CSCU9N5 Practical 5 - Design 3: Testing

BEFORE THE PRACTICAL:
Read chapter 10 of Don't Make Me Think! (3rd edition) (the 2nd edition version is available as a pdf http://sensible.com/downloads/DMMTchapter09_for_personal_use_only.pdf) and/or watch Krug's usability testing video for Rocket Surgery Made Easy.

Testing your product, be it software, hardware, a multimedia presentation or a web site, is essential. Some of this you can do yourself, as the designer, such as functionality testing, and basic validation: does the product behave as you expected? Some you really need other people to help you with, to check your design. This is more about usability: did you make a design that works for other people? This week you're going to run some user tests and develop your group work skills.

Testing you can do on your own
Here is a handy checklist to remind you of the issues to consider (from www.usereffect.com). This is specific to web sites, but many of the points are relevant to software and multimedia presentations too.

Accessibility
1. Site Load-time Is Reasonable
2. Adequate Text-to-Background Contrast
3. Font Size/Spacing Is Easy to Read
4. Flash & Add-ons Are Used Sparingly
5. Images Have Appropriate ALT Tags
6. Site Has Custom Not-found/404 Page

Identity
7. Company Logo Is Prominently Placed
8. Tagline Makes Company's Purpose Clear
9. Home-page Is Digestible In 5 Seconds
10. Clear Path to Company Information
11. Clear Path to Contact Information

Navigation
12. Main Navigation Is Easily Identifiable
13. Navigation Labels Are Clear & Concise
14. Number of Buttons/Links Is Reasonable
15. Company Logo Is Linked to Home-page
16. Links Are Consistent & Easy to Identify
17. Site Search Is Easy to Access

Content
18. Major Headings Are Clear & Descriptive
19. Critical Content Is Above The Fold
20. Styles & Colors Are Consistent
21. Emphasis (bold, etc.) Is Used Sparingly
22. Ads & Pop-ups Are Unobtrusive
23. Main Copy Is Concise & Explanatory
24. URLs Are Meaningful & User-friendly
25. HTML Page Titles Are Explanatory

Specifically for web pages:
- use both HTML and CSS validators
- check your website in a number of browsers, at different window sizes
- use colour blindness testing (gmazzocato.altervista.org/colorwheel/wheel.php)
- use automated Web accessibility evaluation tools such as WAVE (wave.webaim.org)

Of course there are other kinds of testing. Do you meet standards? How is site visibility on major search engines and how can you improve visibility? Is the site secure? Are you meeting sensible performance metrics? Is the site being marketed suitably? We won't cover these today.
It's such a big topic that there are many checklists on the WWW to help ensure you've got it right http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/06/29/45-incredibly-useful-web-design-checklists-and-questionnaires/

Testing in a group
Some very simple, but useful, usability testing can be carried out by getting a user to try out your product, running through some tasks, describing what they're doing, being observed by the designer. The simplest form is Steve Krug's "Get it" testing. This is similar to 5-second testing and the Trunk test. "Get it" testing is just what it sounds like: show them the site to see if they get it: do they understand the purpose of the site, how it's organized, how it works, and so on.

Form into groups of three people. Each of you will take turns in being
- the user
- the facilitator
- the observer

We'll run multiple tests, so there will be a chance to switch roles.

Instructions for the User
Your job is to do the tests and say what you're doing out loud. Be yourself. Follow the instructions given by the test master and be sure to keep talking about what you see and why you choose an action.

Instructions for the Facilitator
Your job is to make the user feel comfortable, and to tell them what the tasks are you want them to do. Make sure they keep talking to you. You are not there to tell them what to click on or to explain the web page to them. Follow the test script overleaf.

Instructions for the Observer
You watch what's happening, listen to what the user says, and make notes about what you think this means for the web site. We will be collecting in the notes at the end to copy, so please write legibly. Read the test script so you know what happens in advance.

Instructions about today's product
We're testing the new University web pages, on mobile and desktop. We'll do this for CSCU9N5, so you are already familiar with these pages. Try to see them with fresh eyes.

Final summary
We want to compare the different versions of the product. We'll do this by a show of hands. Which do you find easier to use: Canvas (desktop) or Canvas (smartphone/tablet)? Which would you prefer to use, should you have the choice?

Test plan and script 1 (adapted from Krug's usability testing script)

Introduce yourself and explain that we're testing the web pages in a variety of ways.

Explain which one we're doing here: Canvas on phone or tablet, or Canvas desktop. Start at the Canvas dashboard.

First, I'm going to ask you to look at this web page and tell me what you make of it: what strikes you about it, whose web page you think it is, what can you/are you expected to do here, and what it's for. Just look around and do a little narrative. Don't click on anything yet.

Let them do this for 1 minute.

Thanks. What do you think about the layout of the web page, and the colour scheme?

Let them do this for 1 minute.

Now, navigate to the specific Canvas pages for CSCU9N5. As before, look at this web page and tell me what you make of it: what strikes you about it, whose web page you think it is, what can you/are you expected to do here, and what it's for. Just look around and do a little narrative. Don't click on anything yet.

Let them do this for 2 minutes.

Thanks. What do you think about the layout of the web page, and the colour scheme?

Let them do this for 1 minute.

Thanks. Now I'm going to ask you to try doing some specific tasks. I'm going to read each one out loud. We'll learn a lot more about how well the pages work that way. And again, as much as possible, it will help us if you can try to think out loud as you go along.

Facilitator: choose one of the tasks below and then ask them to carry it out. Follow up on any questions or points of ambiguity.

1. Ask a question about module organization, e.g when are the lectures, when is the first practical session, are there tutorials in week 6, who is the module coordinator?
2. Sign up to attend the Monday at 2pm practical session.
3. When is the assignment due? Can you find the specification of what you have to do for it? How do you submit it? When will you receive feedback?
4. What is your grade so far?
5. How do you catch up if you miss a lecture?
6. What is the recommended course book? Is it in the library?
7. Send a message to the module coordinator to say you're having a great time, learning lots of new stuff on this module.
8. Post a question on the discussion forum, asking who has completed practical 5.
9. Modify your notifications so that you only get an email once a week.
10. Has there been an announcement about listening to the radio?

Ask "Any other feedback?", and then repeat with another task. Do this twice more (three tasks in total).

Thanks, that was very helpful.

If you'll excuse me for a minute, I'm just going to see if the people on the team have any follow-up questions they'd like me to ask you.

Consult with the observer to see if there's anything else to ask. Feel free to come up with new tasks here if there's something that you'd like to test about Canvas which hasn't been covered.

If not, we're done. Thank the user.

Now do this again, switching roles. Choose different set up this time.