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English 420

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### **Usability of Web Design: An Annotated Bibliography**

**Gaffney, Gerry. "Why Consistency is Critical." *Sitepoint*. 25 February 2005. 4**

**October 2006 <http://www.sitepoint.com/article/why-consistency-is-critical/>.**

This source is an article on sitepoint.com, a website containing a variety of information and articles about web design. The article is still present, at the same url. It gains additional credibility with a description of the author showing what other work he has done. The article itself is a nicely detailed discussion of consistency and why it is so critical in web design. The white paper does cite this article, but it could easily go into a little more detail such as using an actual quotation or taking some of the reasons why consistency is so important from this article.

**Garrett, Jesse James. "AJAX: A New Approach to Web Applications." *Adaptive***

***Path*. 18 February 2005. 2 October 2006**

**<http://www.adaptivepath.com/publications/essays/archives/000385.php>.**

This article discusses the uses of a web development technique that stands for Asynchronous JavaScript. This web development technique is used for creating interactive web applications. It exchanges only small amounts of data with the server to make it easier to open web pages. This allows the entire page to not be reloaded each time the users changes pages. AJAX is being used by all of the major products that were introduced over the last year by Google. Similar techniques are being used by Amazon and other sites. The article also proved some great diagrams that can be used to illustrate the differences between the AJAX technique and the other more classic web application models. I think the use of these illustrations would be used to make the distinction easier to understand. I think the current white paper may focus a little too heavily on the use of these programs and not necessarily web design. Granted these applications do affect the web site use, they need to be further explained so that the reader can easily understand them (seeing as that is the purpose of a white paper). If we decide to continue using this source I think it would be beneficial to find a supporting source that discusses a more simplified explanation of such programs. It is also difficult for me to rate the credibility

of the source, considering I have never heard of the individual who wrote it or the site to which it was featured on.

**Ginda, Robert. "JavaScript." *Mozilla*. 20 October 2006. 21 October 2006**

<http://www.mozilla.org/js/>.

The credibility of mozilla.org is very high due to the number of professionals involved in the mozilla open source browser movement. Many members of the website engage in computer science as a professional or by means of livelihood. Though the project itself is open source, it does employ numerous professionals in the computer programming industry. Just because the article is valid does not mean it was cited or used in this white paper appropriately. Yes, javascript does exist in web applications today, but it is:

1. NOT a programming language. It is a scripting language which is a form of programming, but not in its entirety. Scripting is creating a set of instructions for a website using a scripting language. Programming is the act of creating software or some set of instructions for a computer's operating system to process.
2. Javascript is not a "new technology" either; the language itself is nearly 12 years old dating back to the earliest versions of Netscape in the early '90s.

**Graham, Paul. "The Other Road Ahead." September 2001. 2 October 2006**

<http://www.paulgraham.com/road.html>.

This article does not really seem to relate to the white paper that we chose. This article focused primarily on the development and use of Web Software, such as Yahoo Store, which runs off of an internet server. It also discusses if there is a real need for computers and various servers depending on personal use. The White Paper focuses more on the usability of web sites and how users respond to issues such as the layout of the page, the speed with which the web site's items load, and how accessible the web site is for users. The portion of the article used in the paper is a very generic statement remarking on how having more graphics causes a slowdown in the loading of pages. This doesn't necessarily refer to the loading of web sites and in this case most likely refers to the loading of the internet software during downloads, etc. Again, I am not familiar with the writer of the article or the subject matter, so it is difficult for me to judge credibility of his information. However, the site seems to be well organized and references some of the top site using those systems.

***Great Web Design Tips*. 2002. AMG. 11 October 2006**

<http://www.great-web-design-tips.com/>.

This web site is my favorite that I have found so far. The information is extremely easy to understand and to find. Each portion of the information is separated into different

chapters. Chapter one focuses on Web Usability. It explains exactly what web usability is, common problems with usability, and the importance of usability testing. It also talks about the success stories of usability. Chapter two talks about web site design. This chapter focuses on how layout, navigation, hyperlinks, text, images, color, etc affect the design and usability of a website. One of the best parts is when it talks about the common mistakes that people make when designing website. I think this is important because it prevents people from making mistakes in the very beginning and having to deal with those mistakes down the road. Chapter three discusses web accessibility including facts, design guidelines, charts and graphs, colors, forms, frames, site maps, etc. All of these topics have their own links, which make it really easy to find the needed information.

