nature: 8 options



(Video description) This clip shows participants expected access options to be grouped together.



KEY
- Correct call to action (CTA)
- Incorrect for the purpose of this test, but the correct CTA
- Incorrect CTA

Users understand institutional access (mostly)

Participants chose other options when institutional access is in question

A few participants intentionally did not select “Access through your institution” because:

- They know their institution did not provide access to the publishers being tested → clicks Purchase/Rent
- They usually access through their institution when they are on campus, and since the instruction told them they are off-campus they selected another option (PDF or purchase)
- “Access through your institution” only works when they are connected to their campus network

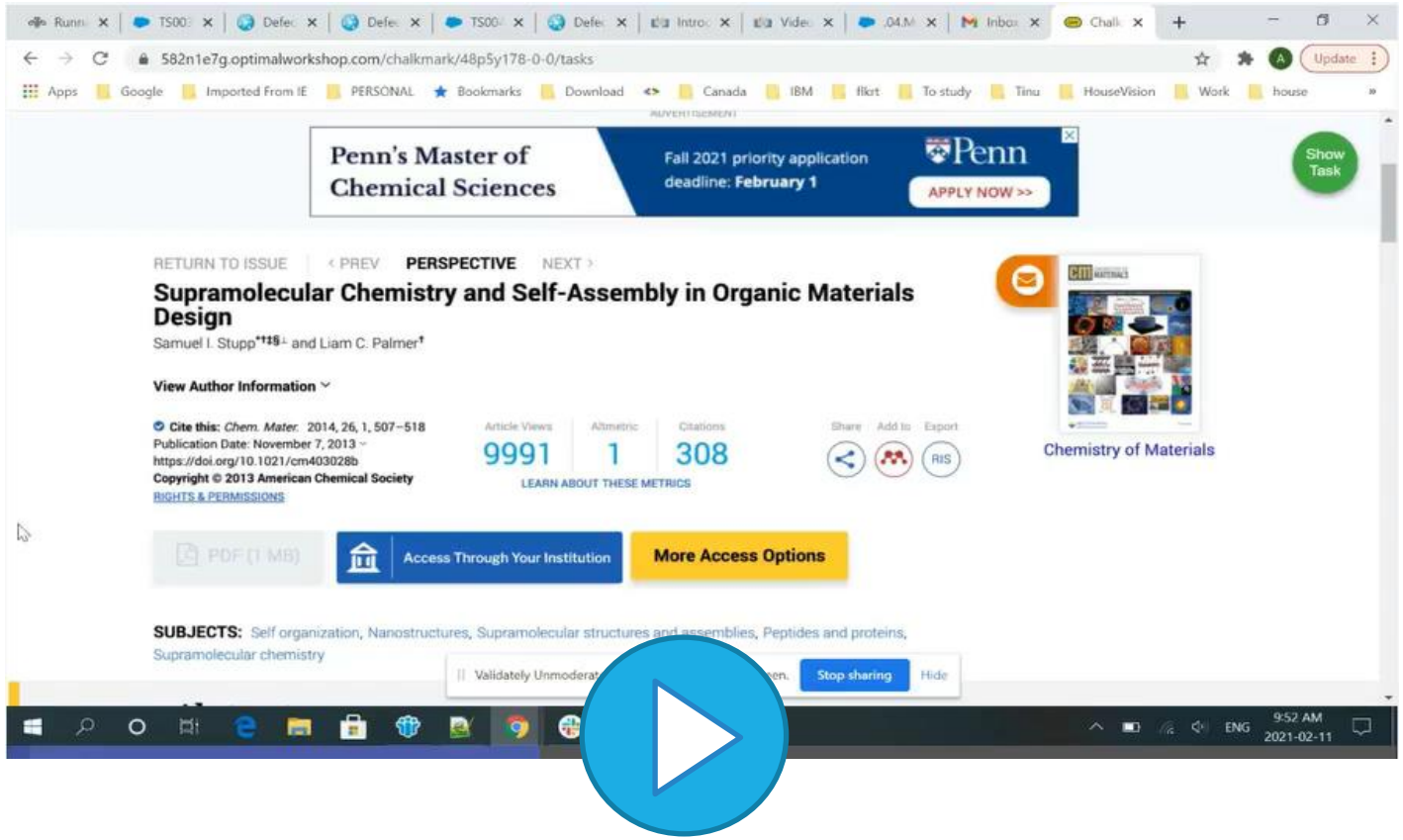
“I did not use the access through institute in this test as I usually used that when I was on campus. Some accesses were limited as well, so I had to buy a pdf copy one way or another.”

“I did notice that option. But since I'm not on my campus network, I decided to not use that feature.”

“For most of them I easily could access by university credentials, but only if I am connected to the campus network. Otherwise I would purchase or use view online.”

“If I really needed an article off campus , I usually rented or bought only one article instead of getting a whole year membership. It was really easy to find because I have used it a lot.

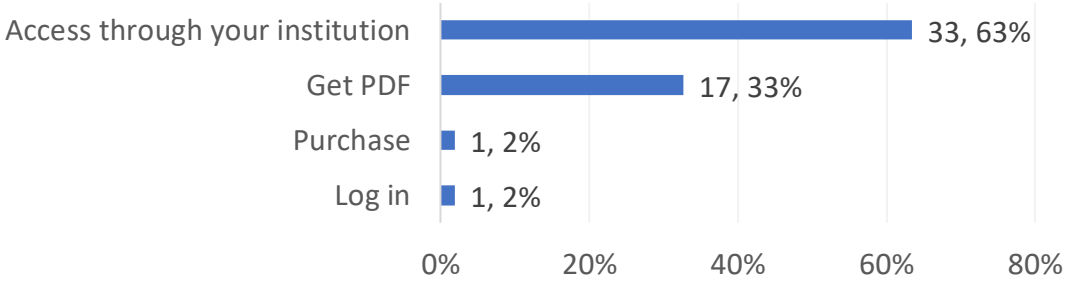
Some participants that “failed” still understood that they needed access through their campus network



“I will click on ‘More Access Options’ since I am out of my campus.”

PDF competes with other access choices

PDF competes with Access through your institution



When asked specifically based on this exercise, which of the following would you be most likely to select to get you access to the full text in the future? 33% still chose “Get PDF”

When asked if “Access through your institution” button was recognizable as the primary method to get to the full-text, participants stated yes, when PDF option was not available.

“Yes in certain cases when the pdf option was not available other than that the pdf option stood out more.”

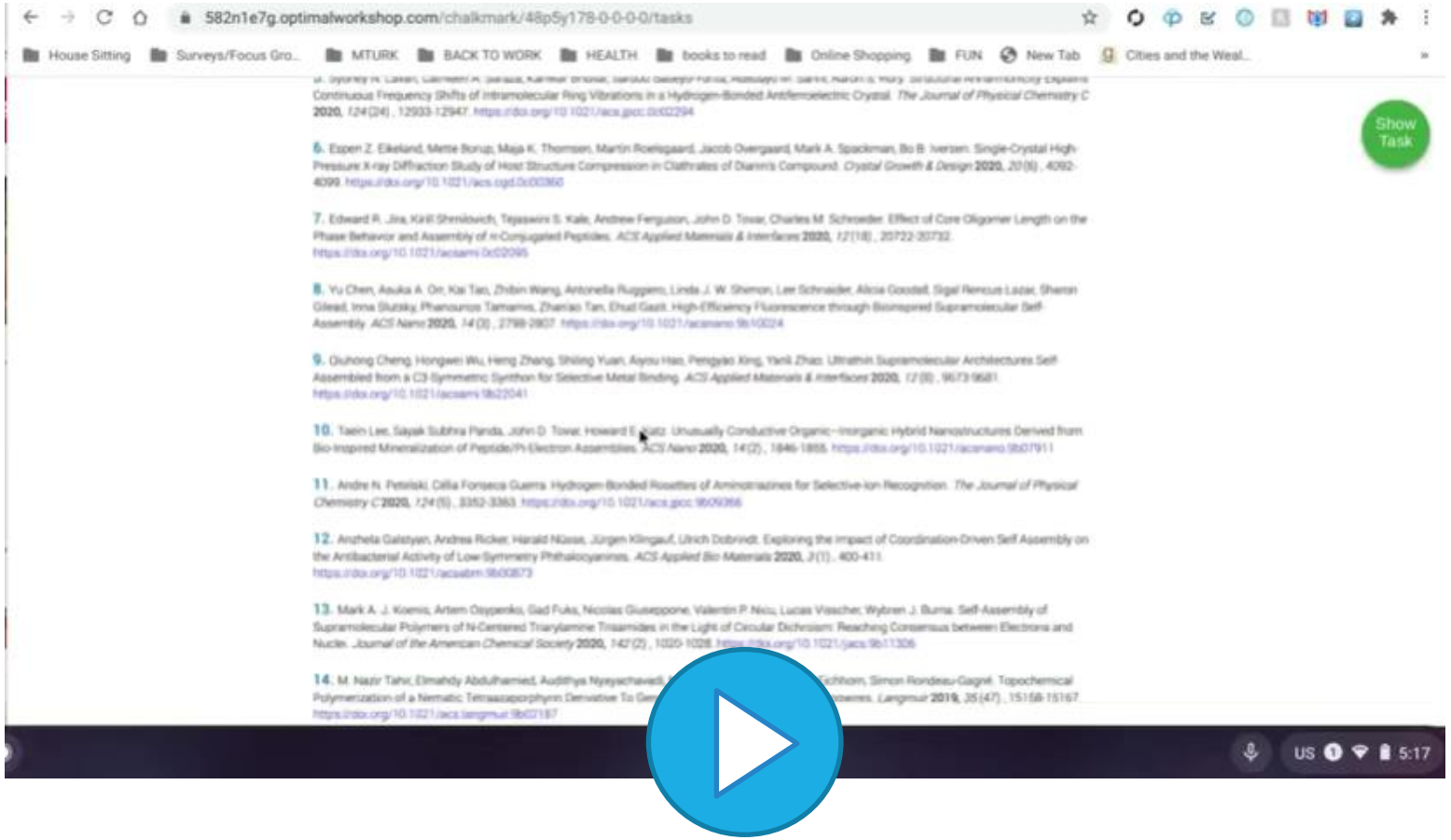
“It was generally recognizable but not always obvious as the primary method.”

