LEARNING FROM YOUR PATRONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO USER RESEARCH

Babi Hammond, Digital Experience Consultant, CO State Library
bhammond@coloradovirtuallibrary.org
CSL In Session Webinar, 18 March 2017
SOME KINDS OF USER RESEARCH

- Surveys
- Card sorting
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Personas

- Suggestion boxes
- Web analytics
- Task analysis
- Usability testing
- Heuristic evaluations
FOCUS FOR TODAY:

• Usability testing
USABILITY TESTING: THE BASICS

- Recruit representative users
- Watch them do key tasks
- Ask them to “think out loud”
- See where they run into problems
- Fix those problems
“There’s no trick to it. It’s just a simple trick!”
A QUICK DEMONSTRATION
ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION

Steve Krug Usability Demo:
https://youtu.be/QckIzHC99Xc
USABILITY TESTING: THE PROCESS

1. Planning the evaluation
2. Recruiting participants
3. Running the evaluation
4. Evaluating the results
PLANNING THE EVALUATION

What should you test?

[ chat: what kinds of things would you like to test at your library?]
PLANNING THE EVALUATION

What should you test?

- Critical systems
- Known or suspected problems
- Things you can probably fix (unless they are critical)
PLANNING THE EVALUATION

Specific tasks & good scenarios

• What patrons might really do
• Plausible scenarios
• Specific tasks but generic language
Question:
How easy is it for patrons to use the e-resources list?

Task:
Find a database on a particular subject.
Q: How easy is it to use the e-resources list?
T: Find a database on a particular subject.

Scenario:
You would like to find a database on a particular subject. Access the e-resources list, and choose a database for newspapers.
Q: How easy is it to use the e-resources list?
T: Find a database on a particular subject.

Scenario:
You are looking for recent news stories about Colorado. Starting from the library homepage, find a database for recent newspaper articles.
Q: How easy is it to use the e-resources list?
T: Find a database on a particular subject.

Scenario:
You are looking for recent newspaper articles about Colorado. Starting from the library homepage, find a resource relevant to your search.
More Advice on Tasks

Amy Schade, “Write Better Qualitative Usability Tasks: Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid,” Nielsen Norman Group, 9 April 2017
https://www.nngroup.com/articles/better-usability-tasks/
PLANNING THE EVALUATION

Technology & Setting

• Match real-world setting
• But private and quiet if possible
• Record the session if possible
• Observers, or just you?
PLANNING THE EVALUATION

Pilot Test the Session

- Run the full test with someone
- Make sure your tasks make sense
- Test the equipment and recording
RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Who should you recruit?

• Try to get people who represent your users
• If you can’t get them, get anyone you can
RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Who should you recruit?

[ please chat about who you’d recruit and how ]
RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

How to recruit participants

- Flyers, posters, friends
- Offer a reasonable incentive
- Consider remote testing if needed
RUNNING THE EVALUATIONS

Be a good facilitator

• Explain what will happen in the session
• Emphasize that you’re testing the website, not the participant
RUNNING THE EVALUATIONS

Be a good facilitator

• Be friendly, but not too helpful
• Keep them talking
HERE'S AN IDEA: WHY DON'T YOU STOP ASKING PROBING QUESTIONS AND JUST TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD DO WITH MY LIFE?

HOW WOULD THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?
RUNNING THE EVALUATIONS

Be a good facilitator

• Try to keep the session on track
• Try to leave time for follow-up questions
• End the session on time
EVALUATING THE RESULTS

Review and record

• Review your notes and the recordings
• Look for patterns, things more than one participant did or said
EVALUATING THE RESULTS

Metrics

[ chat about possible metrics ]
EVALUATING THE RESULTS

**Metrics**

- Basic metric is success or failure at completing the tasks
- Usually results are qualitative, so really more your judgement
FIXING THE PROBLEMS YOU FOUND

How to fix problems

• Prioritize; fix critical problems first
• “Tweak, don’t redesign”
• Patch problems you can’t fix
• Test the fixes with another study
SOURCES FOR MORE INFO

Steve Krug’s books

His company’s website: http://sensible.com/

His amazon.com page: http://www.amazon.com/Steve-Krug/e/B001KHCFUU/
SOURCES FOR MORE INFO

Free info online

• **Usability.gov**

• **Nielsen-Norman Group**

• **Usability Body of Knowledge**
  [http://www.usabilitybok.org/usability-testing](http://www.usabilitybok.org/usability-testing)
SOURCES FOR MORE INFO

Free help from the State Library

Babi Hammond
Digital Experience Consultant

hammond_b@cde.state.co.us
SO.... WHAT NEXT?

• What kinds of usability tests do want to try?

• Anything you’d like to know more about?

Babi Hammond
Digital Experience Consultant

hammond_b@cde.state.co.us