Do-It-Yourself Usability Testing: a Case Study from the UC San Diego Digital Collections

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In usability testing, we observe product use as it’s taking place in order to learn where users encounter problems.
UC San Diego Digital Collections (http://library.ucsd.edu/dc/) and Digital Asset Management System (DAMS)

The Digital Collections website gathers two categories of content managed by the UC San Diego Library

UC San Diego Library
Digital Collections

UC San Diego
Research Data Collections
Digital Collections Usability Testing Team

- **SuHui Ho** (Digital User Experience Librarian)
- **Vickie O’Riordan** (Visual Resources Coordinator)
- **Ho Jung Yoo** (Research Data Curation Analyst)

- Not developers!
  - Benefit: Objectivity
  - Cost: More start up time
Do-it-yourself usability testing guide – an easy read!

“Three [users] is enough”

“You’re mostly in it for the surprises”

“There’s no data gathering involved”

Citation: Krug, S. 2010. Rocket Surgery Made Easy. New Riders, Berkeley, CA.
Methods

- 5 UCSD students not familiar with the site
- “Think-aloud protocol”
- Participant and screen recording software
Goals of testing:

- Can users navigate efficiently?
- Can users understand content?
- What are their overall impressions of the website?

Task 6: You heard that the library has scanned the UCSD Guardian. You want to see a copy of the newspaper.

- Without using the search function, see if you can find a copy
- What are the size and format of the file?
- Can you download the newspaper?
Users reported a very positive overall experience with the DAMS

- “This is a pretty easy-to-use website”
- “Layout looks clean, very modern”
- “It’s organized neatly”

Easy-to-use digital object viewer and understandable metadata displays.
Finding 1:

“Reminds me of Google!”
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Finding 2: Users want to narrow their search from the search results page, not start over.
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Finding 3:

Users felt the list of Topics is too specific too early on

“I would like to see a simple subject heading – a place to begin my search.”
Takeaways

- Task writing was the most time consuming and challenging step. Important to communicate with stakeholders early to learn their specific goals.

- Both task development and the final report yielded actionable items for improving the site
  - Discovered bugs and usability issues
  - Specific action items for improving search function, navigation, and information delivery

- Keep reports as short as possible

- Make recommendations that are easy to implement, or the fix may not happen at all
Thank You

Learn more:
- http://libraries.ucsd.edu/about/digital-library/
- http://libraries.ucsd.edu/services/data-curation/

Digital Collections Public Beta:
- http://library.ucsd.edu/dc

Contact Us:
- Digital Library Development Program
  Email: dlp@ucsd.edu
- Research Data Curation Program
  Email: research-data-curation@ucsd.edu

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