

Lightweight and 'guerrilla' usability testing for digital humanities projects

Digital Humanities at Oxford Summer School
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Overview

- Usability testing in context
- How to plan lightweight usability tests
- How to run lightweight usability tests
- Putting it into practice: live example
- Finding out more

User experience design is key to the success of crowdsourcing projects

So test early and often!

We all want our sites to be used



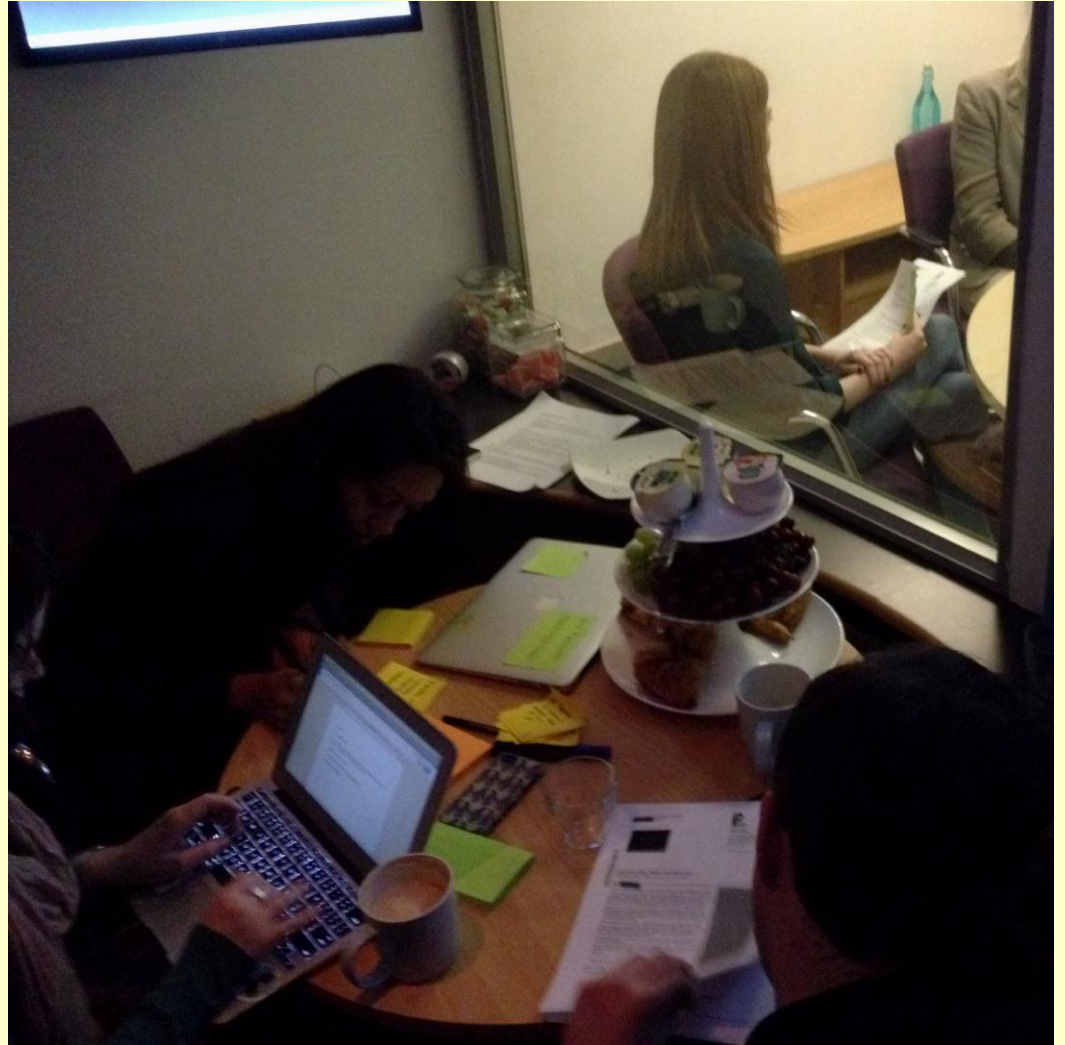
But sometimes this happens



How do you know which designs work?

How do you know which designs work?

Test them!



What is usability?

The quality of a user's experience when interacting with a product or system

- Learnability
- Efficiency
- Memorability
- Errors
- Satisfaction

What is usability testing?

