IT WORKS FOR YOU, BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS? ASSESSING YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE TO IMPROVE THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Liz Kocevar-Weidinger, Tatiana Pasukova-Balkenhol & Virginia Kinman

Commercial Objects
JAKOB NIELSEN’s ALERTBOX, DECEMBER 15, 2010:

COLLEGE STUDENTS ON THE WEB

HTTP://WWW.USEIT.COM/ALERTBOX/STUDENTS.HTML

Students are multitaskers who move through websites rapidly, often missing the item they come to find. They’re enraptured by social media but reserve it for private conversations and thus visit company sites from search engines.
Myth 1: Students Are Technology Wizards

Students are indeed comfortable with technology, but...

• ...avoid Web elements that they perceive as "unknown" for fear of wasting time.

• They pass over areas that appear too difficult or cumbersome to use.

• If they don't perceive an immediate payoff for their efforts, they won't click on a link...

• In particular, students don't like to learn new user interface styles.

• They prefer websites that employ well-known interaction patterns.

Myth 2: Students Crave Multimedia and Fancy Design

• They don't want to be blasted with motion and audio at all times.

• They usually prefer sites that look clean and simple rather than flashy and busy.... Clear menus, not too many flashy or moving things because it can be quite confusing.

• Students don't go for fancy visuals and they definitely gravitate toward one very plain user interface: the search engine.

• Students are strongly search dominant and turn to search at the smallest provocation in terms of difficult navigation.
Myth 3: Students Are Enraptured by Social Networking

• Yes, virtually all students keep one or more tabs permanently opened to social networking services like Facebook. But that doesn’t mean they want everything to be social.

• Students associate Facebook and similar sites with private discussions, not with corporate marketing.

• When students want to learn about a company, university, government agency, or non-profit organization they turn to search engines to find that organization’s official website. They don’t look for the organization’s Facebook page.

Greenwood Library’s Efforts
Greenwood Library Website before...

Overview
- 8:05 to 8:30 - Task 1 (small groups)
- 8:30 to 8:35 - Share Task 1 (full group)
- 8:35 to 9:00 - Task 2 (full group & pizza)
- 9:00 to 9:45 - Task 3 (small groups)
- 9:45 to 10:00 - Share Task 3 (full group)

Task 1 (small groups)
If you could have only one portable electronic device that did everything you wanted it to do, and you could magically make it small and light even while including everything you wanted, what would it look like? Make a drawing, not a 3-D object.

Task 2 (full group)
Present your drawing and the ideas it represents. Discuss with the others with what you are about to do.

Task 3 (small groups)
Using the ideas we just discussed and any more ideas you have, design a new library website. Include everything you would want to help you do your schoolwork and everything that would make your life as a student better.
Greenwood Library Website before...

Greenwood Library Website after...
Web Usability Tasks, Fall 2008

Please read each question aloud before you start the task. Start at the library home page and use the library web site and library resources to complete each task. Please talk out loud about what you are doing and why.

1. Tell us the steps you would take to find out if the library has any books on “environmental equity.”

2. What steps would you take to determine if the library has the September 2008 issue of the journal Health Promotion International? You need a copy of an article in that issue.

3. Your paper is due after the Thanksgiving break and you are coming back early to work on it. Where would you go to find out if the library is open on November 30?

4. Please tell us how you would find a journal or magazine article on “drug abuse.”

5. Where would you go on the library web site to find out the population of Russia?

6. What steps would you take to find out if you have any books or DVDs checked out?

7. Where would you go on the library web site to find resources to help you write a paper for your philosophy class?

8. What would you do if you wanted to get an article or book that wasn’t available in the Greenwood Library?

9. Tell us how you would find out when and where you can go for help with your calculus class.

10. Your professor (Carl Riden) told you to read a chapter from Modern Sociological Theory and the article “Interrogating the Digital Divide” at the library for your class, SOCL 305. How would you go about getting them?

11. You need help citing a journal article in APA style. Please tell us how you would find citation examples by using the library’s web site.

12. If you did not know how to find the information you were looking for, how would you find help using the library’s web site?
Greenwood Library Website after...
Greenwood Library Research Guides after...

Greenwood Library Research Common Threads to consider...

- Less clutter
- More search boxes
- Convenient boxes for IM chat
- Librarians’ friendly faces
Greenwood Library Facebook Page before...

What Students Want...

- Pictures of helpful library staff and their specialties
- More info about services
- Updated content
- Interaction & Involvement (FAQ, discussion board & student of the week)
Greenwood Library Facebook Page after...

- Watch our page!!!

In Conclusion: How can you learn want students want in online learning objects?

- Anecdotal observation
- Surveys
- Participatory design
- Task analysis
- Focus groups
THANK YOU.
Questions?