“when there were no buttons like get pdf or read full text, that option seemed the most intuitive to me and I always selected it.”

“The first time I actually noticed that button was on the third page if i recall correctly, which means that I didn't really consider it the main option. I think the ‘pdf’ or ‘read pdf’ one was a better choice.”

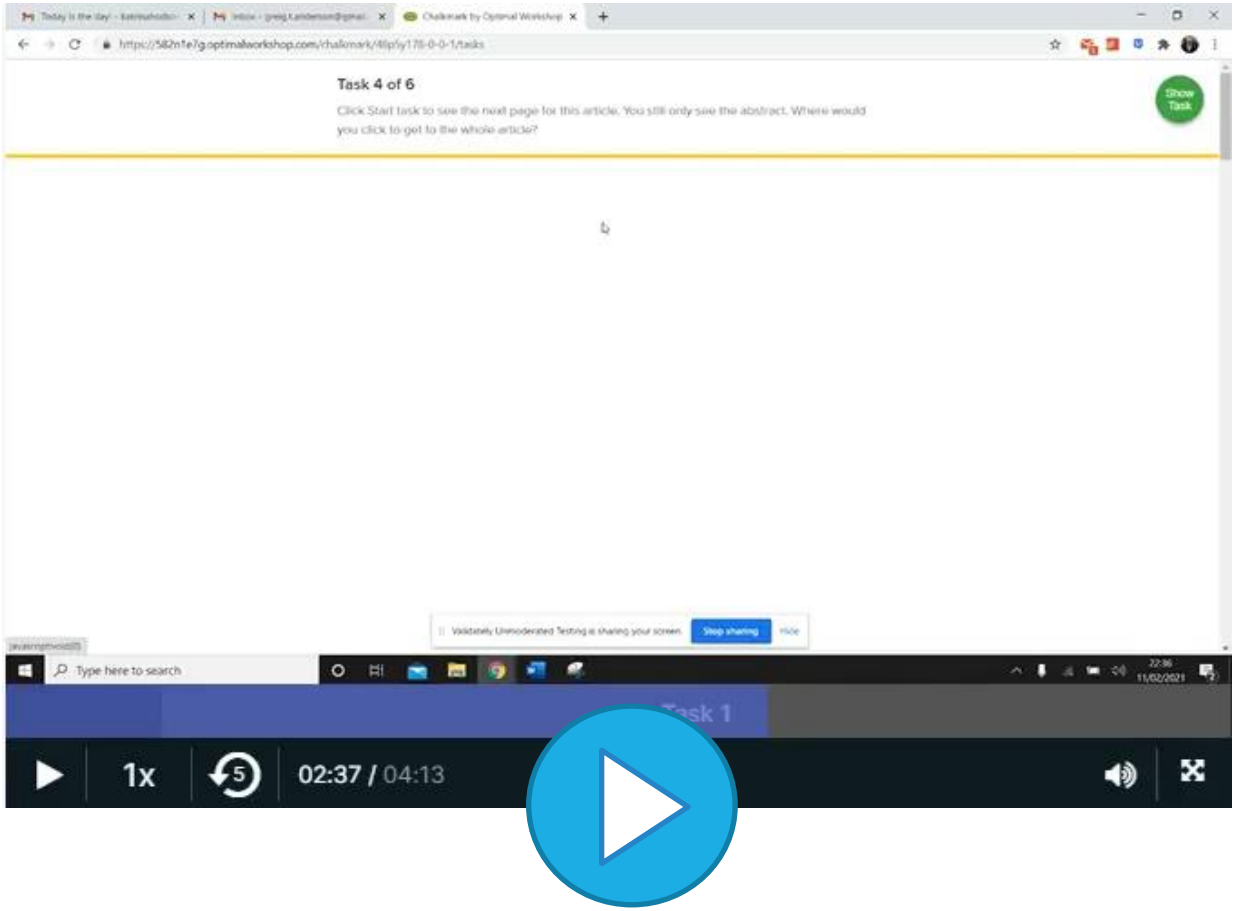
“Layered” experience was disorienting for some

User expected button on all pages: ACS Publications



(Video description) This ACS Publications article was the last task for the participant. She feels lost on this first landing page because she was looking for some kind of “access via institution” CTA but can’t find it. When she saw the second page, it was clear to her where she should click, and states, “see why wasn’t that on the last one?”

User expected button on all pages: Wiley

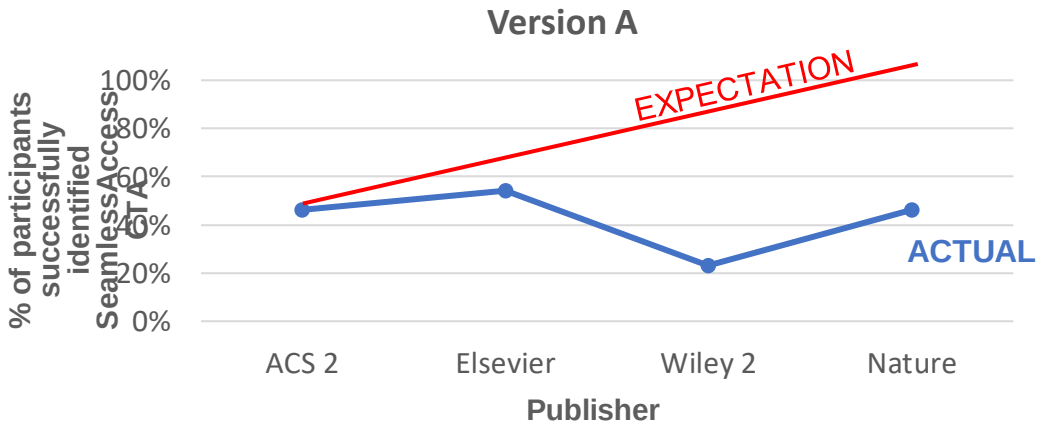


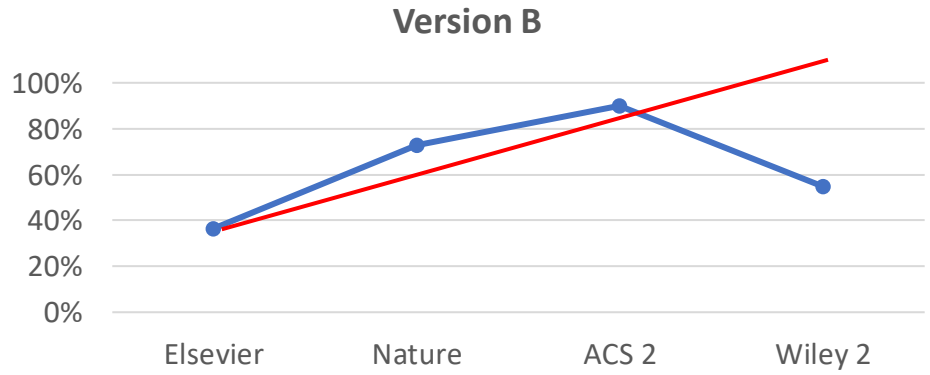
(Video description) This Wiley article was the last task for the participant. On the first page landing page, she tell us it would be “access through institution” but couldn’t find it so she selected “PDF”.