**Heng, Christopher. “Is Your Site Ready for the Average User?” *The Site Wizard*. 8**

**June 2003. 11 October 2006**

**<http://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/averageuser.shtml>.**

Since our white paper is concentrated on usability in web design, I thought it would be appropriate to cite an article that deals with how the average user navigates their way in the online world, and tailor the white paper to informing the reader as to how a website can be designed around this idea. Since most end users of a website are ‘average users’ and not necessarily ‘power users’ or ‘web developers’ the site design needs to be constructed in a way that the average person can find the content they’re looking for in the quickest way possible. Christopher Heng’s article points out exactly what the ‘average user’ really is, how they find their way to the website, and how a misguided approach to the site layout can really confuse the user. Christopher is an editor at thesitewizard.com and has gained valuable experience in the web site development arena.

**Horton, Sarah and Lynch, Patrick. “Navigation.” *Web Style Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*.**

**5 March 2005. 16 October 2006**

**<http://www.webstyleguide.com/interface/navigate.html>.**

This document is more of a “what to remember when” site with some tips and pointers to help the navigation of your site be useful. It talks about how you need to provide graphics and context that will keep the reader intrigued and interested in your website. This document also describes the importance and usage of button bars. If your website is multiple pages, you must use button bars to help the reader jump from page to page. It describes also the importance of always having a button bar to return to the website’s home page. One of the most important facts I gained from this website was “Web pages need to give the user explicit cues to the context and organization of information because only a small portion of any site (less than a page) is visible at one

time.” This website contains a lot of information about button bars and the importance of them, and will be beneficial when discussing navigation in our white paper.

**Horton, Sarah and Lynch, Patrick. “Page Design.” *Web Style Guide 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. 5**

**March 2004.16 October 2006**

**<http://www.webstyleguide.com/page/index.html>.**

I really think that this page is going to be extremely helpful when revising and rewriting the portion on page layout and design. The web site introduces the vital elements of visual hierarchy, consistency within your page, dimensions (because nothing is more annoying than having the scroll over to read the rest of a sentence), length, designing of grids, headers and footers, as well as the more general elements of page layout. I love how the majority of these sites are broken down into very easy to navigate and use sites. I guess this goes along with the usability topic to which they are discussing. The site also goes into more detail on other more advanced page layout designs and components, as well as slightly touching on the accessibility issue, which we also discuss in our paper. Since I am writing the portion on page layout, I focused primarily on reading that portion of the site, but they also have links to site design, interface design, typography, editorial style, graphics, and multimedia.

**“Insight to Innovation.” *Adaptive Path, LLC*. 2006. 7 October 2006**

**<http://www.adaptivepath.com/>.**

This source has been documented in the bibliography, but is not present in the body of the whitepaper. The link is functional, but takes you to the homepage of Adaptive Path which appears to be a business and web consulting firm. Though they may be a reputable firm in their industry with many years of experience, they were not properly introduced in the usability in web design white paper. Looking through their site, I found a publication link which provides the end user with a number of essays, reports, and articles; most of which are related to business practices such as calculating ROI and implementing content management systems. After spending some time on the website I have decided that there are not many articles that would be appropriate to cite in a white paper on web design. I think the students threw this article in the bibliography just to meet their 3 source quota.

**“Improve the Readability of Your Web Page.” *Webcredible*. February 2004. 13**

**October 2006 <http://www.webcredible.co.uk/user-friendly-resources/web-usability/older-users.shtml>.**

This article by Webcredible describes the results of a study done on older users and their difficulties with using the internet. This article compared an older group of

users to a younger group navigating the same sites. Finally it makes recommendations about how to make websites more understandable and accessible to that older user group.

Webcredible is a resource with dozens of articles of which the majority relate directly to usability. Although the authors are unknown to me the site is well organized and the articles well written and with good information.

