Usability Testing:
How Effective is Your Library’s Web Site

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Discussion Overview

- What is usability testing
- Methodologies
- Planning
- Testing
- Analysis
- Implementation of results
- Costs of Testing
- Conclusions
Why Test?

- More design options in WebPacs
- Increased reliance on Library Web Sites
- Lack of agreement amongst Librarians
- Desire for User Centered Design

Usability Testing

- Based on User Centered Design
  - Early focus on users and tasks
  - Behavioral measurement of product usage
  - Iterative design
- Analyzes interaction between product and user
- Includes many methodologies
Methodologies

- Formal/Informal Usability Testing
- Focus Groups
- Site Usage Logs
- Cognitive Walkthrough
- Card Sort
- Category Membership Expectation
- Questionnaire

Usability Testing

- Observers watch participants perform actual tasks in the Web Site and record their successes, failures and comments
- Can be very informal and inexpensive
- Testing needs to be short and focused
Focus Groups

- A method that involves a small group of individuals discussing their opinions and ideas about a defined topic or set of topics.
- Harder to schedule because everyone in group needs to be available at the same time.

Site Usage Logs

- Need access to the server.
- Good for determining patterns of movement and use.
Card Sort

A method for testing the structure of a Web site or application using index cards, each representing an individual concept or Web page. Participants arrange the cards in an order or structure that makes sense to them.

Cognitive Walkthrough

- Designers of the Web site or product try to predict users’ movements and actions by doing actual tasks themselves.
- Good to use while in the early design phase.
- Most designers will behave differently than novice users.
Category Membership Expectation

- A method that tests the participants’ understanding of various categories including what they think should be in each category and what the category should be named.
- Can be exhaustive for participants.
- Good for small sites.

Questionnaire

- A set of questions designed to collect responses and opinions from users on a topic.
- Easy to analyze results.
Planning

- Literature Search
- Purpose Statement
- Task Lists
- Human Subjects Review Board

Planning

- Participants
  - Types
  - Numbers
- Incentive
- Script
- Call for Participants
Overview of Testing at WSUV

- Jan - Sep 1998 - WebPac testing on Pullman and Vancouver Campuses
- Nov 1998 - Web Site testing on Vancouver Campus
- Oct 1999- Feb 2000 - Web Site testing on Vancouver Campus
Analysis: Card Sort

- 7 of 8 participants thought there should be a faculty resources category
- Majority of participants wanted help documentation grouped with specific databases
- 4 of 8 participants wanted the Request forms to be near the databases

Analysis: Category Membership

- What should be added to the Web site
  - Pictures of the staff
  - Links to email account information
  - Checkout periods
- What is confusing about the current site
  - Subject Trees
  - Best of Lists
  - Library Reserves
Analysis: Questionnaire

- What is best about the current site
- What is worst about the current site
- What should be within 2 clicks of the home page

Implementation of Results

- Redesigned Web Site
  - Problem: Several “Reserves” pages
  - Action: Reorganize and rename pages
  - Problem: Request forms are too far from databases
  - Action: Add more links to forms
  - Problem: Too many clicks to key resources
  - Action: Added links to the Library’s home page
Implementation of Results

Costs of Usability Testing

- Can be very inexpensive

- Costs
  - Staff Hours
    - Preparation of test materials
    - Testing, Analysis and Implementation
  - Incentives for Participants
  - Office Supplies
Conclusions

- Costs were low, while amount of information gained was high
- Creation of test instruments was worthwhile
- Good PR for the Library
- Focus on *Users*

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Presentation, testing instruments and bibliography available at:

http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/fac/diller/usability/website.htm