

User-experience testing test plan for si.edu refresh

Purpose

The main goals of the si.edu refresh project are to give the site a more modern look, and to improve the site's navigation and increase findability of content. User-experience testing will help us determine if the refreshed si.edu website is easy for visitors to navigate and find the information they seek and guide final modifications to taxonomy, layout, design, etc. of the refreshed site.

Proposed dates for testing

Any two days within the first two weeks of August

Problem Statements

1. Can users easily find frequently requested information and complete commonly completed tasks without confusion/frustration?
2. Are terms used for site navigation intuitive to users?
3. Does the design create obstacles for users trying to reach a unit Web site?
4. Does the website communicate the Secretary's key messages?

User Profiles

A total of 12 participants will be tested over two-days at the Smithsonian Information Center (the Castle). Participants will be on-site visitors, who are visiting the Smithsonian independently (not as part of a group), recruited from the public areas of the Castle. Participants will be selected to achieve representation from the following visitor type groups:

- First-time visitors
- Repeat visitors
- Visitors with families
- Visitors aged 18-24
- Visitors aged 55+
- "Local" visitors
- Visitors from other parts of the U.S.
- International visitors

Among these different visitor types, care will be taken to recruit a diverse group of participants.

Methodology

The usability test will be limited to 15 minutes per participant, and will consist of three simple parts:

1. Participant greeting and background questionnaire

Each participant will be personally recruited by a member of the testing team, with the offer of a small gift for participation. Participants will be led to the testing area where they will learn the purpose and objective of the test and fill out a simple pencil-and-paper questionnaire that gathers basic demographic and background information. The questionnaire will also contain one open-ended question: What is the Smithsonian and what does it do?

Also at this time, the issue of confidentiality will be broached, and participants will be informed that they are being observed, videotaped and audiotaped. Participants will be asked to sign an agreement to participate in the testing and for their participation to be recorded.

2. Performance Test

The performance test consists of a series of ten distinct tasks that participants will carry out on live Web pages hosted on a testing server. For the test, participants will begin at the website's homepage. Participants will be observed while they complete the following tasks:

- Find and write down hours and location of two museums you want to visit.
- Find information about how to get the Smithsonian by car or my public transport.
- Find information about an exhibition you want to see or an event you'd like to attend during your trip.
- Navigate to the website of your favorite Smithsonian museum.
- Navigate back to the main Smithsonian Web site.

- Now, think of a topic that interests you. Find out what the Smithsonian has to offer on that topic.
- Imagine that you want to become a member of the Smithsonian, navigate to the sign-up page.
- Imagine that you would like to make a donation to the Smithsonian, navigate to the donation form.
- Imagine that you would like to sign-up for or renew your subscription to Smithsonian Magazine, navigate to the proper page.
- Look up opportunities for volunteering, interning or working for the Smithsonian.

3. Verbal open-ended question and participant debriefing

After all tasks are completed or time expires, each participant will be debriefed by the test monitor with the debriefing session audiotaped. Debriefing will include:

- Test monitor reads aloud participants written response to the question, “What is the Smithsonian and what does it do?” and asks the participant if after visiting the Smithsonian Web site, would he/she like to change or add to his/her answer.
- Test monitor asks participant for his/her impressions of the site.
- Test monitor asks about specific errors or problems observed during the test.

After the debriefing session, participants will be thanked for their effort, given the gift for participation and released.

Test environment and equipment requirements

The test environment will be set-up either in a VIARC office in the corridor leading to the Castle Commons or in a roped-off area near the Visitor Information Desk. Required equipment includes:

- Desk or table
- Chair
- PC or laptop w/ network access and UX testing software installed
- Pens and paper

- Video camera
- Audio recording device

Staffing needs

1. **Recruiter/Test Monitor Assistant** – Selects and recruits participants, facilitates part 1 of test, assists test monitor through parts 2 and 4 of test by operating video and audio-recording equipment.
2. **Test Monitor** – Facilitates parts 2 to 4 of test, observing and taking notes throughout

Evaluation Measures

The following evaluation measures will be collected and calculated:

1. The average time to complete each task
2. Error classification
 - a. **Observation and comments** – The test monitor notes when participants have difficulty or show frustration at completing a task.
 - b. **Noncritical errors** – An individual participant makes a mistake but is able to recover and complete the task
 - c. **Critical errors** – An individual participant makes a mistake and is not able to recover and complete the task
3. Percentage of participants who respond to open-ended question in stage four of the test with one of the Secretary's key messages including, but not limited to:
 - Any of the four grand challenges
 - The Smithsonian is a vibrant and exciting place
 - The Smithsonian is more than exhibitions, it conducts relevant research and contributes to education
 - The value of collections care and collections based research