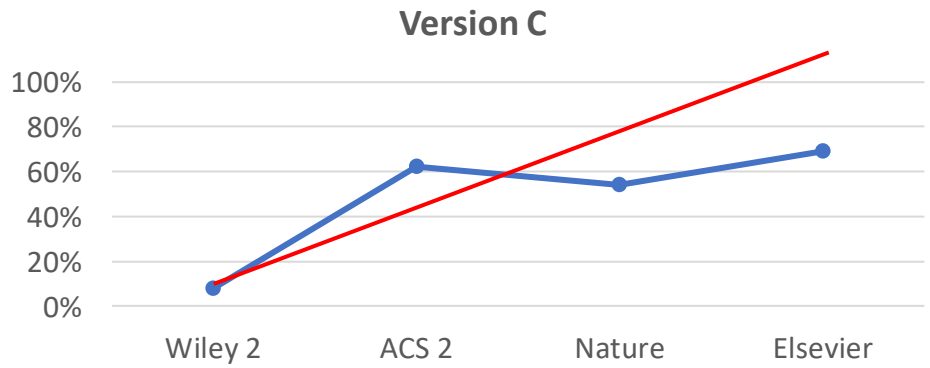
When she saw the second page, she hesitated because now she has the PDF option again as well as “Access through your institution”.

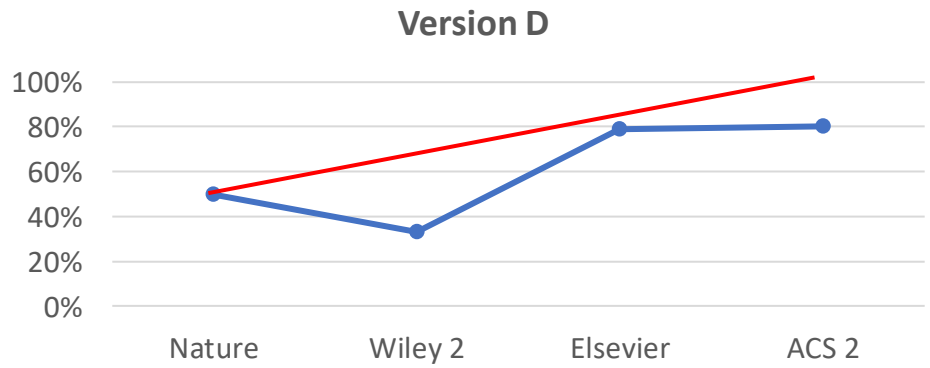
Variability in implementation

The rate of success did not increase as participants progressed through the tasks (blue line)









The variability in implementation across different publishers was a barrier to recognizing SeamlessAccess

“Sometimes I had to scroll down the page and look through a lot of text to find the location where I could select "access through institution".”

“Sometimes it's confusing as I did not see any options to select to view the whole text.”

“Some of the pages were not very clear when it came to finding the right place to click. For example, I remember browsing one page where there was a really huge wall of text and the button was hidden in the top right.”

“I really had to search around to find an access point. But I was able to find them. So it wasn't too difficult or super easy.”

“If the button was big and in an obvious position, like right in the middle, then it was easy. Occasionally the button was small or hidden away and this made it harder.”

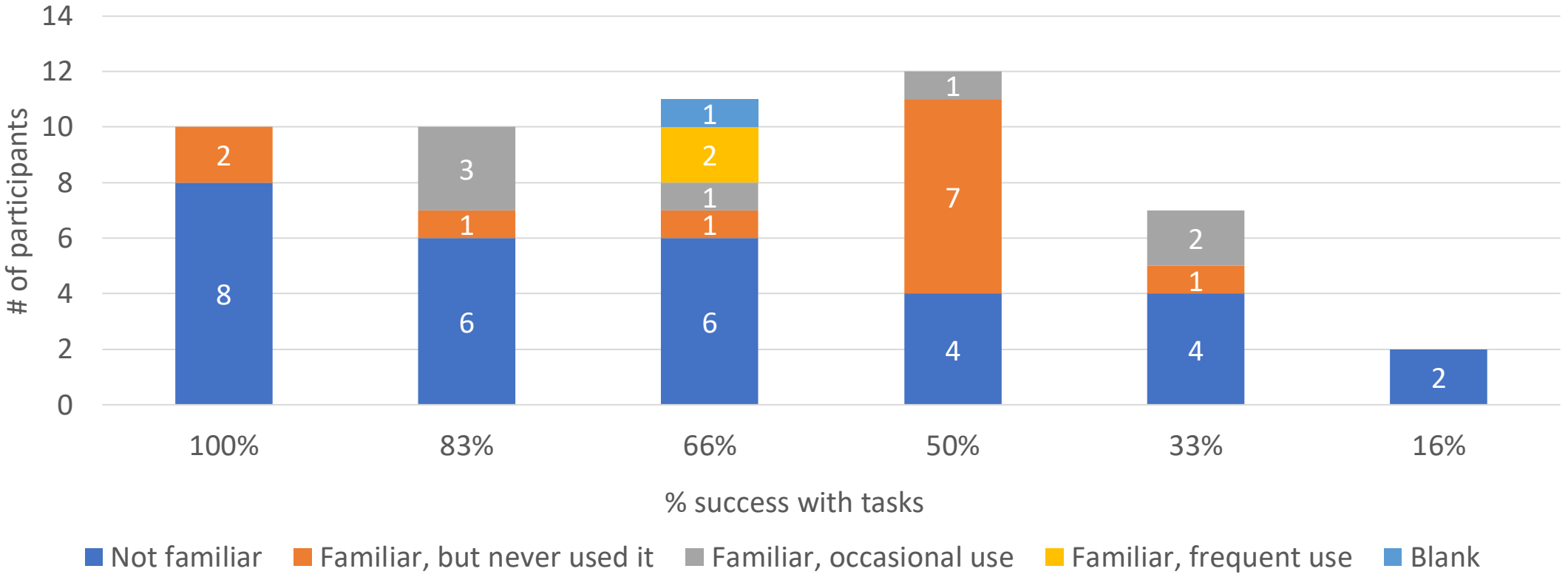
“It is easiest to find the option to get full article text when it is available above the abstract of the article on that page.”

To achieve improved consistencies across publishers

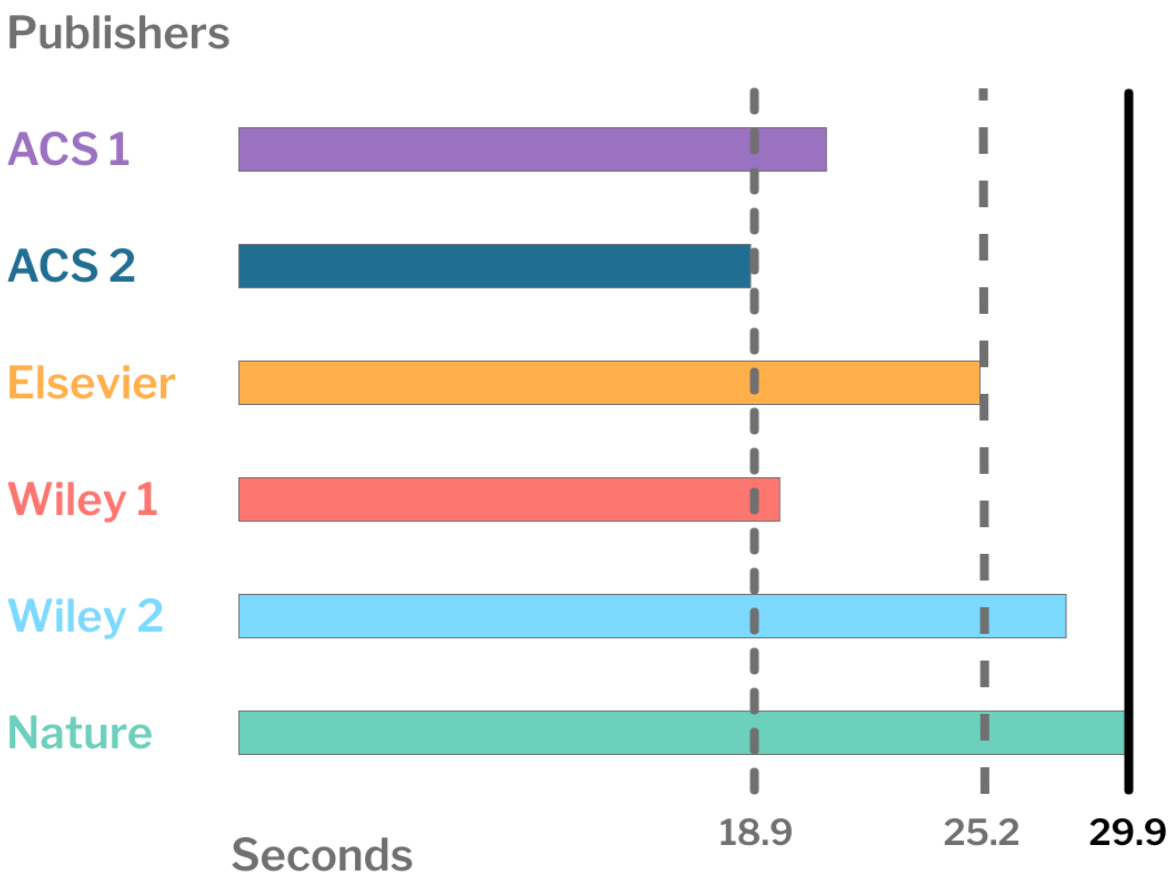
- More consistency in implementation across publishers
- Reduce the number of possibilities available for access to full-text.
- Group the Access Options.
- Place SeamlessAccess CTA in user's path.
- As implementation numbers increase, encourage library instruction about Seamless Access to consumers of scholarly articles.

