The personas represent the patrons of the Oklahoma State University Libraries.

Our patrons span a wide range of disciplines and skill levels, but share certain fundamental goals and needs. By focusing on these essential characteristics, these personas embody our users and can help us make decisions about what will best serve the entire patron population. Personas have become a widely used design tool to help decision makers more clearly visualize their target user groups. These personas were developed by incorporating DLS staff’s knowledge, and validating that information against quantitative and qualitative research.

It’s difficult to make an interface that is both simple enough for Beginners and rich enough for expert Researchers. When user needs conflict, these personas can help support design choices by making the costs and benefits of different alternatives more apparent. Different user needs can be prioritized based on:

- The size of that user group
- The value of that particular feature to their goals
- The impact of their research goals on the University’s mission

To help estimate the users that each Persona represents, the personas are displayed here along with corresponding population information from the Oklahoma State University’s website and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education’s 2012 Annual Report, The State of Higher Education in Oklahoma, Degrees of Progress. This correspondence does not always apply, for some undergraduate students may be quite experienced researchers, while some scholars may behave more like beginners when looking for something outside their area of expertise. However it is useful as a rough way of thinking about our patrons.

For most design choices relating to the website, Brooke the Beginner will be the primary persona.

Students like Brooke, who are just beginning their academic careers, are a fruitful area for us to focus our design efforts. Aside from being the most populous user group, they stand to suffer the most from unsupportive systems, since they lack subject experience to know what research materials exist, and have little prior familiarity with library systems. Since they will need to use the library more and more over the next few years, they also stand to gain a great deal from a system that matches their expectations and guides them to appropriate resources.

More experienced library users, such as Richard the Researcher and Sharon the Scholar, already have some idea of what research materials will be available; for them, using the Libraries is often simply a matter of locating items they already know about. They will be able to successfully use any reasonable interface, even if it does not entirely conform to their expectations.