

Class 43: World Usability Day

Held: Tuesday, 14 November 2006

Summary: Today, in honor of *World Usability Day*, we conduct a small usability study.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Lab: Usability.
- Reading: Usability.

Due

- HW14.

Notes:

- Dr. Davis teaches today.
- EC: In the midst of making, Tuesday November 14, The Dance Studio (BCA 181), 4:30-6:15 pm.
- Reading for Wednesday: Merge Sort.

Overview:

- Usability, introduced.
- Lab/Study.
- Reflection.

Usability Analysis

- Responsible computer scientists worry not just whether their algorithms work, but how their algorithms are used.
- One issue that they consider is the societal context of their algorithms.
- Another is how easy their algorithm (or, more generally, their program, is to use).
- A major subfield of CS is now Human-Computer Interaction (HCI).
- A subfield of HCI is usability analysis, the techniques by which we explore how easy (or hard) it is to use the products we build.
- Today, you will participate in a simple usability study.

Lab/Study

- Follow the instructions.
- You will rotate roles of facilitator, observer, and participant.

Reflection

- What was the most difficult aspect of playing each role? The most rewarding aspect?
- In what different contexts do people use alarm clocks? Are different aspects of usability important in those contexts?
- Have you encountered usability problems in your own everyday use of alarm clocks?
- Which clock did you find the most usable? Least usable? Why?
- Which clock do you think was the most expensive? Least expensive?
- Should we use this exercise in CSC 151 again? When?

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