usability matters

Ontario Library Association

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Building an understanding of users and their needs

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Why involve users?

To create content, tools and environments that are:

Useful
- is this the right tool?

Usable
- is the tool easy to use?

(Nielsen, 2003)

What roles will users play in your library? In your website?

- Users can be:
  - Undifferentiated "users"
  - Audience segments
  - Research respondents
  - Co-designers/creators
  - Content providers/creators/aggregators
  - System/tool developers
  - Decision-makers

Types of user involvement

	Ongoing	Periodic	One-off
Decisional Role	▪ Board	None	None
Advisory Role	▪ Advisory Groups ▪ Community Partners	▪ Strategic Planning Consultations ▪ Annual Surveys	▪ Project-based consultations regarding: 　o Facilities / Renovation 　o Service Development 　o Website Development ▪ Patron comments
Service Role	▪ Volunteers	None	None

Providing multiple ways to be involved

- Multiple Channels
    - Phone
    - Face-to-face
    - Online

- Multiple Research Methods
    - Interviews
    - Town Halls
    - Meetings / Workshops / Focus Groups
    - Surveys
    - Contextual Inquiry
    - Usability Testing

- Different Levels of Commitment/Effort/Anonymity

Taking consultation online

- Web 2.0 technologies (Stephens, 2006):
  - Blogs (Ann Arbor District Library, http://www.aadl.org)
  - RSS (Hennepin County Library, http://www.hclib.org)
  - Instant Messaging (St. Joseph County Library, http://sjcpl.lib.in.us)
  - Wikis (St. Joseph County Library, http://sjcpl.lib.in.us)
  - Photo-Sharing (Gwinnett Public Library, http://www.flickr.com/photos/gwinnettcountypubliclibrary)

- Web 1.0 technologies:
  - Forums
  - Live Chat
  - Surveys
  - Polls
  - Internet Conferencing (e.g. NetMeeting, WebEx)

Improving ongoing involvement

- Find ways to capture and utilize unsolicited comments received through all channels

- Provide ways for users to discuss ideas, issues and concerns with one another, as well as with library representatives

- Consider recruiting users for long-term involvement in programs, projects or services, in advisory or decision-making capacities

- Engage users as co-designers and co-developers

- Support users as content providers, creators and aggregators

Building an understanding of users and their needs

- Make research tools and findings from all initiatives easily available within your organization
    - Share surveys, scripts, technologies, etc. between research initiatives
    - Gather findings and recommendations from all research activities
    - Don't forget to include findings from informal research methods

- Share the high-level findings, along with significant project-level findings, with the entire organization
    - Do high-level analysis i.e. overall, what is our research telling us?
    - Assign responsibility for this high-level analysis to a person or group
    - Schedule regular research updates to the entire organization

What roles will librarians play in your library? In your website?

- Librarians can be:
    - Invisible Enabler
    - Information Broker
    - Trusted Authority
    - Advisor
    - Partner
    - Researcher
    - Facilitator

What roles will your library play?

- Libraries can be:
  - Collections – physical and virtual
  - Services
  - Environments – physical and virtual
  - Information commons (Kranich, 2004)

Key thoughts

- Consciously consider the role of users and of librarians

- Provide multiple types of user involvement as well as multiple channels and methods, requiring differing levels of commitment/effort/anonymity on the part of users

- Find ways to start, continue and deepen conversations with users

- Consider ongoing ways to involve users

- Use what you learn through your engagement with them to build an understanding of users and their needs

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