



Capilano College Library Web Site Usability Test Report March 2008

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The Capilano College Library web site sees more traffic than any other section of the Capilano College web site. Library senior staff are concerned that some of their web sites functionality may be too buried. They have asked the Interactive Design department for our help.

The library provided our team with eight tasks for our sample users to perform on the library web site. These tasks were based on the most common problems library web site users reported to the help desk.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The tasks our sample users performed easily did not require them to go very deep into the site. They had difficulty completing unfamiliar tasks.

The biggest single stumbling block was labeling, which seems to make more sense to librarians than to faculty members and students. The site needs more white space to guide the users' eyes. Users were stymied by the lack of a global "google-style" search feature.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

We recommend further usability analysis before attempting any fixes.

Our primary recommendation is a card sort to discover how faculty, students and new users organize sections, functions, and content on the site.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

TEST PARAMETERS

The sample users were given eight tasks to perform on the Capilano College Library web site.

TEST ENVIRONMENT AND EQUIPMENT

Usability tests were performed in the Interactive Design department's test lab at Capilano College. The tests were recorded using Morae software on a PC running Windows. Internet Explorer was used to access the Capilano College Library web site.

TEST PARTICIPANTS

We tested a sample of four users. Of the two faculty users, one is a female instructor in the music department (F1), and the other is a female instructor from the psychology department (F2). Of the two student users, one is a male student in the business program (S1), and one a male student in the Interactive Design program (S2).

TIME

An hour was allocated for each test. Each test was completed in about thirty five minutes.

THINKING ALOUD TECHNIQUE

The users were instructed to verbalize their thoughts, thinking aloud while performing the assigned tasks.

USERS AND TASKS

USERS

faculty = **F**
students = **S**

LIST of TASKS

- FS** Find "The Life of Pi".
- FS** Find one five year old article in the *Vancouver Sun*.
- FS** Can you come in to the library at Cap College on the weekend?
- FS** Where, on the library site, is a good list of resources on "global warming?"
- FS** Where, on the library site, is a good list of resources on "Anthropology?"
- FS** Request an article from another library.
- F** How would you book a video for future use?
- F** Where would you find forms to place material on reserve?

MOST USED SERVICES

I databases & articles
I on-line catalog

LOCATIONS OF MOST USED SERVICES :

[home]
□ [search]
□ [databases & articles]

[home]
□ [search]
□ [books & videos]
□ [on-line catalog]

[home]
□ [on-line catalog] (□ note
2 paths to the same page)

FACULTY ONLY

There is a library service, accessible to faculty only, which we've also been requested to test. There are two versions of this service. An old version, which is accessible off the library web site and a new version, which is only accessible on an intra-net which is password protected. The library staff wanted us to test the new version, as they plan to phase out the old version. The old version can be found at:

[home]
□ [library info]
□ [instructors info]

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Do the "see also"s make sense?
Are the pages engaging enough? (Do they need more graphics?)
Does the global navigation work well? (Is it too wordy?)
Does the indexing work well? (What about the child pages?)

Users did well on most tasks.

This is partly because they have used the site before and have learned methods for navigating the site to find what they need.

The tasks they did well on did not require them to go very deep into the site, so they didn't get lost. They had more difficulty completing unfamiliar tasks and tasks that required them to really look around. Unfortunately, we did not test any users who had never before visited the site.

Tasks 2 and 4 were the most difficult for both student and faculty users. Their difficulties confirmed the concern senior library staff had originally expressed, that some functionality and information is too buried.

When users found themselves in unfamiliar territory, they had trouble finding what they were looking for in long lists of hyperlinks. Often, they would scan right past the item they were looking for without seeing it.

Users also had difficulty understanding where they were on the site from the names given to the different sections.

