

Contents

Preface	xv
<i>What Is Usability?</i>	<i>xvi</i>
<i>Where to Find Detailed User Research</i>	<i>xviii</i>
Usability Then and Now	xix
Who Should Read This Book?	xxi
1 Introduction: Nothing to Hide	3
Where We Got Our Data	4
How We Did the Book Study	5
<i>Sites Tested</i>	7
What if a Site Has Changed?	14
<i>User Testing in Three Days</i>	17
Tell Me Again: Why Do I Need to Do User Testing?	17
The Exceptions	17
2 The Web User Experience	21
How Well Do People Use the Web?	22
<i>The Measure of Success</i>	23
Web-Wide Success Rates	24
Success by Experience Level	25
User Satisfaction with Web Sites	26
<i>Three Guidelines for Supporting Deep-Link Users</i>	27
How People Use Sites	27
<i>Four Goals in Thirty Seconds</i>	30
The Homepage: So Much to Say, So Little Time	30
Interior Page Behavior	33
<i>Tip: Optimizing Interior Page Links</i>	35
<i>The Rise of "Answer Engines"</i>	36
Search Dominance	36
<i>Four Ways to Grab Value from Search Engine Visitors</i>	38
<i>Organic vs. Sponsored Links</i>	39
How People Use the Search Engine Results Page	39
<i>Number One Guideline for Search Engine Optimization</i>	40
Using Keyword Pricing to Estimate Usability	
Improvements	41
<i>How To Determine the Optimal Bid for a Search Keyword Ad</i>	42
<i>How Much Is Improved Usability Worth?</i>	43
<i>Three Reasons to Improve Your Site</i>	44
<i>Tip: Design for Short Scrolling</i>	45
Scrolling	45
<i>Defining Standards and Conventions</i>	47

Complying with Design Conventions and Usability Guidelines	47
<i>Seven Reasons for Standard Design Elements</i>	48
<i>Recommended Book on Information Foraging</i>	52
Information Foraging	52
Information Scent: Predicting a Path's Success	52
Diet Selection: What Sites to Visit	52
<i>Three Ways to Enhance Information Scent</i>	53
Patch Abandonment: When to Hunt Elsewhere	53
<i>New Design Strategies for Attracting Information Foragers</i>	54
<i>More Information</i>	55
Informavore Navigation Behavior	55
3 Revisiting Early Web Usability Findings	57
<i>Under Construction</i>	59
Eight Problems That Haven't Changed	60
Links That Don't Change Color When Visited	60
<i>Why Designers Don't Believe Us</i>	62
Breaking the Back Button	63
<i>Fitts' Law of Click Times</i>	65
Opening New Browser Windows	67
<i>The Curse of Maximization</i>	69
<i>How Can You Use Windows if You Don't Understand Windows?</i>	71
Pop-Up Windows	72
<i>Most-Hated Advertising Techniques</i>	75
Design Elements That Look Like Advertisements	76
<i>Avoid Influencing Users During Testing</i>	78
Violating Web-Wide Conventions	78
Vaporous Content and Empty Hype	80
Dense Content and Unscannable Text	81
Technological Change: Its Impact on Usability	84
<i>1986 Air Force Guidelines Stand the Test of Time</i>	85
<i>Don Norman's Three Levels of Emotional Design</i>	86
Slow Download Time	86
Frames	87
Flash	88
<i>Flash: The Good, the Bad, and the Usable</i>	90
Low-Relevancy Search Listings	91
Multimedia and Long Videos	91
<i>Teenagers: Masters of Technology?</i>	92
Frozen Layouts	92
<i>Sad Mac</i>	94
Cross-Platform Incompatibility	94
<i>Mobile Devices: A New Argument for Cross-Platform Design?</i>	96

Adaptation: How Users Have Influenced Usability	96
Uncertain Clickability	97
Links That Aren't Blue	100
Scrolling	100
Registration	102
Complex URLs	103
Pull-Down and Cascading Menus	103
Restraint: How Designers Have Alleviated Usability Problems	104
Plug-Ins and Bleeding-Edge Technology	108
3D User Interface	109
Bloated Design	111
Splash Pages	111
Moving Graphics and Scrolling Text	113
Custom GUI Widgets	113
<i>"About Us"</i> Features Don't Say Enough	115
Not Disclosing Who's Behind Information	115
Made-Up Words	116
Outdated Content	116
Inconsistency Within a Web Site	118
Premature Requests for Personal Information	118
Multiple Sites	119
Orphan Pages	119
Assessing the Fate of the Early Findings	119
<i>More Information</i>	121
4 Prioritizing Your Usability Problems	123
<i>How Severe Is the Problem?</i>	124
<i>Scoring Severity</i>	125
What Makes Problems Severe	125
<i>Hospital Usability: In Critical Condition</i>	128
The Scale of Misery	129
<i>Tip: The First Law of E-Commerce</i>	131
Why Users Fail	132
<i>Five Biggest Causes of User Failure</i>	133
Is It Enough to Focus on the Worst Problems?	134
5 Search	137
<i>Tip: How to Know If You Need Search</i>	138
The State of Search	138
<i>Three Simple Steps to Better Search</i>	139
<i>The Three Things Users Expect from Search</i>	140
<i>Tip: When Is a Search Not Search?</i>	140
How Search Should Work	140