Appendix

Task success or failure was independent of participant's familiarity with federated access

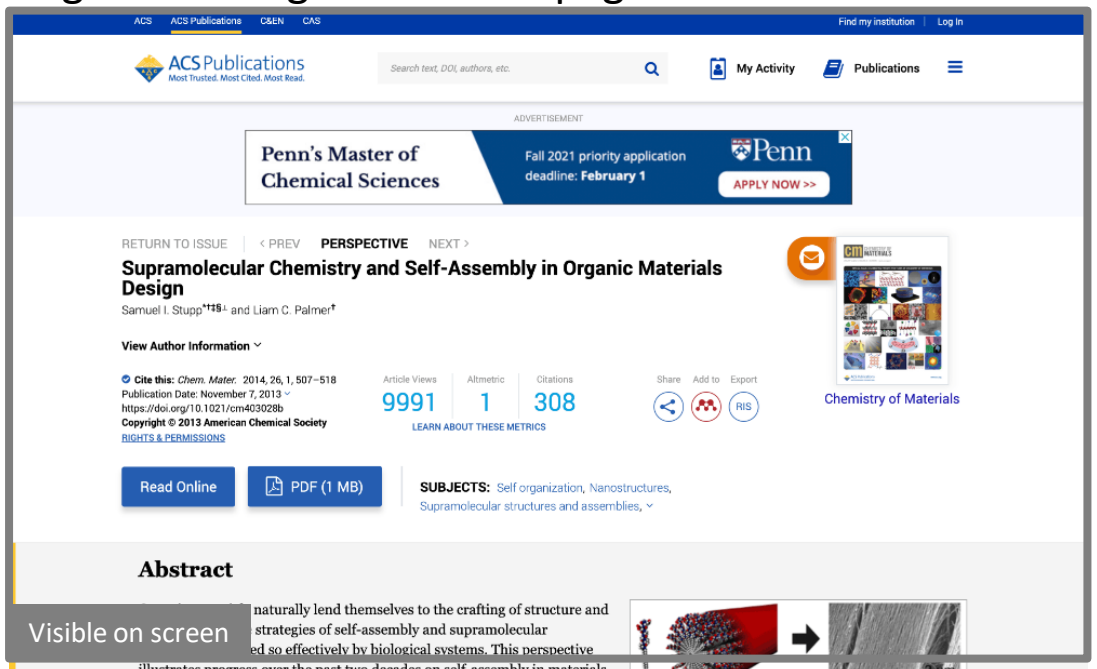


Average task completion times



ACS Publications

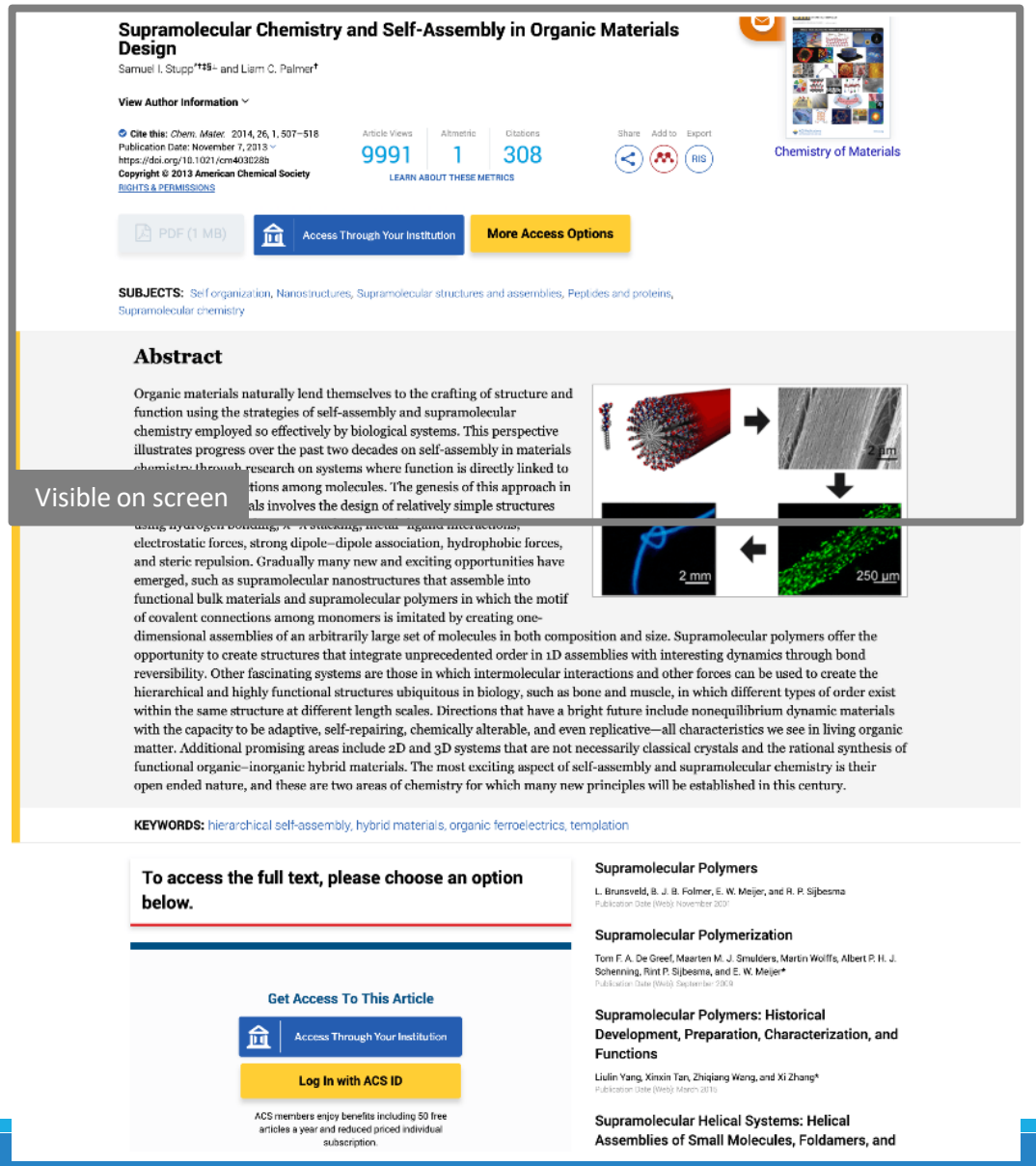
Page 1: landing on abstract page



Visible on screen

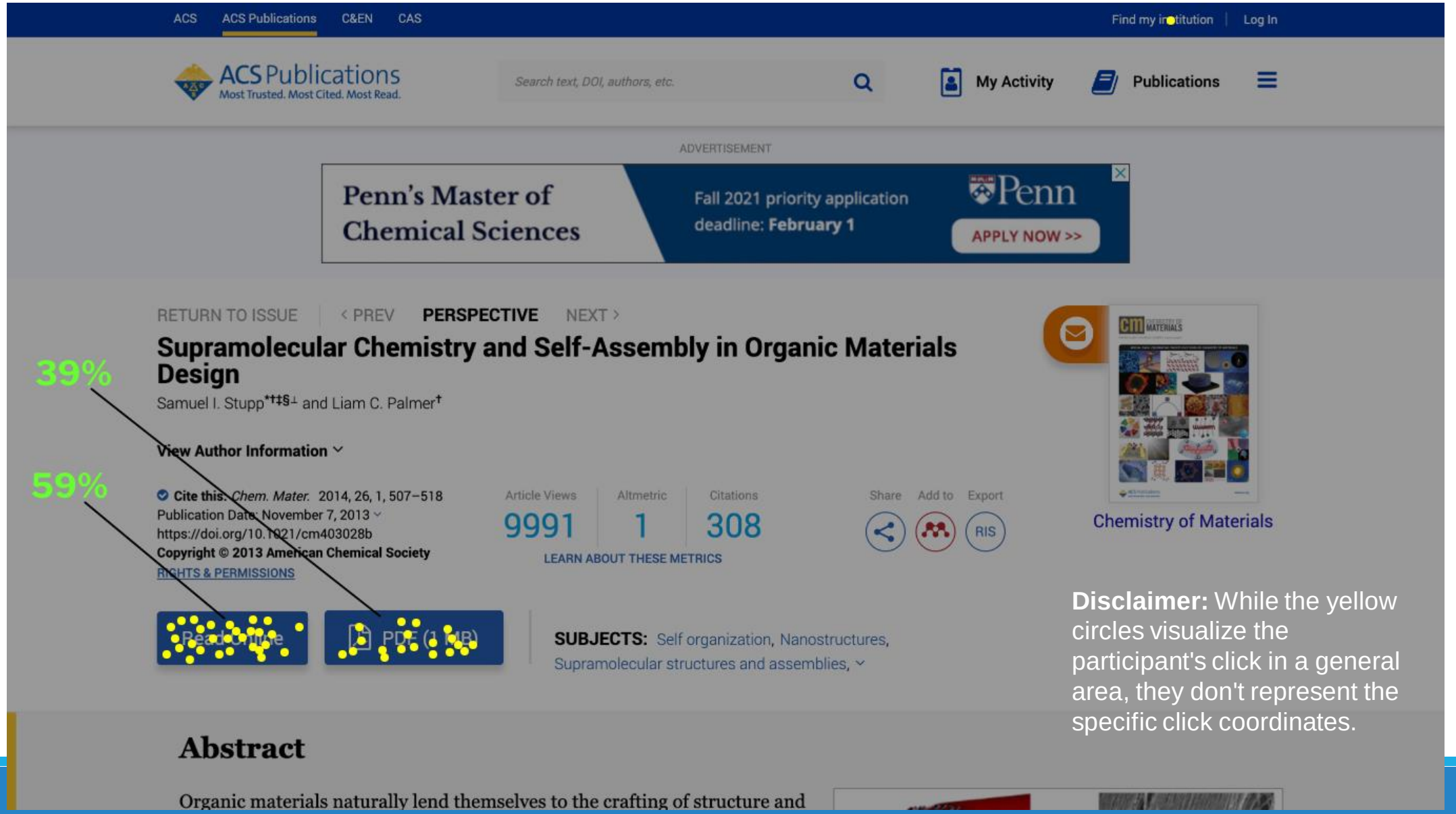
