

Quarterly newsletter of D. L. Cohen Information Services

INFOSCOPE

News and Tips for Locating and Managing Information

d.l. cohen information services
Information and
Knowledge Management
Website Architecture and
Usability Testing
Library Development

<http://www.dcoheninfo.com>

URLs are hot-
links accurate as
of 1/20/2010.

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INFOSCOPE is published **quarterly**.
Feedback is always welcome. dcohen@dcoheninfo.com

Changes...

This newsletter marks a transition in D. L. Cohen Information Services from a full-time business model to part-time. The plan - interesting professional projects, and time for personal interests that deserve more attention, or, are simply fun! I will publish a shorter version of INFOSCOPE. It will focus primarily on website design and testing, and on revealing quality information resources on various topics.

**Case Study -
Website Usability Testing**

**Recommended Web
Resources**

D. L. Cohen Information Services will continue to provide a broad array of information management services: assessment and evaluation, website information architecture, website usability testing, design and development of virtual and physical libraries / information centers, research, and taxonomy development, as offered since 1996. In addition, individual guidance and coaching in these areas will be available.

Case Study - Website Usability Assessment

As Chair of the Website Review Committee for the Association of Independent Information Professionals [<http://www.aiip.org>] I am leading a team [that includes myself] of four "infopros" – yes, that's what we independent "information professionals" often call ourselves – to conduct an evaluation of our organization's website. It's a volunteer effort and our schedules are busy so the process is slower than it would normally be and is focused on identifying the most important areas for change. But, this process strategy is one kind of effective qualitative assessment model that can be used in certain situations. The model is always customized for clients.



Phase One – Architecture Taxonomy / Top Level Site Categories

Independently, each team member spent time reviewing the site in an unstructured manner and came up with a list of desirable primary categories [site sections] – most came from the current site but we also added categories to our list if we felt something significant was missing from the site. We each outlined a 2 or 3 tiered category structure – the site architecture. We then reviewed our structured lists during a conference call.

Phase Two – Heuristic Evaluation

I created a two-page checklist of website usability features customized to our objectives and site.

<http://www.dcoheninfo.com/infoscope/2010/UsabilityChecklist.pdf>

Each team member assessed the site using the checklist. As team leader, I aggregated the results into a single document which the team reviewed. At this point, we had some promising ideas about the non-user-friendly aspects of the site.

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Information is Power
... if you can find it!

Are customers getting lost on your website?
Are you spending too much time looking for
information

- On Your Company Intranet?
- On the Company Network?
- In Your Office?

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Customized Solutions

Phase Two – Development of a Concept Prototype

Using MS Publisher, I created a “concept prototype” of top-level pages for a site upgrade. The goal was not to create a detailed set of wireframes. Rather, it would be a graphical representation of a new primary category architecture for the website. The prototype images would also reflect, by the general placement of the content categories – what we felt should be given greater or lesser prominence.

Phase Three – User testing

We needed to be able to simulate, virtually, one-on-one sit down sessions with our audiences. We had defined four audiences and developed a list of three participants from each of the four audiences to interview. We used a web collaboration tool that allowed us to remotely access the computer of the participant, as well as vice versa [tester can always take back control]. In most scenarios we first gave control to the person being tested and watched the person's navigation through the AIPP site.

In brief, there were three stages to this phase of the testing:

- Having the person freely navigate the site according to their own interests. The participant is instructed to “talk aloud” – to verbalize their thoughts and intentions. The tester does not typically talk at this point.
- Having the person complete “tasks” while the tester watched. For example, asking the person to find a particular document, or service, on the site.
- “Debriefing” – having a discussion to collect feedback from the participant.

In addition, for some participants we asked for their feedback on the concept prototype. We did this by displaying the prototype on our own computer, which was able to be seen by the participant.