Watching people try to use your prototype/site/app/product in order to:

- make it easier to use
- measure how easy it is to use

Lightweight usability testing

- Bare minimum:
 - one participant similar to your target audience,
 - one facilitator,
 - one laptop, tablet, mobile or paper prototype,
 - one task and scenario,
 - ten minutes.
- Review notes and debrief, prioritise fixes.
- Repeat 3-7 times for each type of user

Guerrilla usability testing

- Recruit in cafes, libraries, queues, train stations
- Test whatever you can in the time
- Be nice, move fast, don't get in anyone's way

Demo

- Volunteer site?
- 'First impressions' and task test

Ideal testing

vs

‘Guerrilla’ testing

- Carefully recruit participants as close as possible to the target audiences’ demographics, motivations and expectations
- Test in contexts of use as close as possible to the real situation e.g. when and where used
- Test until you get no new data

- Test with any accessible group of people
- Test wherever you can find people
- Test 3-5 people

Things you can test

- Paper or PowerPoint prototypes
- Clickable PDF or HTML wireframes
- Alpha or beta sites
- Similar sites (e.g. competitor sites, projects with similar materials)

X - □

HTTP:// _____ →

News

The irony of digital
photos of paper
is not lost on me.

Nav Map

Category

• —
• —
• —
• —

Category

• —
• —
• —
• —

LOGIN - ERROR

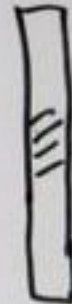
Username

↑ Not found in
database.

Pass word

forgot

Login





Conversations about collections

We've selected 33,000 objects we don't have much information about, but we hope that people who can remember these objects from their own past can help by sharing what they know. Can you help us make our collections better by sharing your memories of these objects?

Help us explain our collections to future generations...

Find me an object by:

Themes



[badges](#)

Decade

2010s	2000s	1990s	1980s
1970s	1960s	1950s	1940s
1930s	1920s	1910s	1900s

Random



[Tom Ford handbag, 1980s](#)

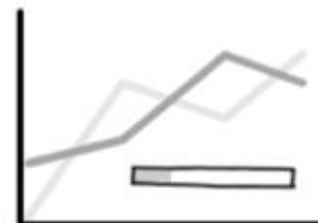
See what others have remembered...

Recent stories

[My grandmother had one of these, she...](#)
[Ipsum Lorem to there goes hipsters...](#)
[My grandmother had one of these, she...](#)
[Ipsum Lorem to there goes hipsters...](#)

Popular stories

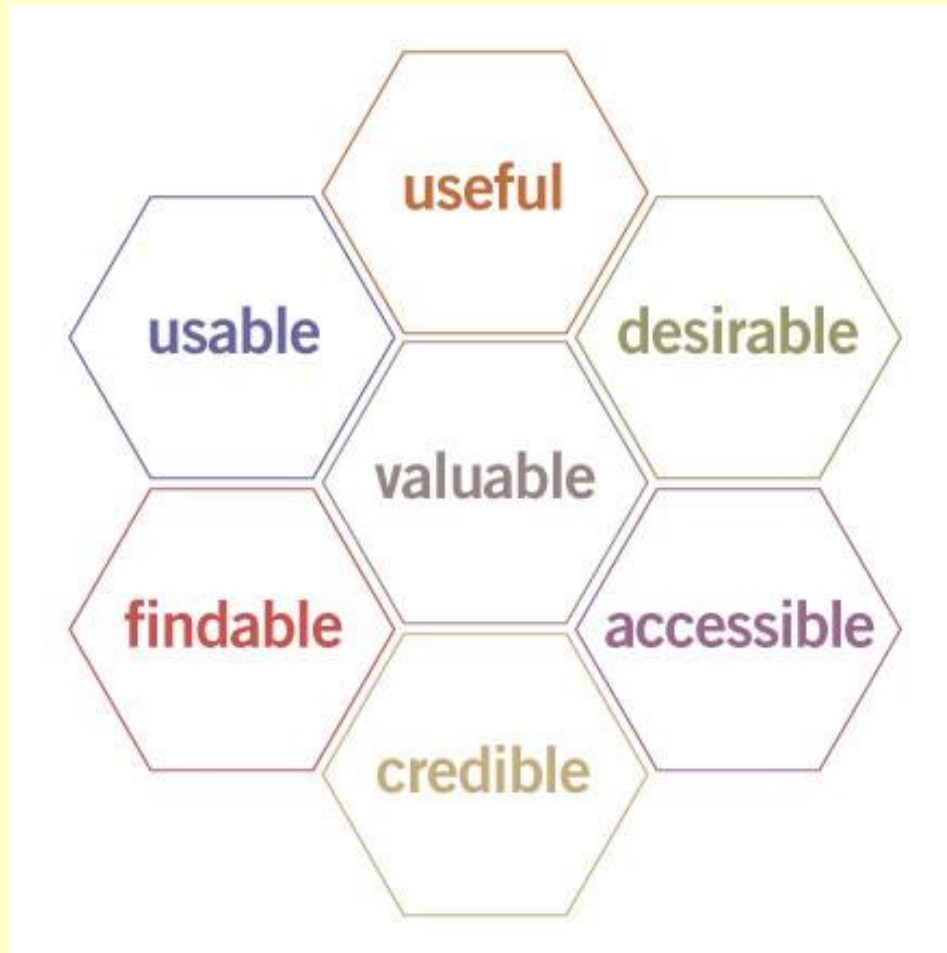
[My grandmother had one of these, she...](#)
[Ipsum Lorem to there goes hipsters...](#)
[My grandmother had one of these, she...](#)
[Ipsum Lorem to there goes hipsters...](#)



