Improving the Usability of the University of Rochester River Campus Libraries’ Web Sites

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Outline

- What is Usability?
- Why is it important at the U of R River Campus Libraries?
- How we got started
- What we do
- How usability fits into our web design process
- Real life examples
Usability is . . .

Ease of use of a web product by the primary users measured by effective and efficient completion of frequently performed tasks
Importance of Usability

- Competing with Google, Wikipedia, Amazon and more.
- Significant funds and energy invested in our content.
- Students, faculty and staff have heavy workloads and many time commitments.
Who are our primary users?

- Usually not librarians or designers
- Must be determined for each web product
- May include faculty, staff, & students
- Determined by major stakeholders
We are not our users!

- Age Difference
- Technological Upbringing
- Learning Styles
- Current Activities
- Knowledge of English
- Cultural Background
- Jargon
- Others?
What do users need to do frequently at our website?
- Find a book. Find an article. Find our hours. Contact the staff.

Make these tasks a design priority.
Also determined by stakeholders.
Surveys

- Do users do what they say they do?
- Can only answer question you asked.
- They estimate.
- They forget details.
- Ex. Do faculty use print journals?
Getting Started

- Invited Jerilyn Veldof to do a local hands-on workshop
- Formed a committee (6 people)
- Read the literature.
- Developed testing protocols
- Practiced among ourselves
- Recruited users and tested other academic library home pages.
- Began testing our own website and sharing our results
Usability Culture

- Administrators supported us
- Willing to pay users incentives
- Web designers interested in user feedback
- Librarians had mixed feelings but willing to give it a try
  - Are we “dumbing down” our website?
  - Why won’t users read?
  - Are test results valid?
What we do

After primary users, purpose and tasks have been defined by stakeholders:

- Choose a testing protocol
- Script the tasks
- Test & record results
- Analyze results looking for patterns
- Report issues to designers and they will solve in next design
- Repeat
Testing Protocols

Early Testing
- Mental Model
- Focus Group/Labeling
- Card Sort
- Paper Prototypes

Later Testing
- Heuristic
- Cognitive walk-through
- Assessments
Mental Models

a door

a search engine
7. Title: Happily ever after? Religion, marital status, gender and relationship quality in urban families
   Author(s): Wolfinger NH, Wilcox WB
   Source: SOCIAL FORCES Volume: 86 Issue: 3 Pages: 1311-1337 Published: MAR 2008
   Times Cited: 0

8. Title: 'P.S. I love you'
   Author(s): Smith A
   Source: SIGHT AND SOUND Volume: 18 Issue: 2 Pages: 77-78 Published: FEB 2008
   Times Cited: 0

9. Title: 'Story of a love affair'
   Author(s): [Anon]
   Source: SIGHT AND SOUND Volume: 18 Issue: 2 Pages: 95-95 Published: FEB 2008
   Times Cited: 0

10. Title: Parent-offspring conflict in mate preferences
    Author(s): Buunk AP, Park JH, Dubbs SL
    Source: REVIEW OF GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY Volume: 12 Issue: 1 Pages: 47-62 Published: MAR 2008
    Times Cited: 0
Card Sort for Staff Files

Top Level Collections

- **Committees and Projects**
- **Departments**
- **Discussion Boards**
  Use the existing boards, or create your own topic board, to discuss the things that interest you.
- **Events and Photos**
  Photos of library events like ScareFair, Study Break and Social Committee Events
- **Forms**
  Need a travel expense or performance evaluation. This is the place.
- **Presentations and Publications**
  Here you can find our staff presentations and publications
- **Staff Pages**
  Get to know the library staff
- **User Guides, Manuals, & Statistics**
  Everything from Page Editor Resources to Staff Web help
Paper Prototype

- Image - not programmed design
- Not limited by technology
- Easy and quick to change
- Get general feedback, impressions
- Do we have the right tasks?
- Do we have the right audience?
- Do design concepts make sense?
Heuristics

- Visibility of system status
- Language/ Jargon/ Real World
- Error prevention and recovery
- Consistency
- Recognition rather than Recall
- Flexibility and Efficiency
- Aesthetics and Graphics
- Help and Documentation
Cognitive Walk-Through

- Test subjects are experts, probably library staff
- Test our products and other products
- Test our assessment test
- Look for glaring errors and strong successes
“Classic” assessment test

- Recruit ~5 users from primary user group
- Schedule Test
- Test monitor interacts with user
- Test recorder captures language, click paths, important points
- User performs tasks while sharing thoughts
- User is rewarded.
Testing 5 users works

- Looking for major problems with web design.
- Don’t need statistically valid results.
- Patterns emerge and are reinforced by each test participant.
- Plan to iterate testing. (3 iterations = 15 users)
- It is too hard, you won’t do it.
Recruiting Users

- Ask at orientation if they will help and create an email list
- Post advertisements with tear offs
- Invite students spontaneously
- Provide incentives/ rewards – money, Starbucks cards, thank you notes, food
Equipment and Software

- Notebook and pen
- Computer

Optional:
- Audio recorder
- Microphone
- Camera
- Morae software (TechSmith)
User Centered Design

Content  Content  Content

Design

Usability
Meta-search

ARTICLES AND MORE

SEARCH FOR:  

Articles and More finds books, selected newspapers, and journal articles in all subject areas.

Sample Searches:
- health insurance elderly
- eleanor roosevelt civil rights
- deforestation amazon

RIVER CAMPUS LIBRARIES
University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627-0055 USA

http://www.library.rochester.edu | Contact Us | Questions | Comments |
Early search results

Find Articles Search Results

Keyword(s): procrastination college students

You searched for procrastination college students. Results 1 - 20 of 42.

**Academic Procrastination Among African-American College Students**
Clark, J. L.
Psychological reports., 75. no. 2, (1994): 931
from ArticleFirst - More >>

**Academic procrastination prevention/intervention: strategies and recommendations**
Kachgal, Mara M.; Hansen, L. Sunny; Nutter, Kevin J.
Journal of Developmental Education
from Wilson Omnifile Full Text Mega - More >>

**Affective responses before and after fraudulent excuses by academic procrastinators**
Ferraro, Joseph R.; Beck, Brett L.
Education (Chula Vista, Calif.)
from Wilson Omnifile Full Text Mega - More >>

**The Causal Role of Causal Importance for the Explanation of Student Study Behaviour: cross-validation with multiple samples.**
Yaldinis, Georgios D.
Educational Psychology, Sep 2001, Vol. 21 Issue 3, p277
from MasterFILE Select - More >>

**Components of Perfectionism and Procrastination in College Students.**
Flett, Gordon L.
Reading List

Abstract

At the University of Rochester River Campus Libraries, we believe that it is no longer enough to produce a functional web page or catalog without getting user feedback. We have embedded usability work into our web product design process. I will describe usability methods, some surprising results and how they impacted our designs.