

Assessing the GovInfo User Experience – Transcript of audio

Hi everyone and welcome back to the spring 2023 DLC virtual meeting. Our next session is assessing the government information user experience. I will hand it over to GPO preservation library and David to get us started.

Thank you Kelly. I think I'm on and everyone can hear me. Good afternoon everyone thank you for joining us for this session. I am David with the preservation library and for GPO. To talk a little bit about this introduce it. Following on our successful collaboration and experience working with the students from the University of Michigan school of information last year, we look for another opportunity. This year we were able to partner with students from a user experience research and design course. And looking at potential projects we thought why not ask the students to do a user experience assessment of info. Here today to talk about the results of that project is the student team. I'm going to introduce -- the lead of the team. She can introduce her fellow teammates and talk about their work.

Can I have you -- thank you

Hello everyone. We have 14 members in our group. We will present today for the outcome of our semester long project. I will get started. It is our pleasure to have everyone here today for our presentation. We are -- University of Michigan school of information. For this semester long project our team cooperated with the GPO to improve the user experience of the GovInfo website . This presentation aims to provide an overview of our process. As well as findings and recommendations we have identified from the research of this semester.

The agenda for today includes an introduction to the team. To the platform and its interaction. Then we will talk about the process of our user needs assessment.

Your microphone muted.

We seem to have lost your audio.

It looks as though you are connected and you are not muted but we are not hearing you.

You may want to go back up to audio and then audio conference.

Can you hear me now?

Yes.

I could start over.

Hello?

You are on point three or four.

So, is it working right now my audio?

Yes we can hear you now.

Please allow me to introduce our team. We are a group of four first-year grad students. Focus on U.S. design and we are passionate about building careers SUS researchers and designers in the future.

Before we dive into the overview of our process, let me quickly introduce the project and our objectives. Our client -- is a crucial government agency that aims to provide the public with free access to extensive collection of official publications from diverse branches of the federal government. The website design was complex. Our team was tasked with conducting comprehensive research to evaluate the usability of GovInfo website. The primary goal was to ensure that the website delivered the expected futures and user-friendly interfaces to the audience. We were also exploring opportunities to further improve the websites visible visibility making it more compatible with similar platform agency websites.

The first step our team took is to draw an interaction map. The purpose of the map is to understand the major pathways of how users interact with the website. And to determine the scope and focus of further research. We paid our attention and interactions like keyword search ink had a -- which users use mostly to find a document. I will pass the presentation to the next team member.

For your basic understanding of the website so the interaction maps we have continued our research process. The process consists of two parts. The first is to understand the user needs through interviews and surveys. The other part is a usability variation. The detailed variation part will be discussed later. I will first go over our methodology. User needs assessment and the corresponding findings. Our research team has contacted user interviews with a total of -- by participants. One stakeholder and for other target users. The interviews focuses on their experience with articles and the professional documents their use of info and their experience with other databases or websites. Our research team has conducted a user interview and identified three user personas. They are university librarians government librarians and government employees. To be noted those personas are fictional characters. They are not linked to any of the interviews by the -- aggregate interview notes.

Are findings revealed our users -- including useful assessment to refine search results. Document search -- quick file sharing and access to high-quality information resources.

We have identified a user pinpoints each includes inconsistent search algorithm across platforms. Difficulty locating -- instruction on how to search and ability to find files accurately and in -- determine their location within the website.

The user interviews also distributed a survey to gain insights into users -- experience using government info. We received 123 valid responses from the government librarian pole. Our survey was two parts. Want to collect demographic data and the other to collect document search --. It is important to be noted here so the results are only from librarian and the subject to bias. Because of results are also not subject to further study -- the findings we have identified could not represent the major population and only serve as a reference of -- to understand the part of the targeted user group.

Based on our demographic data more than 15% of government info users are over 50 years old. Over 90% of users holds a Masters degree. Over 90% are librarians. Based on our survey interface more than 70% of users search for documents at least once a week. Users also use Congress.gov and the -- most frequently to find government documents.

