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ISLT 9469: Designing PSS - Spring 2009

Module 7.2: Usability Testing Report

Purpose:

The purpose of the usability test protocol is to determine the top tasks Information Science and Learning Technology graduate students expect to perform in the e-Port system and how they expect to perform those tasks within our current system.

Overview of e-Port:

E-Port is an online application designed to expedite, simplify and support the process of organizing, creating, and submitting an online portfolio for ISLT graduate students. The system does this by:

- enabling users of the system to easily design a portfolio
- enabling users to easily determine requirements, tips and tricks, etc. for storing and presenting artifacts
- enabling users to engage in ongoing dialogue with advisors regarding progress and quality of portfolio
- enabling users to better understand requirements for completing the portfolio by providing
- clear, well defined expectations for portfolio content
- examples/suggestions demonstrating appropriate artifacts
- a to-do list to facilitate the completion of the ePortfolio

Profile of Target User and Methods:

User Profile

The user profile target for this study was a Masters level student who has begun, but not yet completed his/her portfolio. The typical user is familiar with web based tools for competing projects and may already have a tool being used to complete an online portfolio.

Methods

The individual that participated in this interview was given an overview of the e-Port system and the purpose of the test. She was asked to preview several screen shots of the e-Port

interface. She was informed that after she viewed the screen shots and felt comfortable with them, she would be asked to complete a series of necessary tasks to begin and complete the portfolio.

The test was conducted in a conference room with two laptops. One laptop had a functional PowerPoint mock-up of the e-Port application screens, and was used by the participant to navigate the application interface. The other laptop was used to record the session, and was managed by the facilitator of the test. When additional detail was required to describe a function that couldn't be tested in the slide view, the facilitator would show the participant a screen shot with further descriptions of the underlying functionality. During the test, the facilitator acted as a guide and did not completely manage every task; rather the participant was allowed to explore the interface and ask questions freely. Following the user interface walk through, several questions were asked to elicit feedback regarding the elements that supported the task well, and those elements that may need improvement, or need to be added to the system to better support performance.

Tasks Performed:

The participant in the usability study was asked to perform a series of common tasks and share feedback regarding how well the current interface supports those tasks, and also how he/she would expect the system to support those tasks. The following tasks were performed by the user during the test:

- Assuming this is your first use of the application, what would you seek immediately after login?
- The graduate portfolio has several requirements. Locate the requirements within the app and on a scale of 1 to 5, rate how easy they were to find (1 being very easy and 5 being very difficult)
- How will you know that the deadline for completion of your e-portfolio is approaching?
- If you wanted to contact your advisor or peer to review artifacts you have uploaded, what would you do?
- If you wanted to check for new postings on the message board, what would you do?
- How often can you get automatic feedback from your advisor?
- If you needed to upload artifacts what would you do? What other maintenance/management would you expect to perform related to artifacts (index, import/export, other?)?
- If you needed help completing a task within this system, how would you seek it?
- Please log out of the system then close the application.

Components That Function Well:

Based on user feedback, the following components of the system met or exceeded expectations:

1. Completing the portfolio in the same system provides consistency
2. Like to see the progress
3. System provides access to the correct personnel for questioning
4. Like the navigational bar with all the items that have been completed. It allows the user to be more organized in completing the portfolio
5. The organization of the PSS affords the completion of all the components of the portfolio

Components That Need Improvement:

It is difficult to completely address this without more time being spent on the specifications of the prototype. However, based on user feedback, the following components of the system may require revisions to improve user performance with the system:

1. A clearer help document perhaps with a glossary
2. Unclear as to where you will be exporting to i.e. to the college server or to ones own hard-drive
3. Unclear how progress is determined
4. It's unclear where you can preview/test the portfolio
5. Is it browser specific?

Recommendations:

Based on both positive and constructive feedback, the following revisions and/or updates are recommended:

1. Expand and clarify the context sensitive help system.
2. Clarify the purpose and functionality of the "Export" feature.
3. Identify specific progress benchmarks that will be used by the system.
4. Make the preview/test functionality more prominent in the interface.
5. Determine whether the application will be stand-alone or run via a web browser.