Different access options are presented after the initial selection on page 1 shown on the left.

Page 2: “access denied page” page contains SeamlessAccess CTA



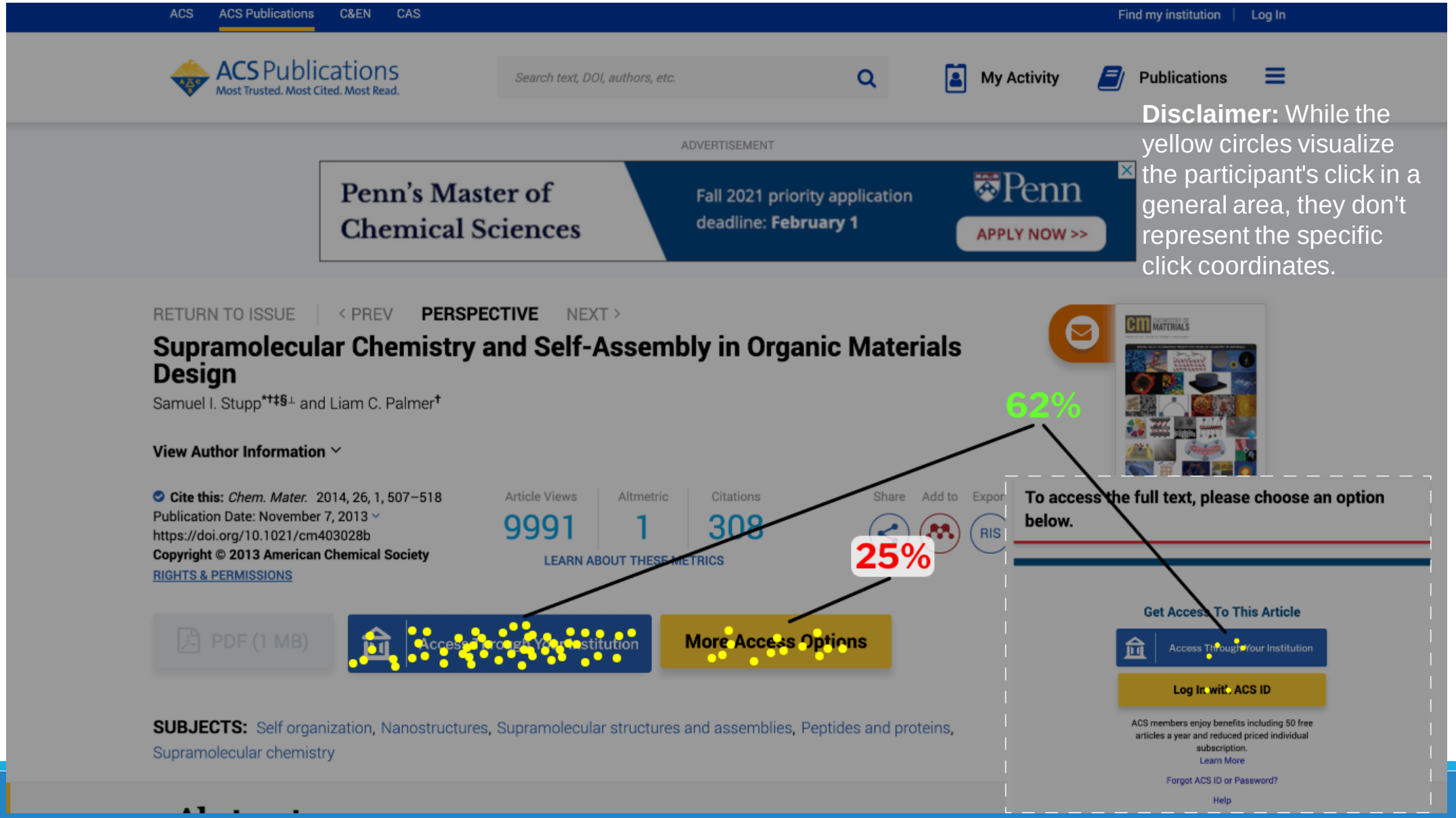
Visible on screen

ACS Publication Heatmap – Page 1



Disclaimer: While the yellow circles visualize the participant's click in a general area, they don't represent the specific click coordinates.