**Krug, Steve. Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability.**

**New York: New Riders Press, 2000. P 54-87.**

Steve Crug's book is available in the Purdue library. Being an entire book on web site usability it contains a vast amount of information that could be used for this White paper. The previous writers make good use of it, citing it several times. Yet there are several aspects of web design that are included in the book which are not mentioned in the current version of the paper at all. The book is well written. It is easy to navigate and written in a good voice. The author is a consultant for website usability making this one of the most important and credible sources in the paper.

**Lacy, Sarah. *For the Blind, a Welcoming Web.* Business Week Online. 27 October**

**2004. 4 October 2006**

**[www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/oct2004/nf20041027\\_6496\\_db016.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/oct2004/nf20041027_6496_db016.htm)**

This article discusses a new more welcoming web that is going to make it a lot easier for blind individuals to use the web. Blind individuals feel that some banks, etc are not making their banking machines, brochures, or web sites accessible to the vision-impaired. Some of the ways that they are helping to fix these problems is to instead of the blind person not being able to see the website, they are now going to be able to hear the site information and vocally choosing other links to visit. This web accessibility can be tricky however. The guidelines for such usage are constantly being updated and changed. One of the big changes has been putting log in information at the top of the page instead of making the visually handicapped listen to the entire web page before getting to the choose the option that most individuals choose right away. Therefore, many websites are beginning to put their most important information or most sought after links at the very beginning of their sites.

**Lipera, Roger. "Basic Web Page Layout and Design." *University at Albany Libraries***

***Interactive Media Center. 2002. 16 October 2006***

**<http://library.albany.edu/imc/webdesign/page4.htm>**

This site is a great resource to use when thinking about the navigation of your website. It is actually an interactive media center from a university that is designed to help in the making of a website. The main information that was taught was on navigation styles, fonts and text presentation. Navigation styles are important to consider when you are thinking about where you are going to locate all of your links and tool bars etc. Fonts are also important to consider what you want your website's 'look' to be and how easy they are to read. Text presentation includes such sub categories as size of text and the contrast of colors; all of which are important to the overall message of your website. Because this website is basically a tutorial, there are quizzes throughout to make sure the user understands the concepts. Overall, this website is very beneficial to the overall practice of web design and usability, especially navigation.

**McCarthy, Philip. 2005. *Ajax for developers: Build dynamic Java applications*. 2**

**October 2006 <http://www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/library/j-ajax1/>.**

This website contains the vital information needed in order for an individual to build/create Java applications. It takes you through the entire process of creating the application by providing you with the relevant HTML codes for creating shopping carts, a cross-browser XMLHttpRequest, add to cart request, among many others. All thought this site would be extremely useful for someone who is trying to create their own Java application, it is not necessarily suitable for the use in a white paper that barely touches on the subject of layout, speed, usability, and accessibility of these applications. One portion of the page does touch on usability issues surrounding the Ajax application and dealing with loading the server. The paper may provide us with a few key points to add to the paper, much like the previous writers have done, but it will most likely not be one of our significant sources. The source is credible, coming from IBM, and there may be more pertinent information found elsewhere on the site.

**Moss, Trenton. "Secret Benefits of Search Engine Optimization: Increased**

**Usability." *Sitepoint*. 15 November 2004. 2 October 2006**

**<http://www.sitepoint.com/article/increased-usability/>.**

This is another article from sitepoint.com. This article, interestingly enough, seems to contradict some of what is said in the other sources about keeping things concise and free of clutter. It is geared mostly to making it easy for both users and search engines to search the content, and so it encourages use of words that will be searched for. This article is cited within the white paper, but is not used very well. Although the article does mention CSS that is a sidenote and not the main purpose of the article. The white paper fails to even mention searchability, the main point of this article even though it is a major factor in usability. Many users just want to find a particular bit of info quickly so searchability is one of the main sections we need to add to the paper.

