

Web Site Usability

The User Perspective

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E-Journals at NRL



A Case Study – E- Journals at NRL

Web Site Usability

Brief History

Existing interface – 1995/1999

Alphabetical index page

+/- 200 titles

Slow increase in electronic publications numbers

Addition of first multiple-title package

Web Site Usability

Redesign it or users can't use it

The scroll bar spins endlessly but doesn't drop

Personal observation of users

Reference staff input

ILL/photocopy staff input

User observations & comments

Add alpha bar & internal page bookmarks

Web Site Usability

Good may not be good enough

... stalls out again and again and again...

Too much for browser and user to handle

First of many hundred plus title additions

Usability lost to crash and burn

User frustration rising

Solution - to redesign for complete access

Web Site Usability

Knowledge Testing

Who are your users ?

What are their priorities?

Web Site Usability

What Do Users Want?

K I S S

Web Site Usability

What Do Users Want?

K knowledge

I intuitive interface

S speed is essential

S simple - less is more

Web Site Usability

What do Users Reject?

Busy backgrounds & “cool” but
confusing design enhancements

Blinking words, rolling marquees,
fancy banners

Hidden, hard to find / understand
functions

Inconsistent / erratic interface features

Web Site Usability

The recipe

- Enlarge the alpha bar concept
- Add an optional dash of publisher info
- Plus a pinch of “**HELP**”, another of “**FAQ**”, and the mandatory “**Copyright**” and “**Disclaimer/notice**” - discretely done
- Mix thoroughly
- Find a few “hungry” souls willing to sample and comment honestly

Web Site Usability

The result

Expand alpha bar concept across whole

- 1 page becomes an accordion 65
- use a-b-c bookmarking top & bottom

Additional publisher pages

- second point of access
- quick reference tool
- index of available titles by publisher

Email link for user feedback and questions

- AND SUPPORT IT

Web Site Usability

I am nothing if not a good scout...

Why talk about e-journals ?

E-journals are a microcosm -
a Web site within a Web site

Web Site Usability

I am nothing if not a good scout...

What does this have to do with Web site usability?

- Lessons learned here are applicable to the complete Web site redesign process
- Procedures are changed for the user's convenience, not to showcase the designer's creativity

Web Site Usability

Things that Affect the User

Forced re-education; recreate the known
Frames

User perception of page content

Lack of expansion to fill browser

and give access to full content

Navigation bars w/in a frame - bookmarks or
actual page changes

Do not readily support text only option

Browsers & monitors

Version

Size

Customization option not clear cause confusion

Create for cross platform use

Web Site Usability

Things that Affect the User

Technology

Constant construction - users change resistant

Plug-ins

Animation

Navigation tools that are not immediately evident

Colors

Followed link color same / close to active link color

Using non-standard color for text w/underlining

Color-blindness

Drop down menus, pop-up text boxes, spawning new windows, broken back links, inflexibility in data input fields and textboxes, close window button position

Web Site Usability

Summary

The user is the only reason for a Web site. Users are a gift. They are welcome and well-respected guests and should be treated as such. For a Web site to be successful, users must return again and again; they must find what they want with minimum exertion. When they leave, they should sing the praises of the site as a navigation and knowledge marvel, and share these perceptions with their friends. If users find a site difficult, for whatever reason, they will leave.

Someone else can - **AND WILL** - give them what they want, gladly.