# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** ................................................................................................................. 3

**INTRODUCTION** ............................................................................................................................. 3
  - Background ..................................................................................................................................... 3
  - Overview ......................................................................................................................................... 3

**METHODS OF TESTING** ..................................................................................................................... 4
  - Surveys .......................................................................................................................................... 4
  - Usability Edits ............................................................................................................................... 4
  - Expert Evaluations ....................................................................................................................... 4

**USER FEEDBACK** ............................................................................................................................... 5
  - Survey Responses .......................................................................................................................... 5
  - Usability Edit Responses .............................................................................................................. 6
  - Expert Evaluation Responses ........................................................................................................ 6

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** .................................................................................. 7

**APPENDIX** ..................................................................................................................................... 8
  - Library Guide Survey .................................................................................................................... 9
  - Usability Test Response Sheet ..................................................................................................... 10
  - Expert Evaluation Response Sheet ............................................................................................... 11
  - Consent to Participate Form .......................................................................................................... 12
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As an exercise in technical writing, our class was broken up into groups and given the task of redesigning the library guide. Our objective is to make the library guide more attractive, helpful and useful. We placed an emphasis on highlighting the most popular and under-utilized places. It will not only help students and faculty to use the library, but it will also promote and attract new users to the library.

In order to make our design meet most people’s needs, we reviewed the interview reports from the HU 3820 class in order to collect important information about expectations and criteria for the guide. We also conducted several usability tests upon completion of our Library Guide prototype, which included surveys, usability edits, and expert evaluations. We found that the library faculty wants a design that is cost effective with content that is concurrent with the content in the library website. Also, the guide should promote people to use library website more frequently and effectively.

The feedback we received from the usability testing was very positive. Most people like the table tent format with the map inside. The one page design also serves multiple purposes. It is easy to carry and grab from the circulation desk or browse while sitting in the MUB. It also meets the requirement of being cost effective because it saves in printing and production expenses.

In conclusion, our redesigned library guide will meet the common needs of students and faculty. Our goal is to make the guide easy to read and to find information. We also want it to relate well with the library website and promote people to use the website for more detailed information.

INTRODUCTION

Background
We are students enrolled in the HU 3120 Technical and Scientific Communication class in the Track A 2010 semester. We were assigned with the task of redesigning the Library Guide. In our new design of the guide, we implemented the skills and knowledge we gained in class, the information received from the interviews conducted by the HU 3820 classes, and the incite we obtained from conducting usability testing.

Overview
This report offers an overview of the usability testing that we conducted to evaluate how effectively we met our objectives and criteria for our revision of the Library Guide. There were many aspects of the original guide which made it difficult to use. It was very wordy, and the information was not presented in a concise format or a logical arrangement. The guide was also not widely distributed and as a result, many patrons of the library did not know that it
existed. In redesigning the guide, we decided to make the guide into an attractive one page table tent, which highlighted the most popular areas of the library, answered some of the most frequently asked questions, and directed the users of the guide to the library website for more detailed information. Following is an overview of our methods of testing, a discussion on the feedback we received, and the recommendations we received which we will implement in improving our prototype of the Library Guide.

METHODS OF TESTING

The three methods of usability testing we chose for this assignment were short surveys, usability edits, and expert evaluations. These three methods gave us a variety of feedback from experts and users. We obtained the approval of the IRB to conduct this testing, and included a participant consent form. (See Appendix for Participant Consent form) We also assured the subjects of our testing that their information would be anonymous and that the forms would be shredded at the end of the Summer semester. We chose the Library for our main usability testing site, and chose staff and students in the Library to participate in our evaluations.

Surveys
The first method of testing we chose was a short survey. This method offers a way to generalize the opinions about the usability of our guide from a variety of users. The participants were chosen randomly in the library, and we surveyed on multiple floors. We chose to survey twelve individuals, and the survey contained ten questions. The first eight asked the user to rate how we had met goals such as attractiveness, conciseness and logical format. They rated these on a scale of one to five, where one was poor and five was excellent. The last two questions asked if the user felt that any information was missing or unnecessary. (See Appendix for complete survey)

Usability Edits
Our second method of testing was a usability edit. In this method, the user is asked to read our guide critically, mark up the guide with pens or highlighters to indicate any changes or other editing they feel is necessary, and then record comments they would like to make on a separate response sheet. This helped to ensure that the guide was not too wordy, that no information was confusing, misstated, or missing, and that the language was consistent. The response sheet did not ask any specific questions so that their feedback would not be guided in any way. We chose to have four people conduct this test, and ideally wanted to find a variety of users including a first year student, a transfer student, an international student, and a graduate student but we ended up conducting the edit with international and upper-class students. (See Appendix for User Response Sheet)

Expert Evaluations
Our final test, the expert evaluation, enabled us to acquire input from individuals who work full-time in the library and have a more in depth understanding of what the users need in the guide. We decided to have three experts evaluate our guide and gave them a list of our objectives to
analyze how well we had met them, as well as giving us any additional information that they felt was important or missing. The objectives listed included how understandable, inviting, aesthetically pleasing, and concise the guide is, as well as whether or not the design makes it practical. (See Appendix for Expert Evaluation Response Sheet)

**USER FEEDBACK**

The responses and feedback we received from the participants in our testing were very helpful and gave us insight not only on the guide, but also on which questions we should have been asking in the tests. Some input was unexpected and surprising, which verified that usability testing is an excellent way to improve technical writing. Here we will summarize the feedback that we received and then discuss the common elements.