RESULTS TABLE				
Test Subjects:	Faculty 1	Faculty 2	Student 1	Student 2
Task 1 Find <u>The Life of Pi</u> .	25sec	30sec	2min 30sec	30sec
Task 2 Find one five year old article in the Vancouver Sun.	incomplete	Incomplete	5min 15sec	4min 5sec
Task 3 Can you come in to the library at Cap College on the weekend?	1min 15sec	1min	45sec	30sec
Task 4 Where, on the library site, is a good list of resources on "global warming?"	6min 5sec	2min 10sec	2min 20sec	6min
Task 5 Where, on the library site, is a good list of resources on "Anthropology?"	1min 30sec	2min	50sec	15sec
Task 6 Request an article from another library.	2min	1min 20sec	2 min	50sec
Task 7 How would you book a video for future use?	5min	2min 15sec	na	na
Task 8 Where would you find forms to place material on reserve?	4min 20sec	2min 20sec	na	na

Fig. 1

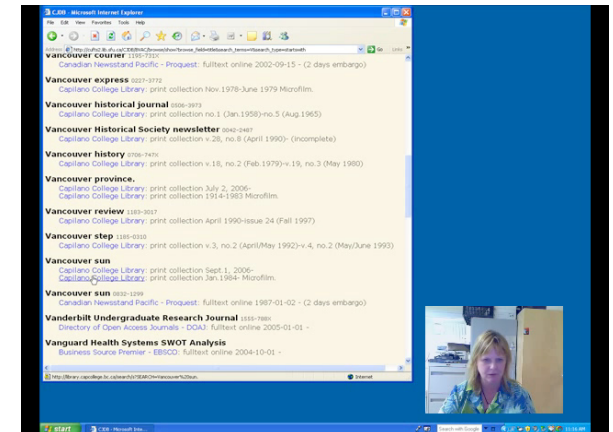
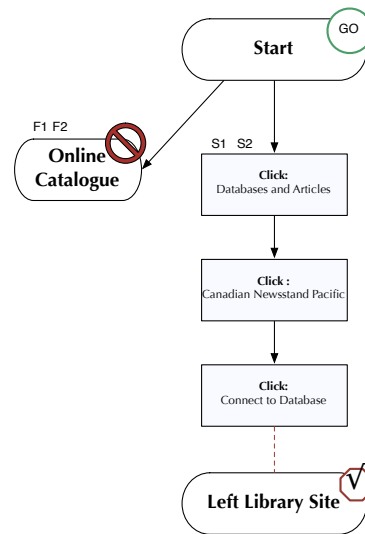
ANALYSIS OF TASK #2

“Find a five year old article from the Vancouver Sun” was a trick question. There are no five year old Vancouver Sun articles on the Cap College Library site. The client wanted to see how difficult it would be for the participants to find the “web portal” feature that points users to other sites with Vancouver Sun articles.

The two faculty members followed links to the page with microfiche resources. The microfiche page told them the information they were looking for was not there. After repeated tries, each faculty member gave up the search. (See Vids 1 and 2)

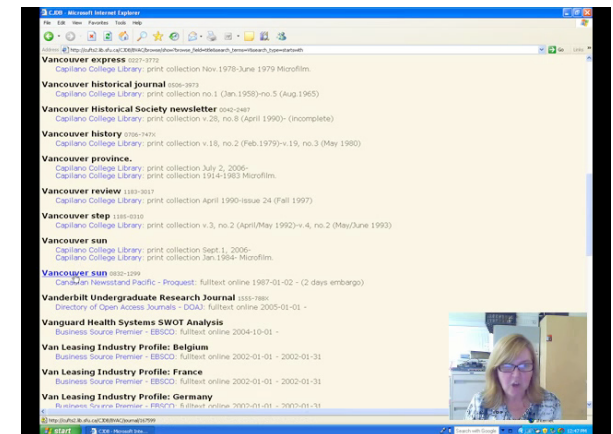
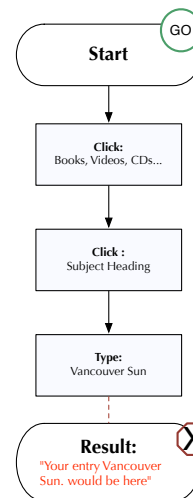
Fig. 2 illustrates the task flow representing the best path a user could take through the library site to complete Task 2. The  symbol represents the point where the participants deviated from the best path.

Fig. 3 shows the participant navigating to an area of the site where she is used to finding information that she is looking for.



Vid. 1

Test Participant: Faculty 1
Task 2: “Find one five year old article in the Vancouver Sun.”
Result: incomplete



Vid. 2

Test Participant: Faculty 2
Task 2: “Find one five year old article in the Vancouver Sun.”
Result: incomplete

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The biggest single stumbling block to users that we uncovered is the labeling. Our sense is that this site was created by the library staff and web programmers with little or no “end user” considerations during the planning process. The result is a web site that makes more sense to librarians than to faculty members and students.

