Usability for Tough Times

Budget Usability

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Image by flickr user alancelaver_2000
Who Are We?

Usability Core Group
2 year term
- 1 chair
- 4 core members

Usability Task Force (UTF)
- short term (4-6 months)
  - 2 core members
  - + 3-4 members
  - + 1 stakeholder
What is Budget Usability?

aka "discount" or "informal" or "do it yourself"

It’s not just about the money... It's also about the time and effort.

It’s qualitative, informal, and unscientific.

Our definition:
Anything that you can do with low overhead that involves users interacting with a site.

“The purpose isn’t to prove anything; it’s to get insights that enable you to improve what you’re building”

– Steve Krug
Why Use Budget Methods?

- Quick answers to simple questions
- Faster
- Easier
- Cheaper
- Targeted
- More staff participation
When to Use Budget Techniques?

When you just want a quick reaction to something.

- Link label
- Placement of something
- Findability of some piece of content
- Attitude towards a design
- Do users get it?
How to Use Budget Techniques?

- Early and often
- Alongside usage statistics & user feedback
- In conjunction (or in preparation for) larger evaluations
- With a grain of salt
Participants

• Anywhere from 6-100+
• Where & how to find participants:
  o "in the wild" & on-the-fly!
  o links from website
  o emails sent to departments via Subject Specialist Librarians
• Incentives: candy, MLibrary gadgets, or a few "blue bucks" each
Lessons Learned & Tips

• Test the test. Time spent piloting the test is time well spent.
• Articulate your expectations but be flexible.
  o Just want general feedback? Ask an open question.
  o Want to solve a specific problem? Ask a direct question.
• Iterate. Know when to admit that something didn't work well. Refine and repeat.
The Galileo Manuscript

The Michigan Galileo Manuscript, celebrating its 400th birthday, is on display through December 22 in the Audubon Room of the MLLibrary Gallery in Room 100 of the Hatcher Library. Here Galileo drafted a letter explaining the usefulness of the telescope, and later used it to analyze data and conclude that he had discovered the moons of Jupiter.

more
What parts of the home page are or are not useful?

What's missing?
Participatory Design

Actively involve users in the design process.
(inspired by Nancy Foster)

Description:
X/O & Ideal Design
Participatory Design

X/O Instructions:

1. Circle the things you find useful
2. Put an X through the things you don't find useful
3. Add a note for anything that's missing
Participatory Design

Ideal Design Instructions:

1. Draw your ideal library website.
Participatory Design

Actively involve users in the design process.
(inspired by Nancy Foster)

Description:
X/O & Ideal Design

36 Participants:
• 15 Undergrads
• 5 Grad Students
• 2 Faculty
• 15 Library Staff

Materials Cost: $0
Incentives Cost: $75+
Set up time: ~1hr
Test time: ~4hrs
Analysis: >12hrs
2 Faculty
useful stuff
not useful stuff
Participatory Design

- Undergraduate Students: 15 participants
- Graduate Students: 5 participants
- Faculty: 2 participants
- Library Staff: 15 participants
Right labels? Organized in a usable way? Can important content be found?
Card Sorting

Ask users to sort a series of cards, each labeled with a piece of content, into groups that make sense to them.

Description:
Did a combination of sessions with individual participants and groups.

158 Participants:
• 18 Undergrads & Grads
• 140 Library Staff

Materials Cost: $0 / $125 for online tool.
Incentives Cost: $90
Set up time: ~3hrs
Test time: ~2hrs
Analysis: >10hrs
Card Sorting
- Services/Departments/Libraries

Group paper card sort
Card Sorting
- Services/Departments/Libraries

OptimalSort online card sort
Right contents? Right label? Right location?
Guerrilla Testing

Quick and short answers to quick and short questions. Five minutes is our goal!

Description:
- Print out web page
- Approach someone “in the wild” & ask if they can spare 5 min.
- Ask 1-2 short questions

Participants:
- 20 undergrad/grad

Materials Cost: $0
Incentives Cost: $0
Set up time: ~2hrs
Test time: ~2hrs
Analysis: ~4hrs
Guerrilla Testing

**Contents:**
- Removed/added links

**Labels:**
- “Quick Links” is good
- Some link labels revised

**Location:**
- Not good! Needs to be more prominent
Online Guerrilla Testing

Automated version of paper guerrilla test to reach a larger audience.

Description:
“Survey” distributed via Subject Specialist Librarians, news items, and directly from access system interface.

Participants:
• In progress

Materials Cost: $0*
Incentives Cost: $0
Set up time: ~1hr
Test time: 0
Analysis: ~1hrs
Where would you click to go directly to an article?
Questions?

All past reports: www.lib.umich.edu/usability

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