For the first insights we want to explore -- relationship between -- preference and the parties -- with the search time. We have notice the parties were all satisfied with the search time to find documents which is 15% of the whole population in this case. Have a larger presentation of using the search -- which is about 80% to find the document. And who are satisfied which is 60%. The difference -- preference may imply that the using search -- to find document may take them a longer time to find the document -- to their dissatisfaction to search time. Also important to note that only found -- were not satisfied with the search time according to the questionnaire. The definition for the term search time is not specified. Not specifically analyze why they were not satisfied with the search time. Can do some more -- testing on this part. Some besides that we want to look -- to the search process in general. After we select those -- unsatisfied and very unsatisfied with a general search process of finding documents. Which are only 4% of the population in this case. Those people all -- search function. The result my imply advanced search - - have rooms for further research and improvements. Because the number is so small also -- it does not represent the overall experience of the large population. I will pass to talk about our variation. Some

After a thorough examination of our users needs our team proceeded with usability evaluation research. This involved a three-part process comparative analysis -- evaluation a usability testing. In order to present our findings -- outlined the methodology and then provide an overview of the aggregate results.

The purpose of conducting a comparative analysis is the benchmark similar products of -- it helps us get a better understanding of what features and functions are expected. We evaluated seven competitors with -- assessing each teacher using three criteria. The competitors were categorized to -- based on their relevance and -- with GovInfo. Here all the identified competitors. Direct competitors are -- Hein online.com and ProQuest congressional. Indirect competitors are librarian. Congress.gov and Library of Congress. Parallel competitors are J store and regulations.gov. Lastly Chet GPT was considered as an analogous competitor.

After considering the insights and findings from our comparative analysis we continued with -- evaluation. It is a user research methodology proposed by --. The objective of this evaluation is to assess website usability using 10 general principles for interaction design with a small number of --. All our team members acted as participants and thoroughly examined GovInfo based on these 10 principles. We identified some usability issues related to five principles. Then visibility -- match between system and real world, user control and freedom, aesthetic and minimalist design and help and documentation.

Then taking the next step in evaluating usability. We conducted a usability testing to gain insights from our users. Usability testing is a method for observing how users interact with a product features and identify areas for improvement. By using this method we can ensure that our product meets users needs rather than just relying on assumptions or the designer's perspective. Our goal is to create a more user-friendly and effective product that better satisfies its intended audience. During the usability testing we successfully recruited six participants completed all the testing starting with a pre-questionnaire demographic information. That helped us better understand our -- in their previous interaction with GovInfo.

The actual testing consisted of six tests. Associated with the website. Followed by a post-questionnaire that asked for overall feedback and questions. The testing is self was successful. We were pleased with the insights and data that were collected. We would like to take a moment to express our gratitude to David and his team for their help with the recruitment process. Their assistance with a crucial role -- outcome of this testing.

We have now concluded our overview of the usability evaluation methodology. Without further ado let's dive into the findings. Our team and interviewees or test participants all agreed that the GovInfo website positive user experience. Many participants found the homepage to be very clear and structured. Without -- the homepage is fantastic timely features and popular in recent document sections. Almost everything I need on a regular basis. Browsing function also was highly placed. Finding it useful. Participants also remarked I especially like the browse function. It is logical and intuitive.

Next us discuss our major findings and recommendations. So our first finding relates to the search result page. Where our investment evaluation comparative analysis and usability -- are reviewed effective information architecture here for the -- of each publication. According to one participant in the usability testing I would expect to find all the information that can uniquely identify with the proper hierarchy on the results page. Our comparative analysis also supported this finding. Showing that users may have investment attention when navigating through this section compared to other competitor websites. The current design makes it difficult for users to quickly identify desired documents with their missing key information at the full publication title author publisher that provides users with the necessary information to make -- decisions about which document to select. Another issue we identified relates to the icons at the bottom of each introduction section. And the ones that have -- features that are located at the top right corner of the page. Some user testing participants reported that they never use the PDF icon on the search results page. But preferred the PDF icon in the content details page. Other users also reported that they would always click the details icon first to get a better idea of the publication then view the PDF. Getting the PDF icon here may not be very effective. However we would still recommend keeping the PDF icon since -- effectiveness might be -- introduction section. Uses also reported that they trusted -- copy and pasting the URL in the browsing window into an email themselves. More than using the email sharing icon as the letter might end up in the junk inbox. Based on these findings we suggest reorganizing all the -- icons to better utilize the space and present necessary information in the most effective and user-friendly way to reduce the -- burden on users.