7	Typography: Readability & Legibility	213
	<i>Tip: The Downside of Dummy Type</i>	214
	<i>Four Top Guidelines for Type</i>	215
	Body Text: The Ten-Point Rule	221
	<i>Tip: Avoid Anti-Aliasing</i>	222
	Age Is Not the Issue	223
	<i>Tip: When the Same Size Appears Smaller</i>	224
	Planning for Differences in Hardware	225
	<i>Accessibility Affects All of Us</i>	226
	<i>The Rule of Relative Size</i>	227
	Relative Specifications	227
	Designing for Vision-Impaired Users	227
	Choosing Fonts	232
	When in Doubt, Use Verdana	233
	<i>When Will Screens Read as Well as Print?</i>	234
	Mixing Fonts and Colors	235
	<i>The Case Against Caps</i>	238
	Text and Background Contrast	240
	<i>Two Ways to Make Colors Pop</i>	245
	Common Color Blindness	245
	Text Images	247
	<i>More Information</i>	249
	Moving Text	249
8	Writing for the Web	253
	How Poor Writing Makes Web Sites Fail	254
	<i>Tip: Hire a Web Writer</i>	258
	Understanding How Web Users Read	258
	<i>Why Users Scan</i>	259
	<i>Tip: Know Your Audience</i>	259
	Writing for Your Reader	259
	<i>Three Guidelines for Better Web Writing</i>	262
	Use Simple Language	262
	<i>Meeting Low Literacy Needs</i>	265
	Tone Down Marketing Hype	265
	<i>Tip: When and Where to Toot Your Horn</i>	267
	<i>Writing Samples: Before and After</i>	267
	<i>Tip: The Two-Sentence Test</i>	269
	<i>Keeping It Short and Sweet</i>	269
	Summarize Key Points and Pare Down	269
	<i>Tip: Writing Descriptive Labels</i>	271
	<i>Making Usability Skyrocket</i>	275

Formatting Text for Readability	275
Highlight Keywords	275
Use Concise and Descriptive Titles and Headings	276
<i>Three Guidelines for Heading Hierarchy</i>	277
Use Bulleted and Numbered Lists	279
<i>Tip: Parallel Phrasing Is Important</i>	281
<i>More Information</i>	282
Keep Paragraphs Short	282
9 Providing Good Product Information	285
<i>Tip: Where To Display Prices</i>	287
Show Me the Money	287
No Excuses	290
<i>Tip: Approximate Prices Are Better Than None</i>	291
Disclose Extra Fees	292
Win Customer Confidence	295
Describe the Product	295
<i>Test Driving an Auto Site</i>	298
Provide Pictures and Product Illustrations	298
<i>Five Big Illustration Errors</i>	299
Layer Product Pages	304
Display Bona Fides	310
Support Comparison Shopping	311
Refine and Sort	314
Support Sales with Quality Content	317
<i>Four Reasons for Informational Articles</i>	317
<i>They Don't Have Products, Do They?</i>	318
<i>More Information</i>	319
10 Presenting Page Elements	321
<i>When the "Three-Click Rule" Wreaks Havoc</i>	322
Should You Design for Scrolling?	322
<i>Four Rules of Scrolling</i>	324
<i>Tip: Beware of Magic Numbers</i>	329
Guiding Users, Step by Step	329
Keep Like with Like	333
Sloppy Formatting of Forms	338
<i>Look at Me!</i>	344
Satisfy Your Users' Expectations	344
Using White Space	347

11 Balancing Technology with People's Needs	351
<i>Flashback to 2000: A Note from Jakob Nielsen</i>	352
Use Multimedia When It Benefits Your Audience	353
<i>Tip: Providing Alternative Accessibility</i>	359
Overcoming Barriers to Multimedia	359
Accommodate Low-Tech Users	359
<i>Sites for Kids: Keep It Real</i>	360
Design for Your Audience's Connection Speed	361
Provide a Simple and Accurate Loading-Status Indicator	361
<i>Watch Your Language</i>	364
Underestimate Your Users' Technical Knowledge	364
Detect Users' Bandwidth	366
Stick to Familiar Interface Conventions	368
<i>Tip: Pop-Ups Usually Strike Out</i>	369
<i>Tip: Scroll Bars Should Be Standard</i>	371
<i>Tip: Rich vs. Poor Media</i>	375
Avoid Multimedia Excesses	375
<i>How Do You Turn This Thing Off?</i>	377
Turn Down the Volume	377
<i>Tip: When to Take a Commercial Break</i>	378
Make Videos for the Web	378
The Practice of Simplicity	380
<i>Improving Your Site: Sooner or Later?</i>	383
<i>Three Tips: Simplify. Simplify. Simplify.</i>	384
<i>More Information</i>	390
Toward a More Elegant Design	390
12 Final Thoughts: Design That Works	393
Test Your Assumptions	395
Index	396