After brainstorming a few band-aid solutions, our usability team determined that more research is required before our client, the senior library staff, will be able to make informed decisions about updating or redesigning the site.

Our primary recommendation is a card sort to discover how faculty, students and new users organize sections, functions and content on the site. The information a card sort would provide could be used to make the current site easier to use while providing a framework for future changes.

We recommend further usability analysis before attempting any fixes.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS

1) The functions users found the easiest were those with a simple interface that employed good use of white space to guide the flow of interactions. Conversely, users had trouble finding information in long lists of links that looked the same. There is simply too much text to read on the screen, with too little white space to guide the users' eyes.

Our recommendation: Use white space to “clump” similar items together. This helps users navigate large amounts of information faster and easier.

2) Users have been conditioned to expect a global “google style” search function on the front page.

3) Users expect a graphic representation of the site to help them find their way around. It is very helpful for users to have a “birds eye view” of a web site of this size with this much content. The current site map is presented as a list of text. A graphic site map would make it easier for users to go exactly where they need to go without guessing, or having to refer to a bread-crumb trail.

APPENDIX A

VIDEO EDIT DECISION LIST

F1 Wendy Grant, instructor Music Department
 total time: 35 minutes
 Internet Explorer

task 1: 00:01:35 - 00:02:00

task 2: 00:02:10 - problem: 00:03:00 - 00:05:00 “ask a librarian, well that’s
 not going to happen...” incomplete
 4:34out in4:50

task 3: 00:08:20 - 00:09:35

task 4: 00:09:45 - 00:15:50 (16:30)

task 5: 00:16:30 - 00:17:00

task 6: 00:17:10 - 00:19:15

Task 7: 00:19:25 - 00:24:25

problem: 00:22:26

Task 8: 00:24:30 - 00:28:50
 (she doesn’t use the home link at all, just back button)
 00:25:30 more frustration
 00:27:10

Comments: 27:10 The Vancouver Sun task “...failure of the catalog system...” 27:30

Sheet Music Now - TRIAL “...how do I actually do it?” 29:34 + 32:30

see alsos? 29:45

engaging enough? 30:15

global nav? 30:48

indexing? 31:05

chat with a librarian 33:30

F2 Karra Zasko, instructor, Psychology Dept.
Total time: 24 minutes.
Internet Explorer

task 1: Find the Life of Pi 02:00 - 02:30

task 2: Find one Vancouver Sun 02:30 - (gave up in frustration) 4:45

task 3: 07:50 - 08:45

task 4: 09:00 - 10:20 (off site) 11:10

task 5: 11:10 - 13:10

task 6: 13:10 - 14:30

Task 7: 14:30 - 17:15

Task 8: 17:10 - 19:30

Comments: 20:00 - "I would have no idea how to find a newspaper article....
It wasn't immediately intuitive for me how to get the form... it was time consuming... I would not use the on-line version of the form."

see alsos? 22:00

engaging enough? 22:10

global nav? 23:00

indexing? 23:50

S1 Jordan Adams, student, Business Admin.
Total time: 20 minutes.
Firefox

task 1: Life of Pi 02:00 - 02:30

task 2: Vancouver Sun 02:30 - 7:45

task 3: Weekend 08:00 - 08:45

task 4: Global Warming 08:40 - 11:00

task 5: Anthropology 11:10 - 12:00

task 6: Request 12:10 - 14:10 (keeps going 19:10)

Task 7: na

Task 8: na

Comments: na

S2 Sean Patterson, student, Interactive Design Program.
Total time: 16 minutes.
Firefox

task 1: Life of Pi 1:30 - 02:00

task 2: Vancouver Sun 02:30 - (should I still be in the site? 03:00) 6:35

task 3: Weekend 06:45 - 7:15

task 4: 6:22 - Global Warming 07:15 - (8:30 I want to just throw the word in
here but they dont have that.) 12:20

task 5: Anthropology 12:30 - 12:45

task 6: Request 00:13:15 - 00:14:10

Task 7: na

Task 8: na

Comments:

see alsos? 14:15

engaging enough? 14:30

global nav? 14:45

indexing? 15:10

overall? 15:15 "...data base and articles very long..."