

School of Library and Information Science

“Would You Like to Test Drive the New Library Website?” Implementing Guerrilla Usability Testing at Academic Libraries

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"Usability allows us to make everyday life more satisfying by **empowering people to control their destiny and their technology** rather than be subjugated by computers" (Nielsen, 2008).

Problem

Redesigning websites based on testing “can substantially improve usability” (Nielsen, 1993). However, many avoid it.

- Research seen “expensive and time-consuming” (Unger & Warfel, 2011)
- Belief that user tests are for large budgets only
- Management hesitant to invest resources into unproven projects

Solution: Guerrilla Usability Testing

Quick: 5 to 10 minutes • **Cheap:** perfect for any budget • **Simple:** easy to run, repeat

Goals: Gain “sufficient insights to make informed decisions” (Unger & Warfel, 2011)
Find bugs, usability issues; fix quickly (Pirker, 2016)

Typical Guerrilla session

1. Approach person for testing
2. Have them complete tasks
3. Observe, record results
4. Repeat short tests with 5 participants—amount needed to reveal 77-85% of all problems (Nielsen, 1994)

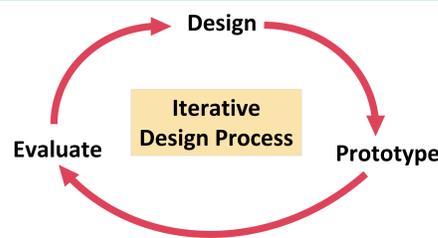
Benefits

- Good “gateway drug” for those new to usability testing (Unger & Warfel, 2011)
- Any research is more useful than no research (Pirker, 2016)
- Insights gained cheaply and quickly
- Eliminates need for participant recruitment
- Regular testing allows for incremental changes, not huge overhauls

Evaluating Usability

What makes an interface usable?

- Easy to learn
- Efficient to use
- Easy to remember
- Few errors
- Pleasant to use (Nielsen, 1993)



Supplies

The beauty of guerrilla usability testing is that it doesn’t require fancy equipment or extensive planning – what you need is easy to get.

- Reliable Internet connection
- Devices for testing
- Method to record results
- Workspace in central location
- Small incentive, like candy
- Friendly attitude!

Steps for Successful Testing

“Test early, test often” (Wee, Jovanovich & Humphreys, 2015)

1. Identify tasks

- What do users need to accomplish?
- Tasks are malleable – will change the more you test
- **Tip:** collaborate with library staff to identify areas of need

2. Develop script

- Turn user tasks into testable questions
- Keep questions short and simple; avoid leading user
- **Example:** “Suppose you had trouble accessing an article through a database. Show us how you would get in contact with someone who could help you.”
- **Tip:** save script in Google Forms for easy access

3. Pick location and time

- Choose a place you know your users will be, like near the entrance to your most visited library at a busy time
- **Tip:** stick to it! The key to successful testing is regular testing

4. Approach users

- Engage passersby with a friendly hello
- Explain you’d like their help evaluating a website you’re working on
- **Tip:** make it sound fun! We’ve found that “Would you like to **test drive** the new library website” snags us more students than “Would you like to **test** the new library website?”

5. Run test

- Stay consistent with script; avoid giving clues
- Make sure to thank participant for their time
- **Tip:** Use Google Form to take notes on participants’ actions and comments

6. Repeat!

- Each time you test, repeat test with 5 users
- Once you identify areas for improvement: make changes, restart process!
- **Tip:** don’t go live with untested improvements! Implement potential changes on “test” page for evaluating

Example Script

Tips

- Explain reason for testing, what it involves
- Stress that there are no wrong answers—testing website, not user
- Remind participants to think out loud
- Stay consistent—once you devise a script, use it for every participant

Thank you for participating in our Usability Study. We’re trying to get feedback on website we are working on so we can see how it works with real users. We’re going to go through a series of tasks and take notes on your responses to figure out how we can improve the site. It should take around 5 minutes.

Just to make it clear, we’re testing this website and not you, so you can’t do anything wrong. While you’re working, please try to think out loud—say what you’re looking at, what you’re trying to accomplish, what you’re feeling. If something doesn’t make sense, please let us know. Don’t worry about our feelings. We need honesty so we can improve the site. If you have questions, feel free to ask them, but we may not be able to answer them until the session is over.

1. How frequently would you say you use library website resources? What do you use the most?
2. Take a look at the homepage. Spend 7 seconds looking at it, then close the window. What do you notice on the page?
3. Find the library’s hours for today.
4. Find the database Web of Science.
5. Suppose you had trouble accessing an article through a database. Show us how you would get in contact with someone who could help you.
6. Find the book “Detroit Lives.”
7. Let’s say you were searching for books from home, and you wanted to be able to request this book so you could pick it up in the library tomorrow when you’re on campus. Show us how you would do that.
8. Do you have any thoughts on how we can improve the design or functionality of the website? What did you like or not like?

[Thank participant and remind them to help themselves to a piece of candy]

References

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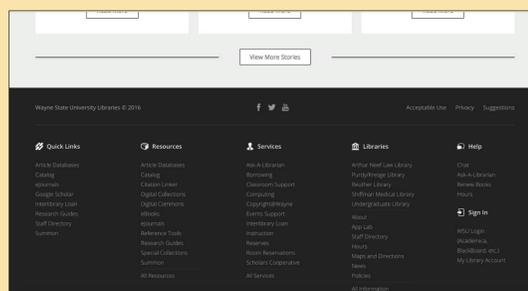
Our testing timeline—

Here are some of the changes the library’s Discovery & Innovation team has made to <http://library.wayne.edu> with user feedback since beginning testing in Summer 2016.

August 2016: pre-usability testing



October 2016: modified Menu button and QuickLinks, added full navigation to footer



November 2016: added Sign In button, drop down carets to both Sign In and Help buttons



January 2017: integrated news stories below search box with background image

