**Access Sheridan Re-Design**

**Luka Necajev**

**Daniel Morrison**

**Brent Sterling**

**Qingquing Wu**

**The Initial Proposal**

Our team decided to do a complete rework of access Sheridan; with the goal being to bring Access Sheridan into line with modern web design techniques and trends. This core idea to fix the dysfunctional mess of access Sheridan has not changed much, though over time we have added some new features to access Sheridan to make it more like a one stop hub, as we will detail later in this document.

**Necessity of our product**

Before we begin detailing on our product however, we would like to take a moment to detail the current features of access Sheridan, along with its numerous problems. Access Sheridan is a website for students at our college with three main purposes

1. To manage courses by allowing you to see past grades, course history, credits, and giving the ability to switch courses.
2. Showing in general all the services a student at Sheridan has access to
3. To fill out and review official Sheridan documentation including payment, accessible learning, etc.

While the service does currently fulfil all the tasks listed above, it does so poorly in all cases where any given task is much harder to do usually due to one or more of the following reasons.

1. The information is obfuscated through several menus making it incredibly difficult to find.
2. The menus are labeled in a confusing way making it hard to even know where to find things.
3. You are sent to pages which are complete dead ends, without the ability to go back due to some unknown error.
4. An outdated design which doesn’t follow modern standards.

Our frustrations with all of the above reasons motivated us to try and remake access Sheridan from the ground up.

**initial design**

Initially we had a few problems with the features that access Sheridan currently has, a big problem was the layout and navigation of the website. Another big problem, was it taking us to completely different pages, and holding too many multi step ways to complete a task.

To try to fix the website we…

1. Adding a navigation bar to the top of the site, including drop down menus to increase the speed of navigation. This included five main Categories.
2. Courses & Grades
3. Calendar
4. Offices (this would include things like accessible learning, and office of the registrar related items for payment info; along with any additional services).
5. Library Services (considering how often this is used, we thought it deserved it’s own category).
6. Software (available software to Sheridan students).
7. To make the content on any page more of a central focus, we laid out the content in the center and tried to focus on the main items that most users would go to access Sheridan for.
8. To make sure that the categories have correct lables , and not multiple different names so you have to search and try to find things that should not be hard to find
9. And finally, to cull any and all unnecessary pages, especially focusing on the ones that would literally lead to errors.

**Insights and Project Reflections**

Thanks to completing the project, we have a much better understanding of how important it is to take the initiative and have a leader in the group, another thing that the group learned, was how important it is to stay on top of the assignments and to keep following up on what your group is doing. Another thing that I found out, was that people have trouble following templates, so you should explain it in detail how you want it to be done, so that there is not much more work being done for the revisions. Another thing that was really interesting to find out, was how useful user testing was. If we had not user tested, we would have some major layout issues; although our layout issues were easy to fix, others issues can come up, that might not be so easy to fix, so it is a very good investment to do user testing and make sure that things are made well the first time, so you don’t have to do as much work later.

**Insights Learned During the Project**

At first, our group was a complete mess. We had no proper communication between each other or any separation of work. Due group members not responding, or not doing a good enough job the work ended up being done by one person for multiple assignments. To fix this we had to improve communication, and make channels for us to communicate easier, I also had to push and force people to do things by constantly reminding and asking if they did the items I asked them to do. One way I did this was giving well defined roles; based on the areas that everyone in our group exceled in. To conclude, while not directly related to user testing this opportunity has helped us learn that you have to take push your co-workers to put the same amount of effort as you while working together to achieve a good goal of completing your tasks on time and in a manner where you will not get fired.

The second benefit comes from a simple realisation that our pre conceived notions of what the user wants in the end is more often then not, completely contrary to what our vision is. Before talking to our users, we genuinely thought our product was perfect. To the extent where if we were not forced to in class, we would have likely not bothered user testing and just stopped developing. However, because the project required user testing, we went out and tested; and were shocked to find many of the flaws, critiques, and changes we had to make. The users didn’t see the same perfection we say, and wanted things changed, and features added. In conclusion this experience helped us realise that us as developers shouldn’t be making assumptions about the user wants, and that we should really ask them and get them to tell us what they want. As the saying goes the Customer is always right.

User testing; is an invaluable part of software development that everyone should have experience in. Even the areas of development you wouldn’t associate with user testing like back-end development benefit from it; after all they need to know what features the user wants. We believe the chance to do a mock user test has been invaluable in teaching us what the world of software development is like.

This chance to do user testing has taught us many things. It has taught us that as developers we can’t simply make assumptions on what the user wants, and that their opinion is something we should value above our own. It has allowed us to see how to properly work together in a group to release a product. The amalgamation of these facts has drilled the idea into our heads: User testing is one of the most important aspects of development.

**Mistakes**

When making a change, you should make sure that you have covered your tracks and have checked to see if it is functional before making people try it, because you can have a problem where you make a page, and have one big error, and it screws up the rest of the pages and your user test because of it.

Another mistake was that group members did not take initiative to complete the assignments thinking that they were easy and that it’s a one-person job; while instead we found out that it was much harder, and more time and effort should have been put into certain things

**Stumbles and Fumbles**

A fumble that we had was when we were doing our user tests, that when a test was conducted, it was conducted without using the navigation bar of our project. This mistake cost a lot of time because the users complained about some things not being easy to find, when all they had to do was hover over the navigation to get the specific items .This was a tester problem not a user problem as the tester should have told them that that is where to see the navigations on hover.(because you cant have a hover option on visio)

**Greatest Achievement**

I feel like we did a very good job with the wireframes and we think that if Access Sheridan implemented the design of our website, more people would use it more often, and the school can improve the ways that they communicate essential information through Access Sheridan.

**Future improvements**

The main improvement I would say we could add to our product in the future is to make our product a true one stop hub for students; including everything a student would need on one single site. Currently our product requires a companion product like slate that teachers are using to complete their marking and giving out information. This however could be made unnecessary by simply having a website with a larger scope, that would have tabs to offer that information. Giving the students a single site to do emails, check courses, and in general manage their experience at any educational institution. Another improvement is completing the rest of the navigation pages and seeing if the items included into the design are feasible to code and are would take too much money and would be too hard to implement into the design.