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Live Web Usability Lab

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Live Web Usability Lab
April 28, 2008
Connecticut Library Association

• Stephanie Willen Brown, electronic resources librarian, the University of Connecticut
• Steve Cauffman, reQuest ILL coordinator, iCONN
• Carol Abatelli, head of collections & electronic resource management, Eastern Connecticut State University
Session based on

Marty, Paul F. and Michael Twidale, “Usability@90mph: Presenting and Evaluating a New, High-Speed Method for Demonstrating User Testing in Front of an Audience.” *FirstMonday*. July, 2005:
http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue10_7/marty/
Paul Marty:

“... only a small amount of time is necessary to demonstrate ... that the best way to evaluate an interface for usability is to test that interface with representative users.”

Marty, Paul + Michael Twidale, “Usability@90mph” FirstMonday, 2005
Please identify the woman on the next slide.

Session will not continue until you have identified her.
Are you still waiting?
It’s Lydia Maria Child, 1802-1880. Abolitionist and supporter of the Underground Railroad.

Frustrated? That’s how our users feel! We make them answer a question that makes NO SENSE to them before we let them continue.
Act Like a User:
Find Information about Diabetes

Look at the next three slides/sites and consider

Two questions
- What’s the first thing you see?
- Where can you get information on diabetes?
  (think of this for your patrons – students, seniors, concerned relatives, patients)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quicklinks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Catalog</td>
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<td>Libraries, Centers, and Museums</td>
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<td>Access Electronic Reserves</td>
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<td>Ask a Librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request: an Interlibrary Loan</td>
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<td>Renew Books</td>
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<td>Support Your Libraries</td>
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What *is* Usability?

Usability … assesses **how easy user interfaces are to use**. The word “usability” also refers to **methods for improving ease-of-use during** the design process.

Jakob Nielsen, Usability 101
Components of Usability

Goals
• Learnability
• Efficiency
• Memorability
• Error recovery
• Satisfaction

Achieved by …
• Thinking like a user
• Consistency
• Tweaking text
Thinking Like a User

• “… let’s acknowledge the vital importance of empathy for the user. Only by understanding and caring about the perspective of the individual can we design useful, usable solutions.”

- Peter Morville, Ambient Findability
Consistency

- Color, graphics
- Orientation & navigation
- Language
Yipes!
Why was that screen so different?

It had a point:
don’t change the look-n-feel
without a good reason
Users will notice and wonder.
Reading Online is Like ??

Reading Proust
– People like to read long sentences online because it’s easy to keep your place, follow complex trains of thought, and flip to the next screen of dense text.

or

Skimming citations
– People skim titles & abstracts for keywords, take notes, and move to the next citation
For a long time I used to go to bed early. Sometimes, when I had put out my candle, my eyes would close so quickly that I had not even time to say "I'm going to sleep." And half an hour later the thought that it was time to go to sleep would awaken me; I would try to put away the book which, I imagined, was still in my hands, and to blow out the light; I had been thinking all the time, while I was asleep, of what I had just been reading, but my thoughts had run into a channel of their own, until I myself seemed actually to have become the subject of my book: a church, a quartet, the rivalry between Francois I and Charles V. This impression would persist for some moments after I was awake; it did not disturb my mind, but it lay like scales upon my eyes and prevented them from registering the fact that the candle was no longer burning. Then it would begin to seem unintelligible, as the thoughts of a former existence must be to a reincarnate spirit; the subject of my book would separate itself from me, leaving me free to choose whether I would form part of it or no; and at the same time my sight would return and I would be astonished to find myself in a state of darkness, pleasant and restful enough for the eyes, and even more, perhaps, for my mind, to which it appeared incomprehensible, without a cause, a matter dark indeed.

Swann’s Way / Marcel Proust
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Beating the Odds: An Analysis of Student Performance and Achievement Gaps on State Assessments, Results from the 2005-2006 School Year</td>
<td>Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC, Council of the Great City Schools. 2007 30 pp. (ED498835)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The Truth about Students of Color and Standardized Tests</td>
<td>Thompson, Gail L.</td>
<td>Leadership, v36 n3 p22-26, 38 Jan-Feb 2007. (EJ771720)</td>
<td>PDF Full Text</td>
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**ERIC search: African Americans & mathematics**
Jargon for Librarians

• On travelocity you need the cheapest round-trip ticket from Boston to London.
• These are your options – which is right?
  ● Flights & Prices
  ● Fares
  ● 3 Best Itineraries
That question was taken from Jared Spool’s 1999 book *Web Site Usability / a Designer’s Guide*.

What’s the answer? **3 Best Itineraries**

Did you get it?! Confused? That’s what happens to our patrons.
Library Jargon to Students

• “ERIC, I think it’s some kind of journal … some kind of citation.”

• Reference Shelf “[It’s] very general. You don’t know what to expect as it could be anything.”

We must be very careful of jargon! Think of that Gary Larson cartoon, where all the dog hears is her name, Ginger
Usability Testing

• Define users
• Design questions to mimic what users would realistically do
• Do usability testing early & often
  – 3-5 users highlights 85% of errors
  – Better to test several small groups than 10-15 at once
• Note errors, redesign and retest
Volunteer Required

• Anyone who hasn’t used iCONN?
• Willing to answer questions about iCONN in front of your peers?!
• Carol will explain the usability testing process
• Steve will
  – Demonstrate iCONN
  – Describe the usability test questions
@ iCONN

- Union Catalog (reQuest)
- Licensed databases
- Authentication
- Federated searching
Usability Test Questions

- Login to iCONN site
- Find the book *7th Heaven* by James Patterson. Does your library own it? If your library doesn’t own the book, how would you get it?
- Find a recent article on global warming.
- Find a table of contents for *Consumer Reports*.
- Choose a resource that lets you search your family history.
You really had to be there.
If you’re interested in usability @ 90mph, please read …

For More Information

• Recommended articles about usability testing
  – http://gslis.simmons.edu/mw/browns/Usability#Links

• SlideShare of this PowerPoint
Questions? Keep in Touch

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