How many stories have been
[Tell your story](#)

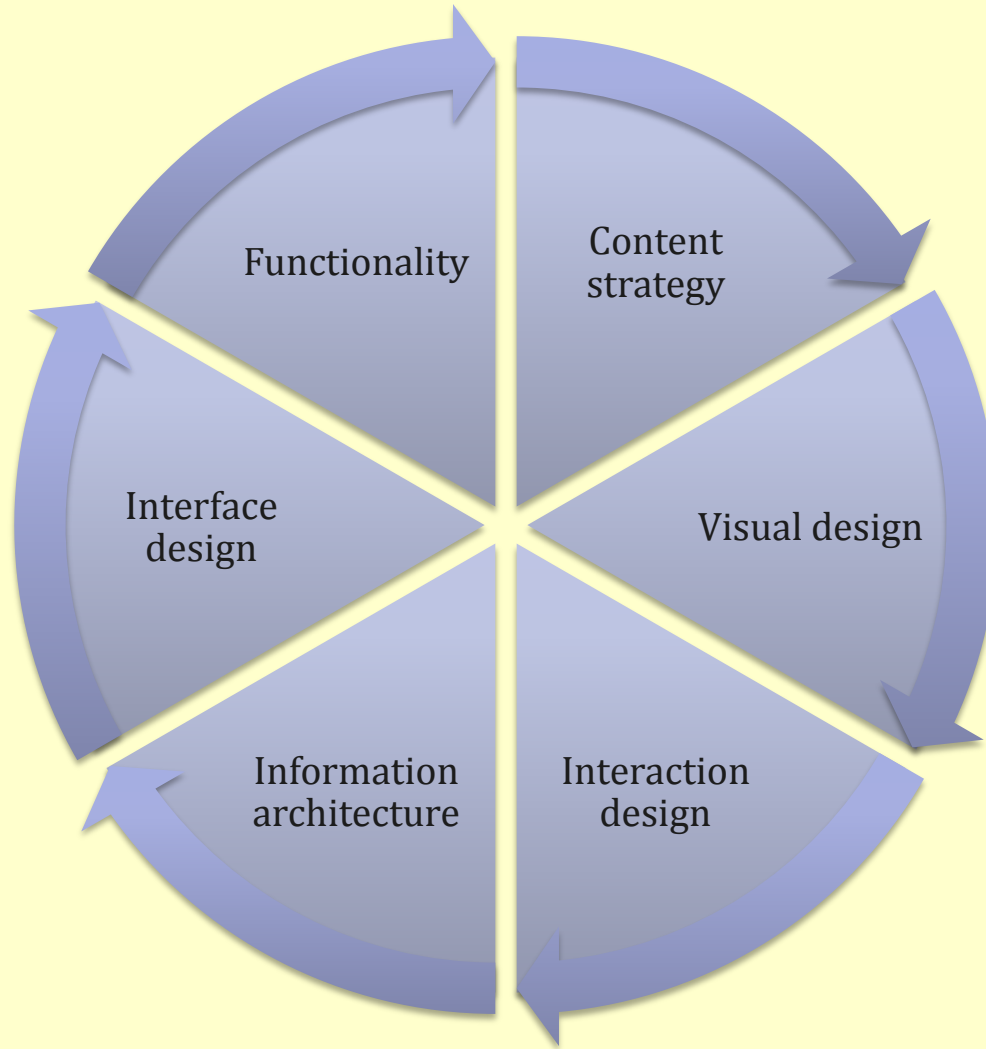
Usability in context

User Experience (UX) Design



Peter Morville's User Experience Honeycomb
<http://semanticstudios.com/publications/semantics/000029.php>

Elements of UX Design



When and why do lightweight testing?