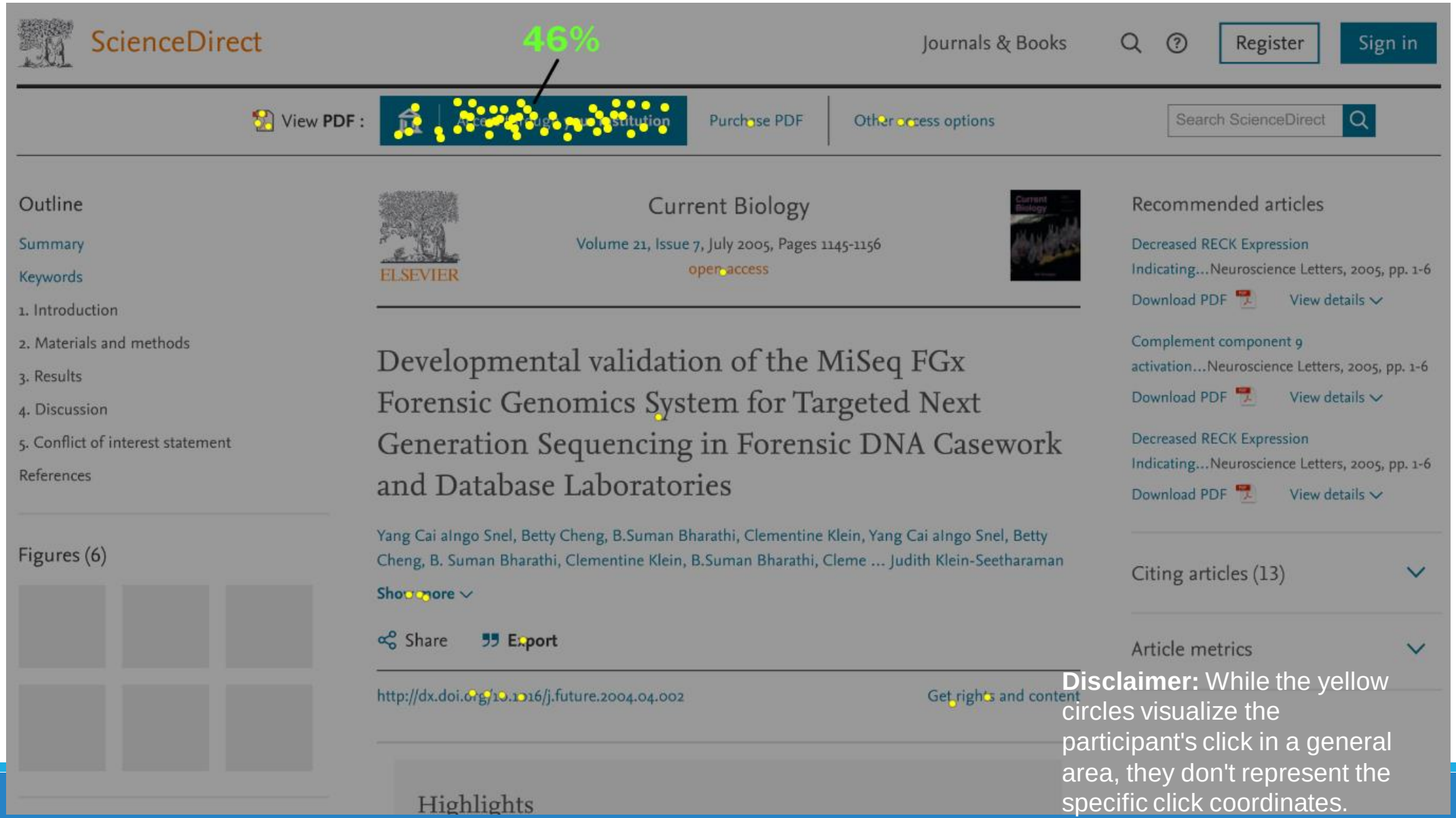
ACS Publication Heatmap – Page 2



Disclaimer: While the yellow circles visualize the participant's click in a general area, they don't represent the specific click coordinates.

Elsevier/ScienceDirect

Elsevier / Science Direct Heatmap

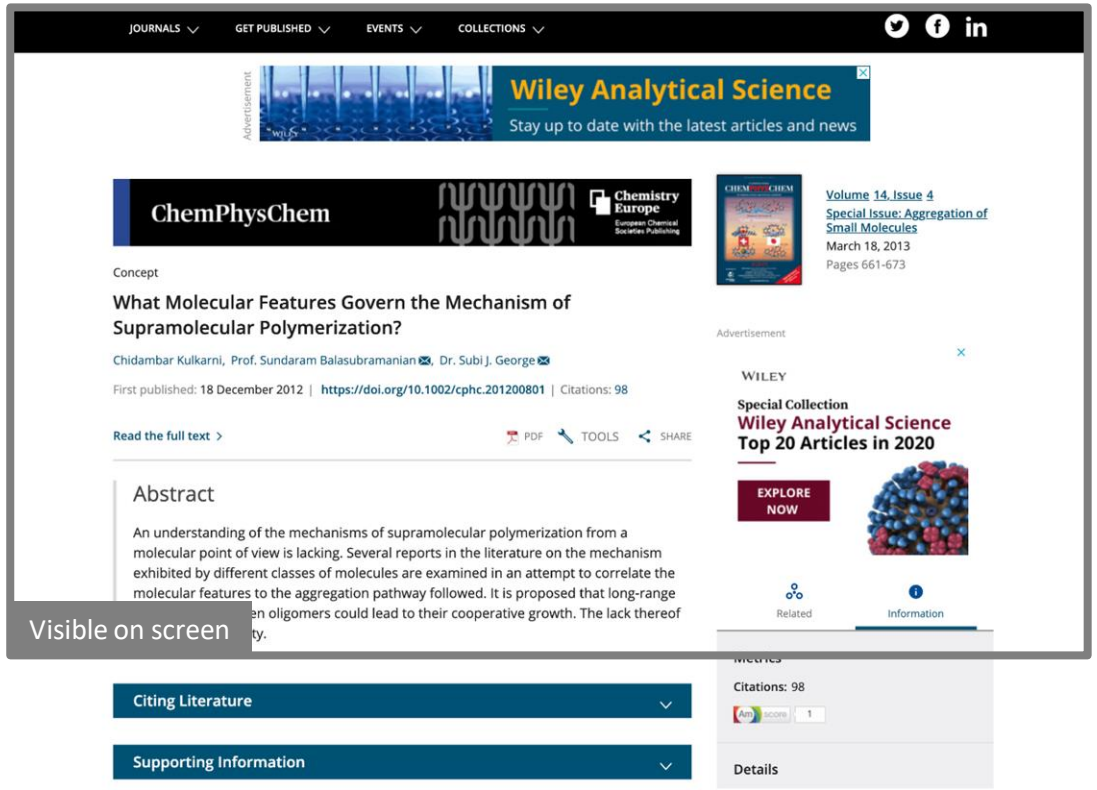


Disclaimer: While the yellow circles visualize the participant's click in a general area, they don't represent the specific click coordinates.

Wiley

Different access options are presented after the initial selection on page 1 shown on the left.