I believe you are muted.

Sorry. So I'm going to introduce our three remaining findings for the usability testing. For our finding relates to the filter on the search results page. We have two sub findings for the future. First during our usability testing to participants mentioned the date filter is displayed in count rather than end date. They did not understand why the dates were displayed in this way. To improve user experience we suggest GovInfo changes the default display to date rather than count to avoid confusion. At the same time at a button to the participants sort the documents from latest to oldest and vice versa to make the selections of dates easier and more convenient for users.

Second during our competitive analysis we found that compared with the competitors GovInfo chose to display all of the items under each filter at once when users came to the search result page. This way of display users browsing time on this page users did not need all of the filters for most of their searching. As a result we recommend GovInfo change the display of all the filters. First only desktop for filters that were most commonly used. And showing three items under each category for users to have a basic understanding of what each filter is about. Second is all the filters be D-line -- and participants extend them based on their needs to save their browsing time. So our third discovery pertains to the content detail page. And suggest that the pages visual elements and hierarchy should conform to user expectations. Specifically we observed that the pages that link does not always match users preferences. For instance the current design gives more emphasis to the title section. Which appears a larger in Boulder font and highlights download options in the top left corner. -- What the users intended purpose

for visiting the page. Because the pages access when users click in on the detail button. With PDF download available at the same time. So users expect to see the title of the document as well as details or summaries of the page. Rather than the download options other prominent detail title. Our participants expressed similar concerns. For example what catches my eye in the first place is? Out of obviously doesn't content detail and I think this whole area here on the left -- of my students missed that when they are in the details. The button to get to the PDF is right there. So for this finding we recommend to change the layout of the page. Instead of having download on the left and documents summary on the right, we suggest having documents summary on the left and download options on the right. Also instead of the content detail the actual document title. Another point has to do with the icons and the use of design elements. Specifically the sole use of the icon may not tell information about the function. This relates to the shared citation icon on the top right. Uses have expressed the quotation mark is handy I never get it. For me it is not intuitive. What you need is something information that tells you what that does that pops up when you hove her over it. Besides the use of icons and buttons should prioritize what users use most often. For example prioritize the most used download option most useful functions for users. In this case our usability testing results have revealed that the most often used download option is the PDF. Users seldom use the share icons to share documents. Instead they prefer to copy the link directly. So we suggest prioritizing the PDF download option and make it more -- on the page. And hide other file options in the drop-down button on the right. Also at the text all icons and prioritize the citation icon over the others. And hide other share options under share. We would also recommend reordering the summary items for the document details. The ordering of information should follow prioritize Asian based on relevance or specificity depending on what is most intuitive to users. The current ordering causes confusion to users. For example when user complained that I don't think it is intuitive. And I think my students get confused a lot. So I would put the publication title at the top. However because we have received different ideas over how this ordering should work do not have a specific recommendation to that. So further research might be needed to determine the ordering. So, the last point we found that users often struggle to determine their current location within the websites hierarchy old structure and find it difficult to navigate back to previously visited pages. There is no way for them to track what pages they passed just now and go back. To solve this problem our recommendation is to add a breadcrumb type of navigation scheme that reveals uses location within a website to let users know where they are. So that they can return to the previous page. For example if uses into the page through categories and collections the breadcrumb will show the corresponding pathways.