**Survey Responses**

As stated before, we surveyed twelve people. Nine of the twelve were students; two of them were also staff members. The remaining surveys were taken by two faculty members and a visitor from another university. Of the students, seven of them were in graduate school which is most likely a result of the fact that we tested on Friday, a day when there are not regularly scheduled classes. This also possibly indicated that graduate students spend more time in the library than undergraduates. The average number of times per week that these users visited the library ranged from 2 to 10, which really depended on how far along they were in school, and whether or not they worked there.

There were no outstanding trends in the answers to the questions where the users where asked to rate their opinion from one to five. In general they seemed to think that the guide was easy to read and understand, that the presentation of the information was logical, and that the format was effective. The guide also seemed to have unnecessary wording, did not promote the coffee shop effectively, and did not add to the content of the guide with pictures and characters.

The really useful information from the surveys came from the comments at the bottom of the page, mostly just in the section entitled “Additional Comments”. Several people commented that the maps were a good idea and useful, but that they were too blurry to make out the details. There seemed to be a general consensus that the guide was too crowded and that we needed to find ways to clear up space or break up the information with pictures. Here are some examples of those comments:

- I think the Q&A section is somewhat long…. It seems like there is a lot of information, but it all seems to be useful.
- Perhaps, under the “Hours” section: consider a Fall/Spring version and a separate Summer version.
- It’s very full of words and almost overwhelming
- A bit crammed
Other comments which were helpful included:
  o  What is the meditation room?
  o  More colorful, pictures
  o  Journals are 3 day loans for grad students only, 3 renewals per book

**Usability Edit Responses**

The four participants who completed the usability edits included two third year students, a graduate student, and an English professor from a separate university. The goal of these tests was to do an in depth analysis of the content, grammatical correctness, and layout of the guide. This test may have given us some of our most valuable information. There were many overlapping suggestions and comments among the responses.

There were a few suggestions for the front page and the map, but most of the comments were about the sections on the inside of the table tent, and about the hours on the back of the guide. It was suggested that we not include the date on the front page. On the map on the inside, one person recommended that we use numbers on the Points of Interest with corresponding numbers on the map so users can find those locations, and that we substitute the map of the study room numbers with a chart listing the number of people that the rooms accommodate. The comments about the hours included only listing the Fall/Spring hours, making both sides symmetrical, using small caps for the AM and PM designations, and using AM and PM only instead of noon and midnight.

Most of the feedback seemed to offer ways to make the inside two pages less cluttered, or to increase the amount of white space and possibly add a picture to the inside. Here are some of the comments:

  o  Need to be simplified; such as: scan document-digital studio  Meeting- Group study room  Coffee – Library Café
  o  Do not repeat the question in the answer in the Q&A section, delete redundant words
  o  Contacts not necessary, too much
  o  Photocopiers are located on all floors. Printers are on the 1st and 2nd floors. The cost per page is 10 cents.

There were also several other editing suggestions for making the guide more accurate, combining information, and making the wording less confusing.

**Expert Evaluation Responses**

We chose our experts from the first floor of the Library, specifically, the front desk and the research assistance desk. The participants were given a page with a list of our objectives and asked to give feedback on how well we had achieved the objectives. The first evaluator orally stated that our version looked “much better” than the original. She wrote “yes” in the space provided for each objective and commented that we made “great use of one sheet”, and also “map excellent idea”. The second evaluator wrote “yes” on most of the objectives,
commenting that the Q&A questions need to match the five “Getting Started” questions on the webpage, “for example, finding articles and journals are more important than photocopying”. The third evaluator agreed that we had accomplished all of our objectives, identifying how and where this had been accomplished, and suggested that we replace the “What’s New” Section with an interior photo.

This trend for positive feedback from the staff without critical evaluations or suggestions may stem from a variety of factors. First, they are familiar with the original Library Guide and may be comparing our guide to that one. They may also have a hard time looking at the guide from a users view since they are so involved with the operations and details of the library. This may also have been the result of the questions that we asked, we only asked them whether or not we had achieved our goals, we did not ask them to critically evaluate the guide, edit it, or revise the content.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The usability testing offered many helpful suggestions for our revision of the library guide. Overall, it seems that the format and content are effective and practical, and the inclusion of the map seems to be a very helpful idea. Most of the suggestions and comments we received were centered around improving the clarity of the maps, decreasing the amount of wording on the two inside pages to make it appear less cluttered, adding a picture or color to the inside, and making a few revisions to the “Hours” section on the back.

Based on our usability evaluations, there are several recommendations that we will implement in our guide to make it more user-friendly, effective, and visually appealing. These include:

- Improving the clarity of the map
- Reducing the unnecessary information, such as simplifying the contact information
- Relating the content of the guide more closely with the website so that users will not be confused by different titles and sections.