Page 1: landing on abstract page



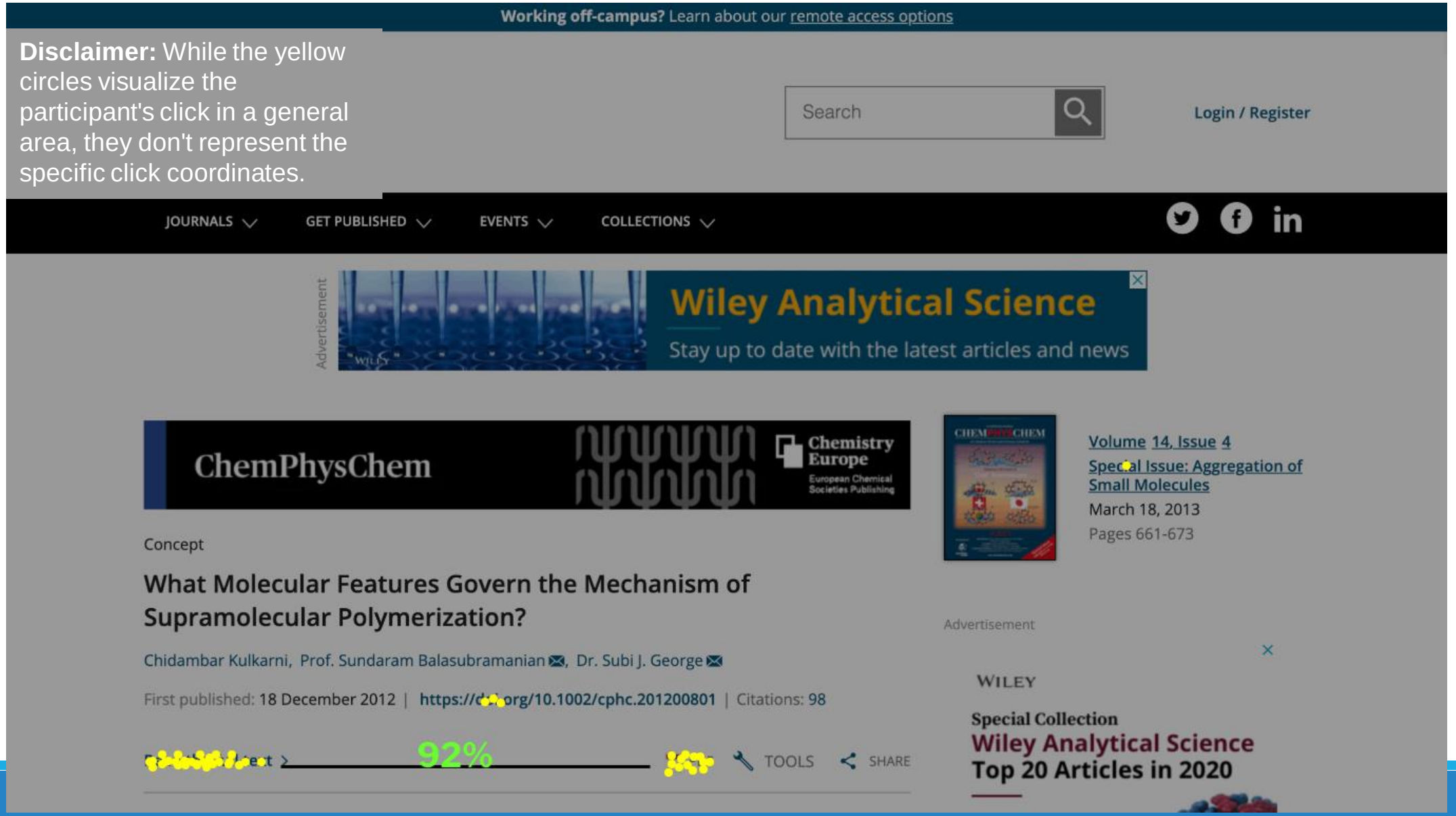
Visible on screen

Page 2: “access denied page” page contains SeamlessAccess CTA

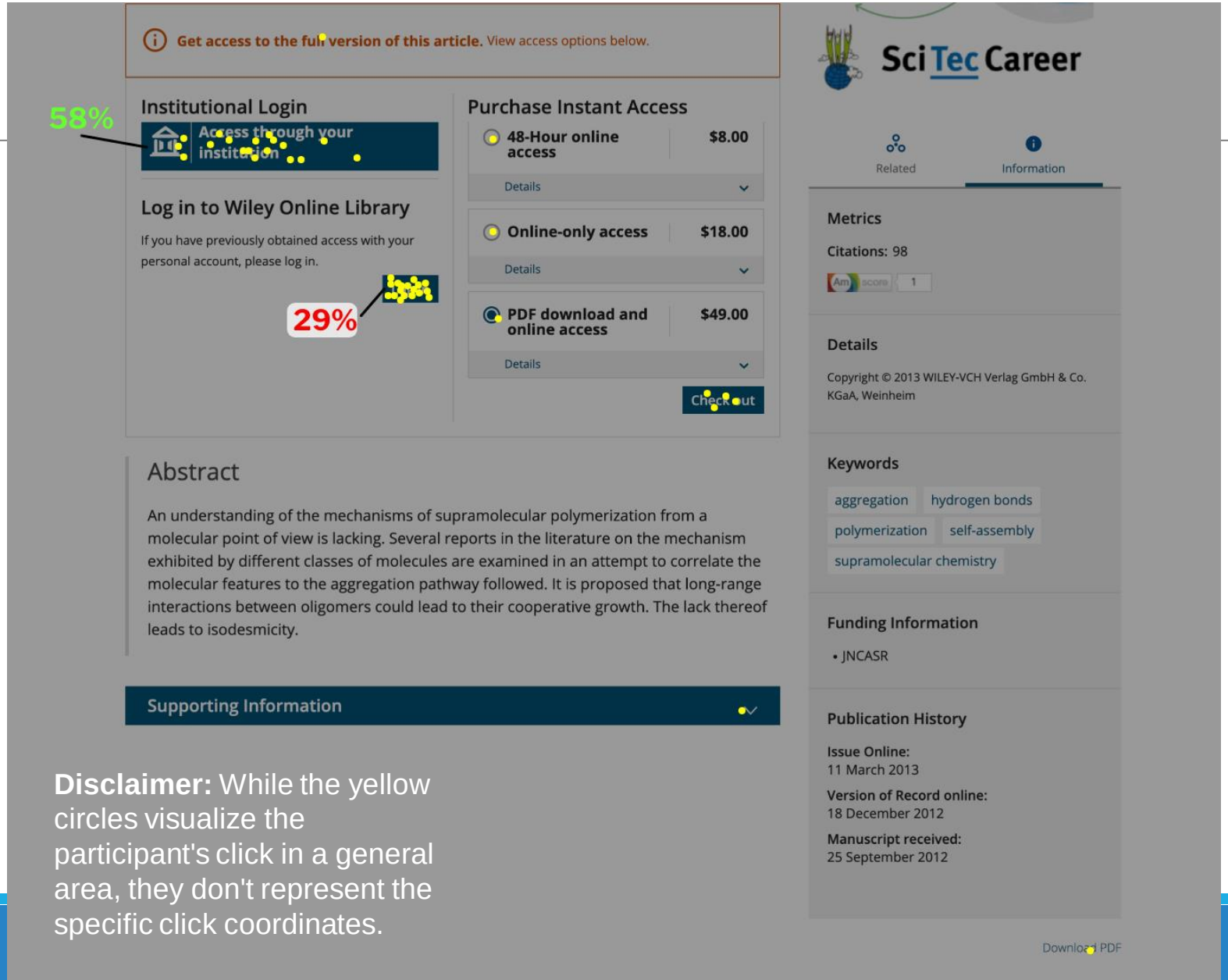
Visible on screen

Wiley Heatmap – Page 1

Disclaimer: While the yellow circles visualize the participant's click in a general area, they don't represent the specific click coordinates.