The last finding relates to the help page. For one thing the navigation is missing appropriate notifier to inform users that there are sections below this menu. This confuses the user. For example one is saying that I do not know what is under this menu. For this point we recommend restructure the help navigation and use color and font weight to differentiate layers. At an arrow to indicate this is clickable. For another thing, the search on the about features and help page does not tell users of enough information what they are searching for. And they lose control over where they are in the page. In this case we recommend allowing users to limit their search with a specific category and indicate where the search results come from. Next I'm going to pass the presentation to Ian to make a summarization.

If you are speaking we are not hearing you.

EN can you try to turn on your video?

And tried to speak.

If you can hear me can you give us a chat in the chat box.

We are not hearing any audio from you.

There is something wrong with Ian's computer. I'm going to take her part and finish the whole presentation is that is okay.

Absolutely. I will give you back the presenter.

Sorry about that. So this is pretty much everything about our findings and recommendations. During the process although we have used the various efforts to uncover user needs and frustrations our research is limited and could be improved in various ways. For example the findings may be biased since most of our participants from either interviews and survey results are professional librarians. Because they are so familiar with databases in general our findings may not cover the needs of the general public. The public users may have a different idea towards how to make the website user-friendly. Also our redesign interfaces were not subject to usability testing and may lack proper verification. This limits their value and usability. However those redesigns can still be used as a reference for future website upgrades. Due to time constraints we were not able to cover everything from our semester long research. But presented points we consider as significant and frequently mentioned from various --. Although our attention focused on UI interfaces we have indeed heard feedback from the content site for example some participants mentioned they are unable to know if documents are updated some naming -- may be subject to confusion and some documents are too large to be useful. But due to the scope of our project those valuable insights are not included in our findings. So based on the findings and recommendations inch and above it is ideal that GPO could take next steps to improve the user experience of the website. The first phase should involve the creation of an action plan that prioritizes the changes based on resources and constraints. The phase will include assessing the visibility of recommendations and determining what resources are needed. The second phase is implementation of the recommendations recommended changes. Which involves supplying to the changes and continuously monitoring and gathering feedback to identify any new issues. It is important to ensure that the changes are being implemented effectively. And that they are having the desired effect. The final phase involves considering the long-term sustainability of the website. It would be beneficial to consider conducting periodic user testing and iterating on the website to ensure that it is up-to-date. User-friendly and effective. This will ensure that the website can continue to provide a positive user experience to its audience and remain competitive in the industry. To conclude we have been working on this project from January to April. During this process various -- were taken. GovInfo is largely effective in facilitating access to government publications. With a few areas for improvement particularly in relation to the UI elements and content of certain pages. In closing we want to extend our sincerest gratitude to the dedicated teams at GPO and other organizations who supported us throughout this project. And we remain committed to -- the field of user experience research through our ongoing work. This is pretty much the end of the presentation. Thanks all for the time here in the remaining time are left for the questions.

Okay David over to you.

I was trying to get my chat off of here. Thank you team. For your excellent presentation. Does anyone have any questions about the findings? I saw a few comments in the chat that we can get to if there is no immediate questions right now. Any questions for the team?

Okay. I will talk about some of the things I saw in the chat while you are thinking about things. There was a question to the team about -- being a parallel competitor. While Jay store does have a lot of government publications and it has government publications from the U.S. as well as a lot of other countries. Largely focusing on pre-1920. Did any of the users that you interviewed talk about Jay store is a parallel competitor or or was that something from your own research that you were able to determine? How did you choose Jay store as a parallel competitor?

Thank you for the question. The way we determine are types of competitors are based on the functions they provided. So the definition of a parallel competitor is a competition a competitor in which contestants compete with each other indirectly by taking terms contesting in separate areas. Jay store provide part of the similar functions with GovInfo but they are actually still very different from each other. This is basically why we chose Jay store is a parallel competitor. Because we discovered that besides the basic similar functions that they have it has to GovInfo it also has several actual functions that GovInfo did not have but maybe helpful to improve the user experience of GovInfo. This is the reason why we chose it as the parallel competitor. Not a direct competitor or a closer competitor.

Okay. Thank you for that.

