Usability Inspection

Topics
- Heuristic inspection
- Expert inspection
- Web usability inspection
- Usability inspection process

Usability Inspection
- Sometimes called heuristic evaluation or expert evaluation (Nielsen 1990)
  - A guidelines-based formative usability evaluation technique
  - Performed by usability expert as inspector
    - Does not use actual users
    - Role of expert is "usability problem detective"
    - Inspectors ask themselves questions about what would cause users problems
    - Inspector gives expert opinion predicting usability problems (not just own critical incidents)
Usability Inspection

Advantages
- Some think inspection is single most cost-effective method to improve usability
- Provides design team with perspectives and experience independent of design team
- Complements usability testing with users
- Especially appropriate for early development stages

Disadvantages
- Does not use real users
- Not a substitute for lab-based usability testing
- Experts may not know system in depth
- May find “false positives”
- May find higher proportion of lower severity problems

Typical usability inspection process
- Expert usability specialists (not on interaction design team) assess specific user interaction design by determining guidelines violated and supported
- “Double expert” even better
- Typical 2 or 3 inspectors
  - Gives diversity of opinion
  - Typically, one inspector finds only about 30% of problems
  - Can have up to 5 inspectors for important part of design
Usability Inspection

- Typical usability inspection process
  - First, each inspector separately assesses design of site
    - Open, no pre-defined tasks
    - Take notes
    - Watch especially for first impressions

- Then, all inspectors work together
  - Merge problem lists
  - Select most important to fix
  - Brainstorm suggested solutions
  - Based on findings, experts recommend modifications to improve usability of site

Assessing a Web Design Via Inspection

- Some suggested categories for inspection of web site (very broad)
  - Availability and accessibility of needed information
    - Information is there AND user can easily find it
  - User-centered wording
    - Speak user’s language
  - User-centered control
    - Keep user feeling in control
Assessing a Web Design Via Inspection

- Consistency
  - Use similar design for similar concepts, terminology, graphics

- Error prevention
  - Make it goof-proof; recognition vs. recall

- Feedback
  - Let user know what has happened, to determine where in site they are

Assessing a Web Design Via Inspection

- Specific guidelines for category: Availability and accessibility of needed information
  - Is important information available?
  - Is important information easy to find?
  - Are pages/frames organized into good "sight bites"

Assessing a Web Design Via Inspection

- Are frames used effectively and efficiently?
- Is text laid out attractively and effectively?
- Are layout, graphic, and text components easily "scan-able" by user?
- Are color/graphicsanimation used appropriately?
Usability Inspection

- Reporting results
  - List guidelines used in inspection
    - Example: Does the design give good user feedback throughout?
  - For each guideline
    - Give specific examples of design violations (and excellent examples of support)
    - Give URL, explanation, and screen image (if available)
    - Give suggestion for redesign (if appropriate)

Usability Inspection

- List "Top 3" (or 4 or 5) suggestions for modifications
  - To give biggest improvement in usability
  - Based on most frequently visited screens, screens with most usability problems, guidelines most often violated, minimum resources to make changes