**Moss, Trenton. "Why a CSS website layout will make you money." *Webcredible*.**

**March 2005. 15 October 2005 <http://www.webcredible.co.uk/user-friendly-resources/css/css-website-layout.shtml>.**

This is a very interesting article concerned not only with web design layout, but how a correctly formatted layout can generate a marginal amount of revenue for your website due to an increased volume of web traffic. The source is cited properly within the Usability in Web Design document in that it correctly informs the web developer that there are certainly ways to increase your search engine visibility by following a simple set of instructions. Looking over the link to webcredible's website they mention that 99% of web browsers today are compatible with CSS 2.0. While this may hold true from a compatibility standpoint, I personally have experienced improper *rendering* of certain portions of the CSS language after introducing it to a varying number of CSS documents across a varying number of web browsers. This alone would make me consider real hard whether or not CSS should find itself on my flagship website if I'm developing for a client in the real world. Nevertheless, CSS is a handy tool that every web designer should be aware of and comfortable using so I think it is appropriate to be included in this white paper.

**Neilson, Jakob. "useit.com". 30 September 2005. 4 October 2006**

**<http://www.useit.com>.**

This website was again cited in the report, but never officially cited in the report. However, I do feel like this website could be of importance to much of the context of the paper. They do mention Jakob Nielson in the paper, but cite that particular sentence with a different source. Our group has found that many of the sources they used were never cited in the paper, and many of the cited sources were not of that much credibility. The website, useit.com, has a lot of valuable information about Jakob Nielson as well as important reports, films, news and book suggestions. However, once I tried to access these reports and articles, many of them you have to pay at least \$300 to have. Therefore, this website is overall useless besides the bibliographies of Jakob Nielson.

**New Riders Publishing. "Designing Web Usability." *Web Developers <Virtual***

***Library*>. 4 May 2001. 3 October 2006**

**<http://wdvl.internet.com/Authoring/Design/Usability/>.**

This source appears to have been taken directly from a book by New Riders Publishing. However it mentions Jakob Neilson in such a way to suggest that he is actually the author. I will have to ask about the correct citation for this. This article is lengthy and is largely composed of examples taken from various websites. This too is a lengthy source that is only just barely used. This source does appear to be nicely credible.

It is taken from a book by a publishing company. It also describes the credentials of Jakob Neilson right in the main intro.

**Leavitt, Michael. Research-Based Web Design and Usability Guidelines. 2006**

**Edition. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 19 October 2006**

**[www.usability.gov/pdfs/guidelines.html](http://www.usability.gov/pdfs/guidelines.html).**

I didn't find this site until I had already begun revising the white paper. Once finding the site, I did choose to go back and update some of the information that I had used from the previous sites that I had found. I think that this web site from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the best site for those interested in the topics of web design and usability. It contains 18 Chapters of pdfs discussing everything from the page layout to navigation to accessibility. Most of the pdf documents contain picture examples and are broken down into easy to navigate and to understand sections. I was able to find most of my information from just this one site. I know that it is also helpful for the other topics discussed in the white paper. I would definitely suggest that anyone looking into creating their own web page should thoroughly read everything on this site before beginning. I really feel like it would ensure the creation of the one of the best web sites.

**Tungare, Manas. "Handy Hints for Web Designers." *Page Resource*. 2000. 11**

**October 2006 <http://www.pageresource.com/zine/des03.htm>.**

This article is probably my favorite of the three. It gives insight to something commonly overlooked by many web developers, even today. Software tools exist that will generate web pages for the site developer. This is a great way to save time developing a site that will be accessed by thousands if not millions across the world; however, there are quite a few variables that exist that may be perceived as a negative aspect when compiling a website. For example, if I develop a site on a computer with a screen resolution of 1280x1024 pixels set with an absolute table width of a similar resolution, I severely damaging the online experience for someone with a screen resolution of 800x600 due to the fact that they are now forced to scroll from left to right just to view the hidden content of my site. Manas Tungare does an excellent job of informing the user how to create a site and avoid most of these conflicts.

**"Usability." *Website Tips*. 3 October 2006. 5 October 2006**

**<http://websitesitips.com/usability>.**

This site seems to have a lot of information about design, including banner ad design, color, creativity and inspiration, design and layout, fonts, graphics, and typography. It also discusses the markup codes of CSS, DHTML, HTML, JavaScript,

PHP, regular expressions, SSI, XHTML, and XML. Another portion of the site discussing the planning and managing of websites and search engine optimization and marketing which are important in creating an easily accessible website. The large number of links also allow for an extensive amount of information on the topic of usability in websites. These links provide additional information from everything from programming with coding as well as color sites that help you to better organize your website and make it more visually appealing. The site also has, what seems to be, all possible coding processes, which makes it a great site for anyone, no matter with type of programming they may want to use in creating their site. I am sure that this site will be useful when writing the technical portions of the paper.