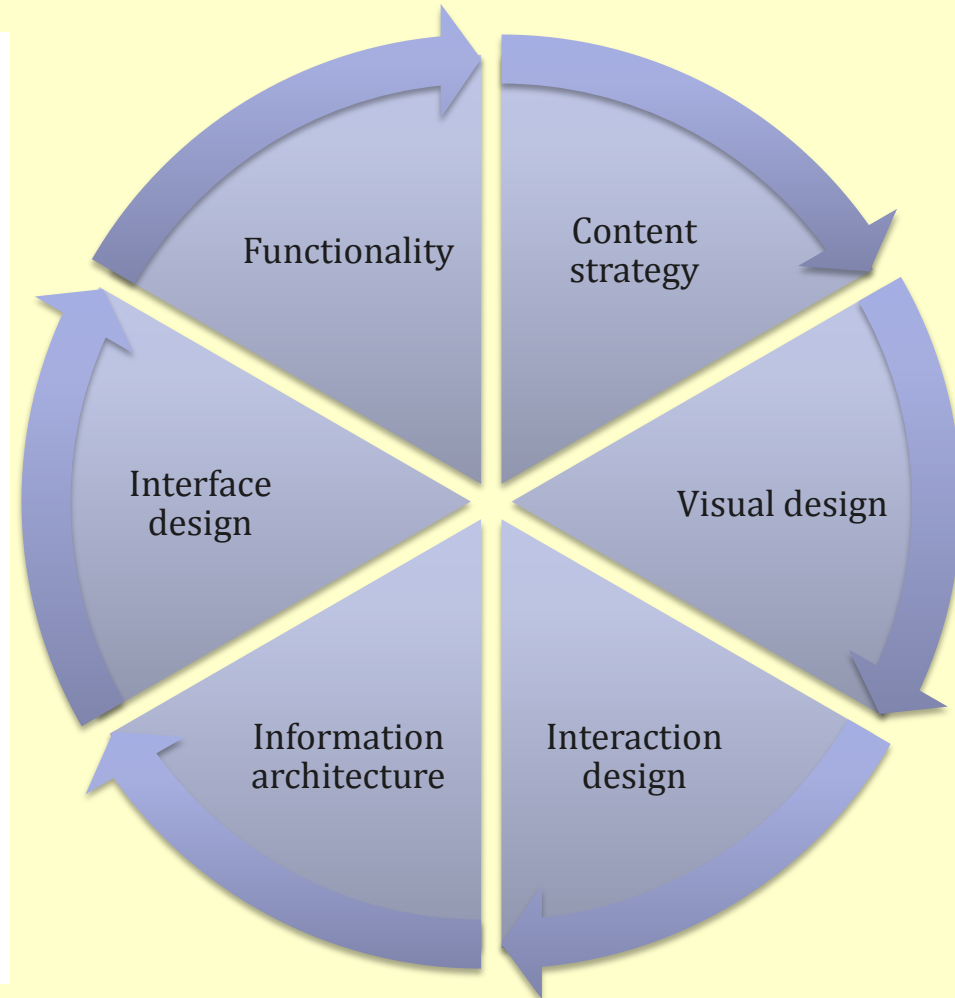
- Any testing is always better than no testing
- See your product with fresh eyes
- Address usability concerns
- Test early and often
- Bonus: reminds you why you're doing the project

Questions?

Planning usability testing...

Work out what to test,
choose tasks that'll test that,
write scenarios to provide some context,
recruit participants,
pilot test, (update it) and do 'pre-flight'
checks,
debrief, prioritise and report.

