Testing Tools and Tips

Morae
- Integrates audio and video of test subjects with screen capture of what they're clicking on
- Record, playback, annotate, compare, analyze, edit, and present respondents' feedback with great fidelity
- Loanable to all Harvard librarians from the HCL Sandbox (Ask for HCL Sandbox Windows laptop #2)
- Laptop includes built-in microphone and camera for testing, but standalone peripherals may be borrowed from the library as well

Tips and Observations
- The Sandbox laptop resets itself overnight; move all data files immediately after the session.
- Design School students make great test subjects; a more formal relationship should be established for the benefit of everyone
- The Simmons Usability Lab is fully-equipped for precisely this form of testing, although there is a charge

Usability Tips

Forget the Three-Click Rule
Don't focus on the number of clicks, but rather the ease of utility. Design interfaces that are intuitive and pleasurable.

F-shaped patterns enhance content skimming
Use headings followed by paragraphs or bullet points to increase the likelihood of encounter.

Make your content easily readable
Highlight keywords, use headings, write short paragraphs, and utilize lists; these techniques increase readability.

Don’t worry about The Fold
The length of the page has no influence in the likelihood that a user will scroll down the page.

Whitespace of text affects readability
Be wary of formatting details – color, line-heights, tracking, typography – to balance readability and comprehension.

Don’t rely on search as a navigation crutch
Search is most often utilized only when the user has failed to discover what they were looking for in the current page.

Your homepage isn’t as important as you think
Traffic increasingly comes from external sources – search engines, social media sites and content aggregator services – rather than from the front page of a website.

Three Sites Doing It Right

Springshare, developers of the LibGuides platform for research guides, hosts a “Best Of” gallery, showcasing contributions of note by the LibGuides Community. Below are examples identified that employ several of the usability principles discussed. For many more, visit http://bestof.libguides.com/home

Université Européenne de Bretagne
Vibrant colors lead users to important information, controlled spacing

Oregon State University
Excellent use of space, simple yet sophisticated color palette

Queensland Institute of Tech.
Clear visual hierarchy, efficient formatting of content for readability
TESTING TOOLS AND TIPS

Morae Software
http://www.techsmith.com/morae.html

HCL Sandbox Program
http://hcl.harvard.edu/info/equipment/sandbox_program.cfm

Media Equipment for Staff
http://hcl.harvard.edu/info/equipment/net_media.cfm

Simmons Usability Lab
http://gslis.simmons.edu/usability/

Alternatives to Morae

USABILITY TIPS: SOURCES CITED

Forget the Three-Click Rule
http://www.uie.com/articles/three_click_rule/

F-shaped patterns enhance content skimming
http://www.useit.com/alertbox/reading_pattern.html
http://eyetools.com/research_google_eyetracking_heatmap.html

Make your content easily readable
http://www.useit.com/alertbox/percent-text-read.html

Don’t worry about The Fold
http://blog.clicktale.com/2006/12/23/unfolding-the-fold/
http://www.cxpartners.co.uk/cxblog/the_myth_of_the_page_fold_evidence_from_user_testing/
http://www.boxesandarrows.com/view/blasting-the-myth-of/
http://www.surl.org/usabilitynews/51/paging_scrolling.asp

Whitespace of text affects readability
http://psychology.wichita.edu/surl/usabilitynews/62/whitespace.htm

Don’t rely on search as a navigation crutch
http://giraffeforum.com/wordpress/2010/04/25/navigation-is-more-important-than-search/
http://www.uie.com/articles/always_search/

Your homepage isn’t as important as you think
http://giraffeforum.com/wordpress/2010/04/18/the-decline-of-the-homepage/
http://www.uie.com/brainsparks/2005/09/29/is-home-page-design-relevant-anymore/
http://uxmyths.com/post/717779908/myth-the-homepage-is-your-most-important-page/