**“Usability.” *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2006 Edition. 7 October 2005* <http://usability.gov/pdfs/chapter15.pdf>.**

Again, this article is not introduced in the body of the white paper. Graphics, styles, and layouts are all great aspects in the realm of web design. But the truth is, without relevant content being introduced on your website it will draw negative attention to most users who find their way to your site. In addition, search engines these days only have the capability to index text as it exists on an html page. Things like flash-based navigation systems and flash-based content provide zero visibility in search engine rankings and retard the flow of traffic to your online documents. The article “Writing Web Content” provides all of this information in an eleven page document, complete with screenshots, narratives, and sources to back up its claims. This is a legit source that should be found somewhere in the final Usability in Web Design document, but isn’t.

**“WebApplications.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. 2 October 2006* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_applications](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_applications).**

This article from Wikipedia provides a lot of the basic information needed to understand the use of web applications. These applications, such as Ajax, help to increase the accessibility of a site and make the experience more interactive. The applications are also what allow users of the site to view videos, listen to music, etc. Without such web applications most of the interesting and exciting ways of providing knowledge and entertainment to internet users would be pointless. The site not only touches on the issues of web accessibility, it also touches on reasons for possible reasons why web sites take longer to download, causing complaints due to speed issues. This site also contains a number of links that further expand many of the topics that are used in the paper, whether they are a program used or internet terminology not known by those individuals who are not as familiar with the topic. The writers of the White Paper sited this source in a number of places, but I think that they could have expanded and little further and used more of the abundance of information that Wikipedia has to offer. Since Wikipedia is a very reputable source, all information used from the site should be credible.

**“Website Design.” *Usability First. 2002. 11 October 2006* [www.usabilityfirst.com](http://www.usabilityfirst.com).**

This web site will be somewhat beneficial when rewriting part the usability of web design white paper. The web site includes a lot of information about design, writing, quality, etc. for web sites. It gives some of the general information and concepts needed to grasp the ideas of usability of websites for new users, and the site also consists of a number of other related links that lead to more specific information about usability with different companies, etc. Not only does the site explain usability, but it also gives information about inspecting usability and user testing, which becomes important for more experiences users and creators of websites. I am not sure how much we will use this site in our rewriting process. Although it contains various links concerning usability, some of the links seem elementary and not as beneficial as I had hoped. One link did contain a lot of quotes concerning usability, etc. so I think that it would be interesting to possibly include some of those to demonstrate the importance of our topic.

**“What is the Difference Between Java and HTML?” *PhoebeMoon Web Design***

***Solutions. 2004. 11 October 2006***

**<http://www.phoebemoon.com/difference.htm>**

This website houses an article which educates the user on the common differences between javascript and html in the realm of web site development. In addition to javascript and html markup languages, the site also gives a brief description about other programming languages such as C++, Perl, Active Server Pages, PHP, Coldfusion, and XML. Though all these languages aren't web-specific, it is nice to have a general overview of how each technology is implemented in the business world today. I think we will include this article as a reference in regards to contrasting the pros and cons of HTML and javascript. This juxtaposition of these two elements will be key in educating the end user on the benefits of usability in web design. In the global arena for website design and layout, nothing is most commonly used than HTML and javascript.

**“W3C” *The World Wide Web Consortium. 30 September 2005. 4 October 2006***

**<http://www.w3c.com>**

I guess you could say that I am not the most technologically advanced person you know. I know how to run a computer, but let's face it I'm not a technology major. I do not know all the lingo and terminology. In the original white paper we are using this website was sited. However it was basically used to quote a definition in the paper. As I went to the website to check it out and make sure it was credible, I was totally confused. It's not your standard search engine therefore I did not understand where the information was I was looking for. I was expecting it to be an actual informational website, but eventually I figured out it was used for in the paper as a search engine for the definition of CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). This is obviously not a something that could be beneficial to our group because it has no additional information for us.

