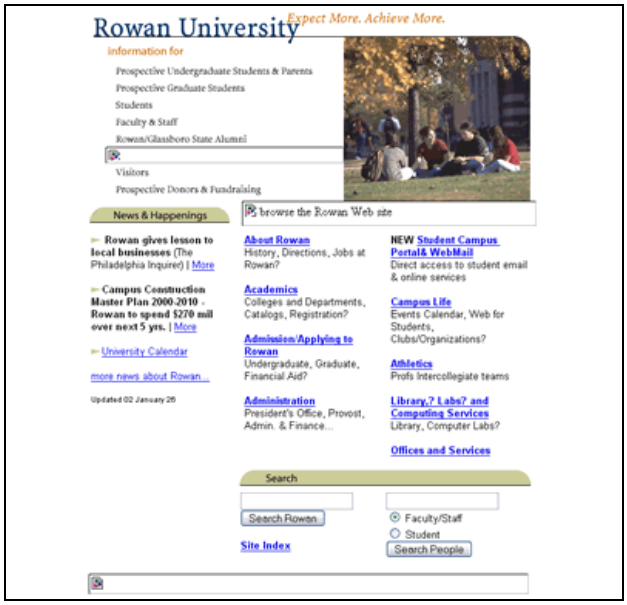
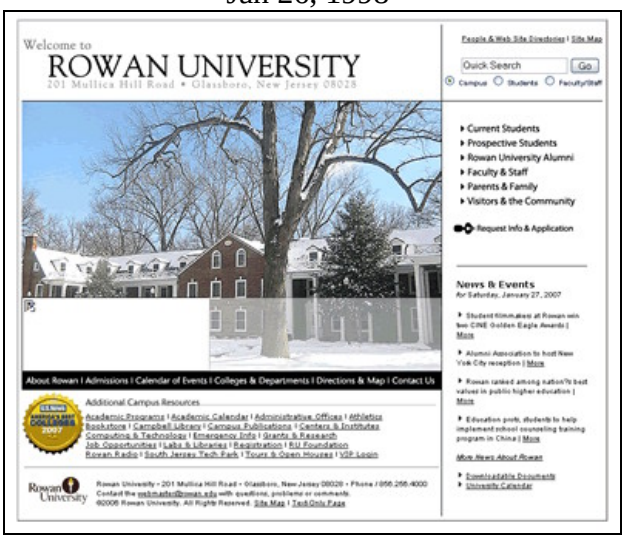
Bill Wolff
Writing for Electronic Communities, Spring 2008
Usability Project

This semester long collaborative project involves a usability analysis of multiple sections of a large informational web site: the Rowan University Web site. The Rowan web site has gone through several designs to get to what we have today.

Jan 26, 1998



Jan 27, 2002



Jan 27, 2007

Jan 27, 2008

We will be analyzing the usability of five sections of the Rowan University web site: Future Students, Current Students, Library, Computing & Technology, and Athletics (including the Rec Center). Our tests will focus on a specific aspect of web site design and use: user comprehension, site navigation, speed to finding information, etc. Each group will focus on one (or two) specific aspects of their own choosing.

We will be working in groups of 4 (the groups have been selected for you). In order to make this project succeed, groups will need to work collaboratively, innovatively, and thoughtfully in and out of class. In order to aid that collaboration we will be using a free, robust, interactive online project management tool called Zoho Projects (http://projects.zoho.com/jsp/home.jsp) which is part of the Zoho suite (http://www.zoho.com/).

The Four Stages

There are multiple tasks associated with each of the four stages of the project: Background Analysis, Test Design, The Usability Test, and Test Findings.

Background Analysis

This stage will involve an analysis of the intended audience of your groups' section and a usability analysis of the section itself based on the criteria discussed by Neilson and Loranger. These sections will make up a portion of a Usability Test Plan.

Test Design

This stage will involve the creation of the Test Plan, a document with multiple sections, including: Scope, Purpose, Audience Analysis, Web Site Analysis, Scenarios, Questions (including pre- and post-questions), Data to be Collected, Roles, and a few others. A Note-taking Guide and IRB documents, including questionnaire and consent form, will also be prepared and handed in. A pilot test will also be conducted.

The Usability Test

This stage will involve the testing of subjects. Each group will test 4 subjects in a test that is designed to last 15 minutes (including pre- and post-test questions). Tests will take place during class on March 6 or March 13. We will use the laptops and will have access to screen recording software called iShowU. This software records everything that is completed on the screen as well as any sounds recorded (so you can ask participants to Think Aloud if you would like). We will have multiple rooms reserved so that there is some semblance of privacy.

Writing-Up the Findings

This stage will involve reporting the findings in at least three mediums: a written report (page length and specifics to be announced) and will include graphs, charts, screen shots, etc. The report will also be published online to your blogs, which will allow you to embed video if you would like. Groups will also prepare a 10 minute PowerPoint presentation which will be presented to the class (and anyone from IT if we choose to invite them). And, if time and access permits, groups will also design a poster presentation.

Important Dates

These dates are subject to change. Drafts of documents will be submitted in electronic to your group folder in the open area.

Week 2: 1/31
Project assignment handed out

Week 4: 2/14
Draft of Audience Analysis, Web Site Analysis, Scenarios, and Tasks (not including pre- and post questions) due at beginning of class

Week 5: 2/21
Draft of complete Test Plan, Note-taking Guide, and IRB documents due at beginning of class

Week 6: 2/28
Final Test Plan, Note-taking Guide, and IRB Documents due; pilot test

Week 7: 3/6
Test conducted; back-up pilot test date

Week 8: 3/13
Back-up test date

Week 11: 4/3
Written report due in class and online

Week 12: 4/10
PowerPoint presentations

Week 15: 5/1
Poster presentations

Groups

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Joe Sabatini	John Schoen	Gavin Hurley	Kathleen Lynch
Linda Travaglione	Karen Banks	Elena Pushaw	Rebecca Bland
John Flanagan	Chris Vicari	Mary Ann Kerwin	Jeb Murphy
Danielle Jubanyik	Sona Thaker	Melissa Brinkmann	Kim Haggerty