

## Executive Summary of MCO Website Usability Study

### I. Evaluation Tasks

1. To get feedback from experts and users about the MCO website
2. To find out the current problems with the MCO website
3. To identify flaws with the content architecture of the website

### II. Method of Evaluation

1. Assessment of MCO Help-Desk call logs
2. Focus group interview with four MCO Help-Desk agents
3. Online survey sent to MCO Listserv
4. Expert review of the MCO website
5. User-participant evaluation with fourteen users

### III. Summary Findings

Detailed findings for all methods of evaluations are available in in appendices.

#### *1. Assessment of MCO Help-Desk call logs*

Two members of the IE Lab evaluation team examined seven years of call logs for topics about and related to MCO website. Three basic categories for calls were identified: reporting problems, requests for action, and assistance in locating specific information.

Reporting problems include:

- Requests for assistance in locating or understanding reports or statistics,
- An inability to upload documents,
- Authentication issues

Request for actions include:

- Changing information about a campus,
- Making member changes, and
- Adding people to committees.

#### *2. Focus group interview with four MCO help-desk agents*

Four members of the MCO Help Desk and two representatives of the IE lab comprised the focus group. The purpose of the meeting was to gain a sense of understanding of the web site from the point of view of the Help Desk, whose members are involved in the day-to-day maintenance of the website and who help users when they encounter problems with the website.

The MCO help desk identified their web users in terms of role: committee members, MOBIUS staff and training staff, circulation and ILL staff, and ‘people reporting problems.’ They said that the main reasons people call the Help Desk about the website are: registration, password problems, and help needed in finding statistics and other documents.

The most prominent problems involve:

- The site map and search tools
- The listserv archives and calendar functions (users cannot jump to the desired page)
- Document organization and navigability.

### *3. Expert review*

Three expert reviewers evaluated the MCO website. Two were experts in the website’s subject matter and the third was a website designer. An evaluation checklist of 76 questions based on 13 heuristic categories was derived from numerous sources, including Jakob Nielsen’s *Alertbox* and Pierotti’s system checklist for usability techniques. The experts found that the MCO website meets only about half (55%) of the usability evaluation questions from the checklist. The majority of unmet heuristics are related to: functionality of search and navigation (e.g., emphasis is on user’s recall and not recognition) and a lack of consistency in information presentation and formatting. See the expert review report for the complete listing of met and unmet questions from the checklist.

### *4. Online survey*

The online survey was distributed through the MOBIUS listserv. The survey sought the users’ perspectives of the MCO website and also served as a call for participation in the MOBIUS web usability study at the MOBIUS annual conference. Twelve people responded to the survey:

- 25% use the website daily; 75% use it monthly
- 83% have used web technologies for 10 or more years, and 17% have used them for 5– 9 years
- 67% said that they have experienced problems with the website; 33% said that they hadn’t.

The survey participants use MCO website for:

- delivery purposes- printing labels,
- accessing entering monthly ILL statistics and Inn-Reach report,
- contacting the MCO help desk to report problems and accessing open calls with the Help Desk,
- keeping up with MOBIUS news, announcements, committees, and task forces,
- finding documents and policies,
- contacting people,
- accessing MAROON,
- checking training schedules and documents.

The survey respondents experience difficulties in finding information about the clusters that a library belongs to. Some also commented that much information is outdated. There were also positive comments that the website is well organized, that tabs are helpful, and that is great to be able to check open calls.

### *5. User-participant evaluation*

Fourteen users participated in the user-participant interview sessions at the MOBIUS Annual Conference, 2007. The participants included:

- 4 deans or directors,
- 3 library technician/catalog librarians,
- 3 access services/reserve librarians.
- 2 reference librarians,
- 1 media coordinator, and
- 1 'head librarian.'

Twelve participants had ten or more years of experience using web technologies, and two had five to nine years of experience. Two participants access the MCO website daily; three, weekly; seven, monthly; and two, yearly. Eight didn't recall experiencing problems with the website in the past. Five did report having problems in the past.

The usability evaluation tasks were devised in order to find out if users experienced problems with website use that were identified in expert evaluation:

- None of the users had problems with the delivery report form; some said that they would automatically call the Help Desk if there were delivery problems.
- Users didn't like the amount of text that they had to scroll through in order to find documents.
- User reported that was hard for users to find information without knowing the political structure of the organization.
- There are no instructions for uploading documents.
- The calendar caused many problems; the SQL error came up when they tried to sort by group.
- Most users were unable to find the library director without leaving the MOBIUS website. This illustrated the need for an improved search function for people and places.

## V. Recommendations:

### *Site Architecture*

- Create a “My Mobius” function so that users can easily see what they are able to access and ‘Quick Links,’ consisting of previously/often accessed information.
- The calendar function needs to be corrected and it should be regularly maintained. There should be an option to skip months. The ‘Next Month’ option should be present on the top as well as ‘Bottom’ of the calendar. No other mention of any ‘month’ (as in the current one) should be there as that might confuse the user.
- Provide a way for users to change their password without calling the Help Desk (as in Paypal, etc.: where they are sent an email and must click on it in order to access their account)
- Provide an FAQ page (or tab) with site information and instructions to help users troubleshoot their own problems
- Make collaboration between the clusters/groups easier by providing access to others’ minutes and documents
- Consistency in format and sub topics under each ‘Cluster’ should be maintained.

### *Navigation*

- The site should have a better site map, which is collapsible for less scrolling
- The ‘Search’ results should be sorted by relevance and the Search terms highlighted in the results.
- Create a clickable/searchable map so that users can find out which cluster the libraries are in and where the libraries are located. This could link to the people who are in the library. It should be easier for users to find people by function and location.
- Provide an ‘advanced search’ function in the people finder.
- Improve the search function. Many people in the usability testing used the search function.
- Include many cross-links between articles and documents so that users can access the articles in ways that they find intuitive, and so that they don’t have to know who created the documents in order to find them.
- The pages are filled with too much information. The menus should be collapsible. The right and left panels have the same information and occupy a lot of space, increasing redundancy and reducing visual clarity of the website.

### *Content*

- The site should be more easily kept up-to-date. Archive old information if needed. There is much outdated information on the site.
- Consider implementing a tagging function, as this may be the only way to improve the keyword searching on all documents that users access.
- Abbreviations should be described wherever possible.

- The 'News' Section should have either the headlines hyperlinked and the 'Read More' removed for less clutter. Users understand that a headline usually takes them to expanded news or the news detail.
- The site should provide descriptions about the purpose of forms and more explanations of acronyms. The knowledge of users shouldn't be taken for granted. This could be accomplished through rollovers or in a detailed FAQ section.
- Consider revising the home page to 'about' rather than 'news,' or combine the two.

### *Aesthetics*

- The tabs at the top should be spread across the page and be more visible.
- Label the 'Help Desk' tab as 'Support' or 'Contact Us'.
- The 'Print' function should be on the top right hand corner of the webpage.
- A lot of users rely on the Search function. Change 'Search' to 'Search MCO Website' or 'Search this site'.
- Increase the Search text box size so that at least the first 25 characters entered is visible. Also, the font of the text entered should be larger.
- Make the font more easily adjustable, site-wide.
- The format of the text in the pages should be left aligned, with items in bulleted lists, and with uniform spaces between lines to reduce clutter and make the page more easily readable. Emphasize data wherever it needs to be emphasized with bold text.
- The Day, Month, Year and Today links at the bottom of the current calendar should be more visible and descriptive so that the user understands their function.
- Don't put links to the same term more than once on a page.
- All visited links should change color.