Phase Four – Aggregation of User Testing Results, Refinement of the Concept Prototype and Narrative Report

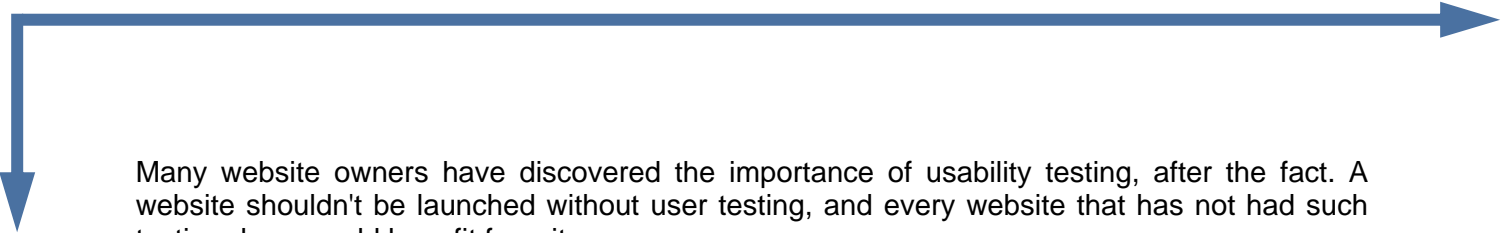
Test results for each person were reported on a form.

<http://www.dcoheninfo.com/infoscope/2010/UsabilityTestingReportForINFOSCOPE.pdf>

This is the current stage of our evaluation. I will organize, combine and analyze the test results, refine our prototype and write a narrative of our findings. These documents will be shared with the team, reviewed, discussed and refined based on our discussion.

That's it!

There is nothing about the usability testing process that is mysterious, yet it does require expertise in how best to organize and present information, and experience in qualitative data collection techniques. My career in education, enhanced by becoming a professional librarian, is where I developed most of my skills.



Many website owners have discovered the importance of usability testing, after the fact. A website shouldn't be launched without user testing, and every website that has not had such testing done would benefit from it.

D. L. Cohen Information Services would be happy to provide a quote to conduct usability testing on your organization's website or intranet. Donna can completely handle the evaluation, or can guide a project team selected from your staff.

In regard to an assessment of the Providence Health and Services Regional Information Services intranet site: [The report was] "Very good and well written. Good recommendations too...Donna was easy to work with, and I appreciated her flexibility and can-do attitude in working under serious time and budget constraints."

Marcy Satalich, Web Development, Regional Information Services, Providence Health & Services

Recommended Web Resources

The Promise and Peril of Big Data, The Aspen Institute. 2010.

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/InfoTech09.pdf>

The term "big data" is an intentional metaphor which establishes this 40-page [plus references] report as a highly readable examination of the development, use and privacy issues surrounding the ever growing aggregation of personal data into large databases. Included is a good discussion of the "promise and peril" of health information technology. Will bring anyone with an interest but little background quickly up-to-date on the most important issues.

A common way to take large data sets and make them comprehensible is to transform the data into visual form. If you are inclined to do that, here are some Javascript tools to help you:

Javascript Data Visualization Libraries

<http://sixrevisions.com/javascript/20-fresh-javascript-data-visualization-libraries/>

Pew Global Attitudes Project - Global IQ Quiz

<http://pewglobal.org/quiz/iq/>

12 questions that will challenge *your* assumptions about the assumptions of people in other countries. Quick, entertaining and educational. From the Pew Research Center.

Due Diligence on Charities

Everyone should have these bookmarked, especially now: two sites where you can find information about organizations who want your money! Note: the IRS Form 990 is required by all charitable organizations and will tell you lots about where their money comes from and where it goes. Currently, both sites have sections devoted specifically to Haiti.

Charity Navigator

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/>

Guidestar

<http://www2.guidestar.org/>

Ever think of a [*career as an information professional?*](#) Some work environments/job descriptions:

University of California at Santa Cruz - Archivist to create a Grateful Deal Archive

<http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/10/wanted-grateful-dead-archivist/>

American Nudist Research Library

<http://www.anrl.org>

Can't resist mentioning these cat videos:

Inefficient drinker

<http://www.wimp.com/inefficientdrinker/>

How to wrap a cat for Xmas

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jm3dm5J5r0A>



Would you like Donna Cohen to put her research skills toward creating a customized one-time newsletter or weblibliography for you?

D. L. Cohen Information Services

Information and Knowledge Management Website Design and Support

- 📁 Website Visioning Facilitation
- 📁 Website Information Architecture
- 📁 Website Usability Testing
- 📁 Virtual and Physical Library Development
- 📁 Category, Keyword List and Taxonomy Construction
- 📁 Research
- 📁 Personal Information Management
- 📁 Staff Training on Information Organization

D. L. Cohen Information Services, established in 1996, is a certified State of Oregon Woman-owned business. Donna Cohen holds a Master of Library and Information Studies degree [M.L.I.S.] and a Master of Education degree and has consulted with government agencies, private corporations and non-profit organizations.