Introduction to User Needs Assessment

Understanding User Needs

Kentaro Toyama

Associate Professor, School of Information

Do users want anything else with their soda?

What methods of payment do users prefer?

What do users want when a machine fails?

Why do a user needs assessment?

To understand why people would want to use a product or service

To learn how people actually use or don't use a product or service

To see what people like or dislike about a product or service

To hear what *else* people might want from a product or service

When to do a user needs assessment?

Before any design phase

- *Before designing something new*
- *Before a re-design*

Any time questions or problems arise

- *What causes users to want our service?*
- *Why don't customers go beyond the home page?*
- *What frustrates users of our product?*
- *How could we improve the client's experience?*

"Needs" are not always urgent.

Origin of "needs assessment"

- *1960s*
- *Roger Kaufman, an educational technology researcher*

In UX, "needs" = needs, wants, preferences, quirks

- *Often focused on a product or service*
- *Pros and cons to taking a broader view*

Course Focus: Qualitative Research

Methodologies taught in this course

- *Interviews*
- *Observations*
- *Affinity walls*

Strengths of qualitative research

- *In-depth*
- *Broad range*
- *Hypothesis generation*
- *Causal explanations*

What This Course Does *Not* Cover

Other methodologies sometimes used in user needs assessments:

- *Work models*
- *Personas*
- *Market research*
- *Surveys and questionnaires*
- *Log analysis*
- *Document analysis*