We also have recommendations for the Library Faculty in producing the guide. They are as follows:

- Implement two versions of the guide, one for the Fall/Spring semesters, and one for the Summer semester.
- Distribute the table tents in all dining halls, on tables in the MUB and the Library, and also at the circulation desk so users are familiar with the guide and can easily grab one.
- Including a nice photo of the Library Café inside the guide as it is a popular area and will promote the Library.
Appendix
LIBRARY GUIDE SURVEY

Name:

Student, Faculty, Staff, or Visitor:

If you are a student, what year are you?

If you are a student, are you a transfer or international student?

Number of times per week you visit the library:

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of its quality. Use the scale above to select the quality number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description/Identification of Survey Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the guide easy to read and understand?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the information presented in a logical arrangement?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is the content of the guide written concisely without unnecessary wording?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are you able to find information quickly?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Is the format of the guide effective?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Does the guide make the coffee shop and quiet study space appealing?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Does the use of pictures and characters add to the usability of the guide?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is the overall appearance of the guide aesthetically pleasing?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is there anything that you expected to see in the guide that is missing?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Do you feel that there is any information that is redundant or unnecessary?</td>
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Additional Comments:
# Library Guide Revision
Usability Test Response Sheet

Name:  
Year:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of Guide</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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Library Guide Revision
Expert Evaluation Response Sheet

Listed below are our objectives for revising the library guide. Please review our guide and give us feedback on how well you believe we have achieved these objectives. There is also space provided at the bottom of the page for any additional comments.

- The information should be easy to read and understandable by a variety of users.

- The guide will bring new people to the library for coffee and quiet study space.

- The guide will provide information about confusing aspects of the library.

- The users of the guide should be able to find specific information quickly, or be directed to the website or section of the building that will offer additional information.

- The guide should contain adequate information while at the same time being constructed in a manageable size and format to be easily accessible and portable.

- The design of the guide and the use of pictures and fonts should serve a purpose and be aesthetically pleasing.

Additional Comments:
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN USABILITY EVALUATION

You have been asked to participate in a usability evaluation of a prototype of the Guide to the Van Pelt Library conducted by the above-named students as part of an assignment in HU3120 Technical and Scientific Communication taught by Dr. Marika Seigel, Michigan Technological University. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before the evaluation is conducted.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this usability evaluation is to improve the Guide to the Van Pelt Library. These students are developing a new library guide and are seeking to ensure that it meets the needs of its users: that it is easy to find and locate information, that there is no information missing, that it is aesthetically pleasing, and so on. A secondary purpose is to give the students in the class an opportunity to practice conducting usability evaluations.

PROCEDURES

You will be asked to participate in a 15-minute evaluation. The moderators will take notes and ask both prepared and spontaneous questions. You may be asked general questions about your impression of the guide or asked to locate information within the guide. You also may be asked to complete a short questionnaire. Remember that you are not being evaluated; rather, the usability of the library guide is being evaluated. The students will take precautions to preserve both your anonymity and confidentiality (see below). A report will be submitted to the instructor within two weeks of the evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be shared with library staff, with two other HU3120 classes in which students are redesigning the Guide to the Van Pelt Library, and with HU3820 (Interpersonal Communication—this class is also involved in the project).

ANONYMITY and CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained through this interview will remain confidential and will be shared in a report viewed only by students in the designated HU3820 and HU3120 classes, the course instructors, and library staff. Reports will be stored by course instructors and used only for the purposes of this assignment. No transcripts of the evaluation session in its entirety or recordings will be made. Reports will not identify you by name. This consent form will be kept in a file by the HU3120 instructor, Marika Seigel, until the final day of Track B, August 12, 2010, and then shredded.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

You may not benefit directly from participation in this interview although you may feel some satisfaction about expressing your views and providing input for the Library Guide. Your participation will help the student moderators learn more about how to conduct usability evaluations.
POTENTIAL RISKS

There are few likely risks although if you choose to share confidential or sensitive information, you may experience minor embarrassment or social unease. Please be aware that in the event of physical and/or mental injury resulting from participation in this class assignment, Michigan Technological University does not provide any medical, hospitalization or other insurance for participants in this study, nor will Michigan Technological University provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may choose to respond or decline to answer any questions as you wish without consequences of any kind. You may stop the evaluation at any time. There is no penalty if you stop the evaluation.

INSTRUCTOR IDENTIFICATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this evaluation, please contact Dr. Marika Seigel, Department of Humanities, Michigan Technological University, Houghton MI 49931-1295; telephone 906-487-3093; email maseigel@mtu.edu.

RIGHTS OF EVALUATION SUBJECTS

The MTU Institutional Review Board has reviewed the instructor’s request to conduct this assignment. If you have any concerns about your rights in this evaluation, please contact Joanne Polzien of the MTU Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 906-487-2902 or email jpolzien@mtu.edu.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this evaluation. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject:________________________________________________________

Signature of Subject:__________________________ Date:________