

Informed Consent Form

Understanding the Software Documentation Search Behavior of Novice Developers

Principal Investigator:

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Purpose:

The knowledge needed by software developers is captured using many forms of documentation, written by different individuals, and communicated to a variety of audiences. The main challenge for developers working with this heterogeneous documentation is the lack of a clear navigation structure, which could save developers time, ensure that relevant documentation is considered, and assist developers in learning what knowledge is stored where. In our research, we extract the core concepts from the documentation using various techniques, such as natural language processing (NLP), and surface these concepts in order to help developers navigate their documentation.

The expected value of this research project is to make it easier and more efficient for software developers to navigate the heterogeneous documentation landscape. If software developers can consume documentation in a more efficient way, they will likely be more productive.

Study Procedures:

You are being invited to participate in this study. You will be asked to use a tool that we have developed whenever you search for documentation. The tool is web-based and will integrate with the documentation landscape that you are already familiar with. We will collect data in two ways: For one, we will record your interaction with the tool automatically. In addition, we will you some questions about your programming experience at the beginning of the study, and then about your impressions of the tool afterwards.

By participating in the study, you solemnly engage yourself not to share your account. All COMP 303 students are eligible to an account whether they participate or not.

Confidentiality:

All personal and identifying data will be kept confidential through the use of codes when referring to you. All records from the study will be protected by a password. Only the investigators and project programmers under the direct supervision of the principal investigator will have access to the confidential data. We expect to disseminate the results through conference presentations and publications in conference proceedings and journals, potentially including on-line appendices.

The course instructor will not be aware of whether or not you choose to participate in the study until after the final grades are submitted. All activities related to setting up accounts will be handled by the co-investigator who is not involved in grading COMP 303.

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Potential Harms and Risks:

You might have privacy concerns related to the capturing of your interactions with the tool we provide. If you do not wish to share this data, you can opt out of the study at any time. Your participation in the study is completely optional and will have no impact on your COMP 303 grade. The assignments in COMP 303 will only be used as a pedagogical tool and not be graded.

Time:

You will be able to use the TaskNav tool throughout the entire term.

Remuneration/Compensation:

You will be entered in a draw for gift certificates from an online store. Each certificate will be worth \$100. Chances of winning a gift certificate will be 1 in 20.

Contact:

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Prof. Martin Robillard at martin@cs.mcgill.ca. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences to treatment or class standing.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. Your signature also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Participant Signature

Date

Participant Name (please type)