Working out what to test



Designing tasks

- What do you want the user to do to help answer your question?
 - e.g. find contact information for DHOxSS organisers; find out whether parking is available
- You can also reality check early designs or content with a 'first impressions' task

Writing scenarios

- Give participants a brief story that provides context, parameters for task
 - e.g. you have a nut allergy and want to make sure any caterers have that information
- Make them flexible where possible
- Outline what has to be done, not how

Activity: deciding what to test

- Suggest one of your projects, or a site you find difficult (or hate) to use
- Suggest some questions about that site
 - e.g. learnability, efficiency, memorability, satisfaction or error rate/severity
 - You can also test the ‘critical path’ (key task for that site) - useful for crowdsourcing projects!

Activity: tasks and scenarios

- Think of one task for each usability question
 - Think about what you're measuring, how we'll use the results
 - Think about test logistics and how the participant might feel about doing the task
- Write a scenario for one of your tasks
 - What context does the participant need?
 - Can they adapt it?
 - Are there any fixed parameters?

Recruiting participants

- Be hospitable!
- Krug: 'recruit loosely and grade on a curve'
- 3 participants is enough for one round of testing
- Recruitment takes time (and energy)
- Reward appropriately

Guerrilla recruitment



Activity: looking for participants

- Think of three ways to recruit suitable participants
- How could you reward them?

Preparing test scripts

- Ensures consistency and fairness
- Download sample scripts and forms at <http://www.sensible.com/downloads-rsme.html>
- Always pilot your script, update if necessary

Steve Krug's sample script

Hi, _____. My name is _____, and I'm going to be walking you through this session today. Before we begin, I have some information for you, and I'm going to read it to make sure that I cover everything.

You probably already have a good idea of why we asked you here, but let me go over it again briefly. We're asking people to try using a Web site that we're working on so we can see whether it works as intended. The session should take about an hour.

The first thing I want to make clear right away is that we're testing the site, not you. You can't do anything wrong here. In fact, this is probably the one place today where you don't have to worry about making mistakes.

As you use the site, I'm going to ask you as much as possible to try to think out loud: to say what you're looking at, what you're trying to do, and what you're thinking. This will be a big help to us. Also, please don't worry that you're going to hurt our feelings. We're doing this to improve the site, so we need to hear your honest reactions.

If you have any questions as we go along, just ask them. I may not be able to answer them right away, since we're interested in how people do when they don't have someone sitting next to them to help. But if you still have any questions when we're done I'll try to answer them then. And if you need to take a break at any point, just let me know.

Pre- and post-test questions

- Ease into the test
- Provide information to interpret session results
- Get a sense of overall satisfaction with site
- Always pilot your questions, update if necessary

Activity: pre and post-test questions

- What information would be usefully diagnostic for your context?
- Think of three pre-test questions
 - Aim for useful, clear and unambiguous questions

Recording tests

- Scribble quotes, errors on post-it notes
- Have a scribe take notes
- Screen capture
- Video and/or audio
- Photographs to document the test scenario
- Always explain and get consent in advance

Reporting tests

- Focus on agreeing and prioritising fixes
- If you have to report more formally, illustrate with juicy quotes, key moments
- Involve stakeholders in the process if it'll help convince them

Questions?

Running usability tests

- You will need...
 - Testable prototypes, internet connection, logins
 - Facilitator (i.e. you) and participants
 - Scenarios and introduction script
 - Print-outs of consent forms
 - Something to take notes on
- Optional:
 - Note-taker/scribe/meet-and-greeter
 - Video/audio recorder
 - Screen recording/sharing software

Running usability tests

- Look after your participants
- Pre-flight checks
- During a test...
- After the tests

Pre-flight checks

- Pilot the entire test at least once
- Check the computer/prototype, network, logins
- Test voice, screen recorders
- Clear browser history and previous test data
- Save any URLs, shortcuts to desktop

Optional 'First impressions' task

- Bring up the home page/start screen
- Ask the participant to think aloud:
 - what they think the site is/does
 - who it's for
 - what content or functionality they think is available

During the test

- Meet and greet
- During scenarios:
 - watch and listen
 - note key points
 - probe if questions after a task
 - look after participants
- Thank participant, note most important issues, reset devices

After the tests

- Debrief
- Prioritise
- Report
- Done!

Finding out more

- Usability 101: Introduction to Usability

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20030825.html>

- Steve Krug's 'Rocket Surgery Made Easy' book

<http://www.sensible.com/rsme.html>

- US Government usability site

<http://usability.gov/>