Usability Evaluation

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We conducted a usability evaluation for UVa Collab site. We browsed through and examined the entire website and looked into different courses and the tabs associated with the courses. According to the five Shneiderman's criteria, our rankings for the criteria are as following (from most important to least important): avoiding user errors, speed of performance, subjective satisfaction, time to learn, and retention over time. We gave such rankings due to the following reasons: (1). avoiding user errors must be the most important goal, given the fact that all UVa students use Collab to submit homework, check their grades, and download resources related to their courses, so we don't want errors in crucial data to happen. (2). Speed of UI performance should be the second concern because of the intense use by UVa students. Far interaction points and large number of mouse clicks to accomplish a task would waste a lot of time. (3). We put retention over time as the least important criteria among all, because UVa students use collab everyday, which makes it impossible for them to forget the UI features. (4). For the rest two, we weigh subjective satisfaction more, since this is going to be the UI that all UVa students face everyday, and how comfortable they feel should be taken seriously, while the UI learning process is more like a one-time thing.

For the overall evaluation of user interface, we provide our reasonings for each score as below: In terms of use of terminology, Collab does a pretty good job (the terminology is easy to understand and is consistent among different courses), so we gave 5 on all questions related to terminology; the instructions provided in the Collab are specific and accurately address the task; colors of the webpage is good and smooth, and the layouts of course tabs do help students to track the info they are looking for, except sometimes different professors tend to display different course tabs or course tabs in different sequences. Students can customize their own webpage by selecting their own courses to display on the webpage, but in general there isn't much they can do for customization. There's no error messages available to students, and it is almost

impossible to solve the errors on students' end. Same thing apples for the online help section that when it comes to some severe problems, it is often hard to solve them on students' end.

In a nutshell, the usability of collab is decent. The navigation of website is fairly clear, and the displayed features adequately include the most significant functions that Collab is supposed to have: a website where UVa students can have access to all the resources they need for classes they are taking - homework, grades, lecture slides, syllabus, etc. The UI performance also has high speed. Generally, a good number of interactions/mouse clicks to accomplish a task is to be as few as possible. In the Collab sites, the average amount of interactions/mouse clicks to accomplish a task is around 3. For example, if you want to check the grade for a specific course, after you login, the only steps you need to do is click on the coure tab and then click on the 'Gradebook Classic' tab. Also the interaction points, such as buttons and text boxes, are close to each other so that students don't need to hover on the page for too long. The number of keyboard-to-mouse switches for Collab is also very low. Unless filling out a textbox, almost everything else can be done by just clicking the mouse.