You had a lot of positive comments on the series of recommendations that you made. From the community all saying either agreeing or yes that would be good. Specifically comments on some of the long URLs to get to some of the documents. Or that the URLs the documents have as if you are copying those and sharing them or copying them for your future use. I think you did address some people were referring to that. Some of your testers referring to that in their conversation with you.

Yes

Anything more about that?

Do you mean the information on like their preference on directly copying the URL to share?

Yes

And the length of the URLs.

When we are analyzing the the role of the share icons like we can share it may be by email or maybe by Facebook. That role of icons we discovered most of our interviewees they did not they have never used those icons before. They just prefer to directly copy the URL in the top in the URL bar at the top of the browser. So we think it might be a little more efficient way for them to share the document they want to share to each other. So maybe reduce the priority or the visual -- of the share icons or reorganize them may be better for user experience.

Okay.

Thank you. Are there any questions from the audience? For the folks --

We had a couple come in while you were reviewing those. Has there been any analysis of who are the users of GovInfo other than librarians ? What the mix might be of civilians versus librarians.

Actually our participant -- like GPO staff helped us to reach out to all the participants no matter for the interviewees of our interview with the participants of the surveys. Until now we only got librarians majority of librarians as our participants. So we did not know about other types of the types of users for GovInfo. We think if there is a chance that GovInfo GPO can reach to a broader category of users and ask for their feelings and user experience about the website they may get a lot of different sides and perspectives about like how we can improve the user experience of the website. Maybe if GPO wants to do further usability testing, for the GovInfo like what we suggested in the slides. They may reach out to different types of users of the website rather than librarians. This is out of our scope. Our participants -- like how we found our participants are under the help of GPO folks. They are mainly librarians.

I can chime in and say one of the difficulties and the students have a tight agenda and a tight schedule. They had requirements that they were required to things they were required to do and perform to be able to meet their course goals. It was very difficult for us to try to figure out how we could open it up further given the limited time to select a public user population that was to find enough and controlled enough we could derive some meaning from it. And so that is why given the time constraint we thought for the first dive potentially into this we would just rely on some government users as well as GPO coordinators from the FDLP.

But we think like the data we obtained from librarians are still very useful for GovInfo to improve user experience. Based on the data we collected we still think the majority of the users of GovInfo might still be librarians. Thank you so much for facilitating us to find so many users and participants.

We have numerous questions basically asking the same thing. What is the status of these recommendations on the GPO side and when would they be implemented or what of the next steps?

We take the students recommendations and we will turn them over to PST. Management and team. We will see what can be accomplished. The study just ended the semester just ended for them and we have not had an opportunity to regroup and take their information and to look at next steps yet. But we will be doing that.

We are almost at the end of our time. We have a couple more questions. I will see how many we can get to. Did anyone on the team have previous experience with the GovInfo website or government information before you begin the project?

No none of us have any experience with GovInfo or government related websites. We are all Chinese.

How much overall time did the project take?

The project lasted from January until April. Basically it lasted for one semester.

How did user maps handle people who were just clicking?

Kelly or the person who proposes the question could you clarify on this question? What do you mean by just click on?

She said clicking along randomly. I just click when I'm bored.

Most of the participants of our survey or the interviewees of our interviews are the frequent users of GovInfo. We mainly take the perspectives and suggestions from them. We feel like if we have future possibilities that we can still like help GovInfo to improve user experience we may want to reach out to this group of participants to see like what are their general experience of GovInfo ? What are some difficulties? What are some advantages they think about the website? Because this our usability testing may focus on the frequent users of GovInfo. We have not got too much information about users who randomly click on different items. But if we have future possibilities that we can reach out to this group of participants -- to perform may be a different series of tests from where we performed for the frequent users to see if we can get new perspective or new suggestions from these group of people.

Unfortunately we have reached the end of our time. Thank you so much to the presenters. And for your time devoted to this project. We will be back in 15 minutes for our DLC open forum. If you're just joining us we are capturing all of this chat that came in during the session. We will be sharing it with our team at GPO. And with the presenters as well. Thank you all and we will be back with you in 15 minutes.

Thank you so much.