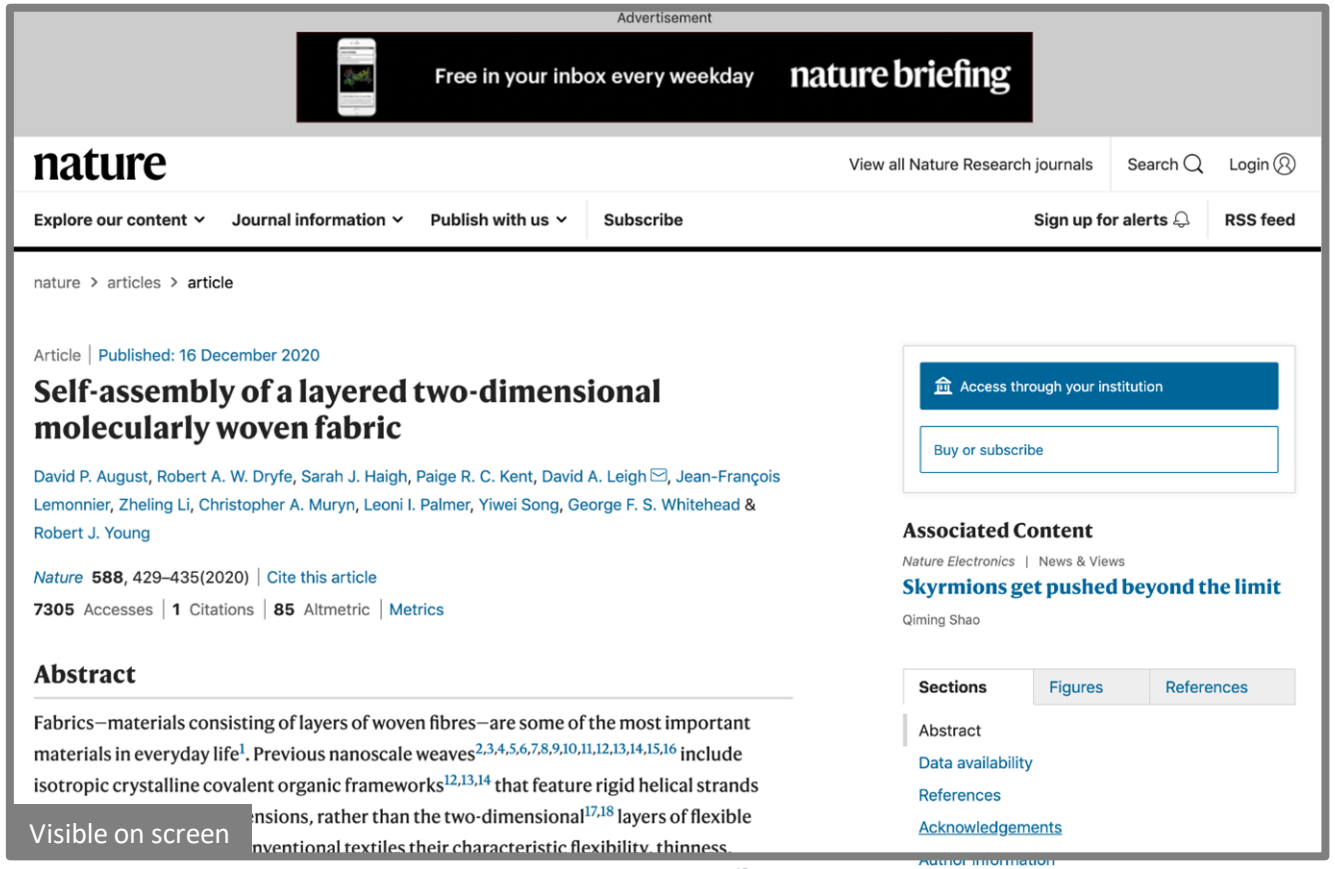


Wiley Heatmap – Page 2



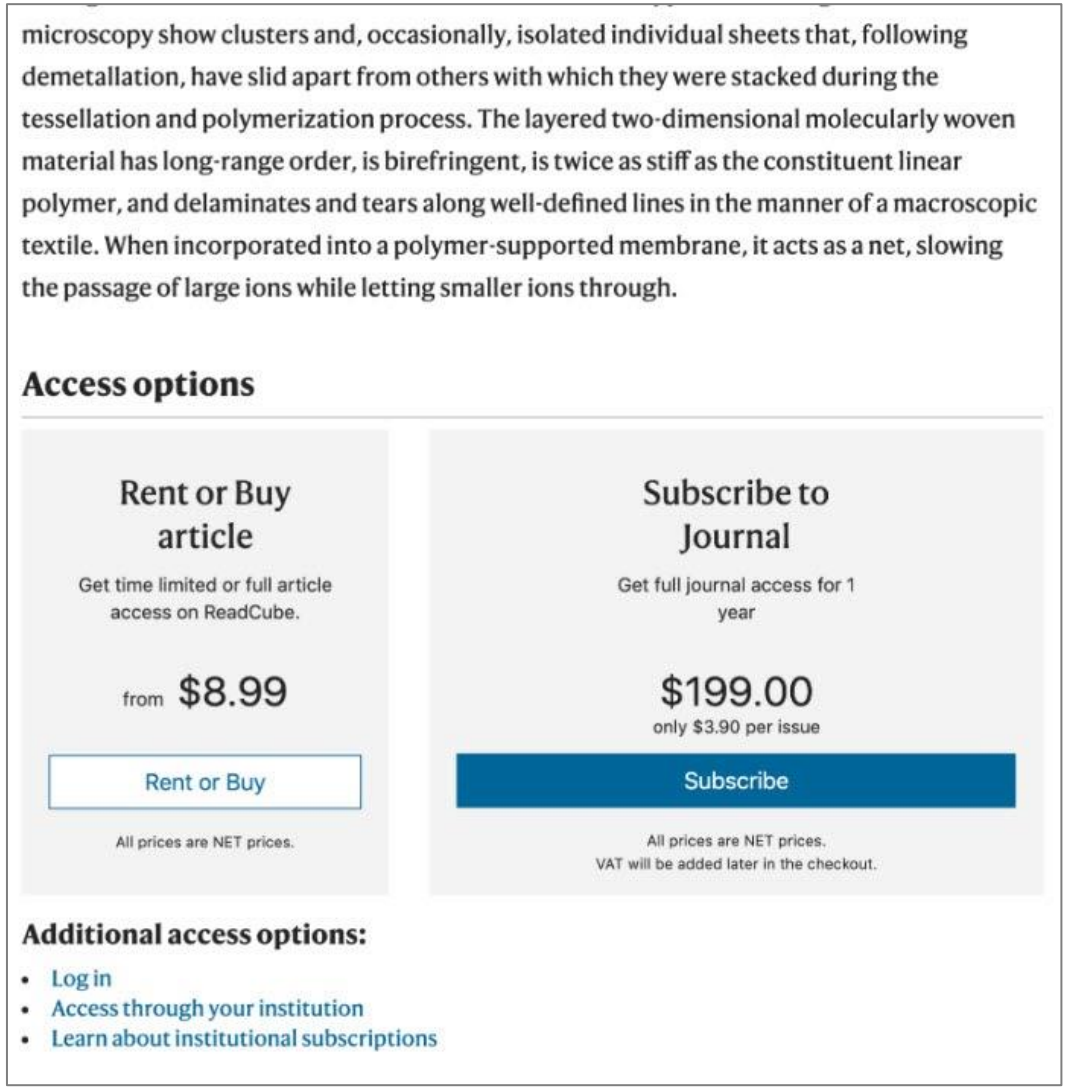
Disclaimer: While the yellow circles visualize the participant's click in a general area, they don't represent the specific click coordinates.

Nature

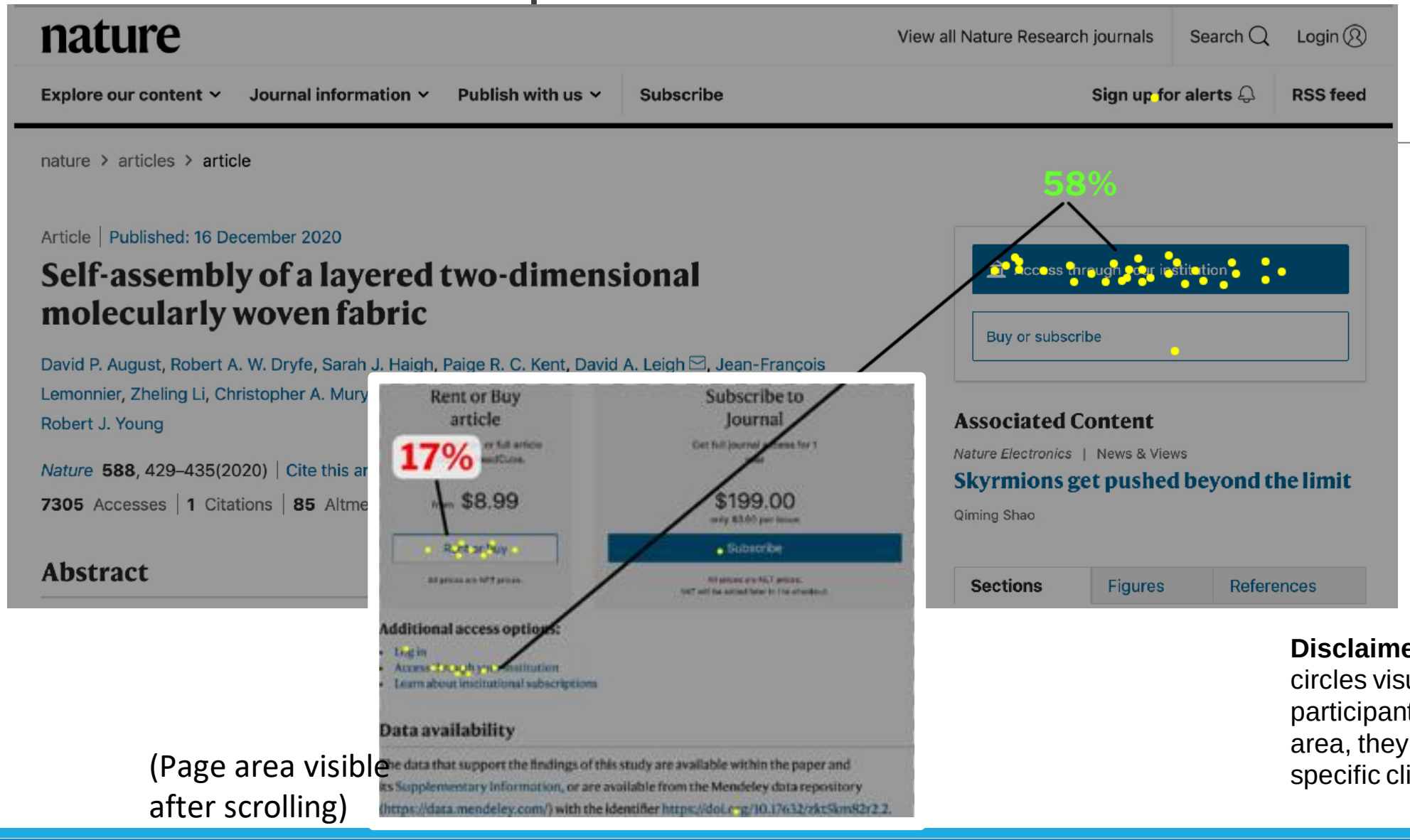


Visible on screen

(Page bottom visible after scrolling)



Nature Heatmap



(Page area visible after scrolling)

Disclaimer: While the yellow circles visualize the participant's click in a general area, they don't represent the specific click coordinates.

Thank You