Internships Evaluation Report

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Preface

Summary

This is an overall effective website, filled with useful information for students who are looking to learn about and find internships. Usability-wise, the website is easy to use and students can effectively find the information they are looking for rather quickly. While some of the links are broken, a majority of them are incredibly useful for students wishing to find an internship, and are laid out in a way that makes sense for the student. While some pages of information are a bit barren, for the most part the information is complete, and walks the student through step by step instructions on various issues regarding internships. This website would be an effective one for Virginia Tech to use, and could really help streamline the process and answer a multitude of questions for students in all aspects of the internships process.

Chapter

1

Introduction

This section is an introduction to our evaluation of the group from Creating User Documentation who wrote about internships at Virginia Tech.

Our Creating User Documentation class was split into four groups and each was assigned to complete a group project using DITA and Markdown, that would help users at Virginia Tech to complete a task. Now that the projects are done, we have each been assigned to do a peer evaluation of another group's project.

Our group has been tasked with reviewing the group who wrote about internships. We have been tasked with checking their project for issues related to the topics discussed in the book, *Developing Quality Technical Information* (DQTI) by Carey et al., and general usability.

Throughout our evaluation, you will find our assessments of successes of the internship group and things that could have been done more effectively. You will also see notes related to more specific points, such as clarity, concreteness, style, navigation, and others.

We will start with the quality evaluation based on DQTI, with specific principles defined and measured in the context of this site. Then we will assess the usability before finally providing recommendations for improvement.

With that, let's jump right in!

Chapter

2

Quality of Technical Writing

This section will review the quality of the writing based on the guidelines described in *Developing Quality Technical Information* by Carey et al.

Usability

The three guidelines that dictate effective usability are task orientation, accuracy, and completeness.

1. Task orientation involves writing content that caters to the user's goals. The WebHelp follows this guideline very well as there are step-by-step instructions on most of the pages, where applicable.
2. The accuracy guideline dictates that the information should not only cater to the user's needs, but also be accurate. Something notable is that this WebHelp is specifically for English majors seeking internship, but it does not explicitly state this anywhere on the site, it is merely implied. Internship requirements, procedures, and advisors are different for other departments. The site should either indicate on the welcome page that these internships are specific to the English Department or include information for other departments.
3. Completeness ensures that there is enough detail covered so that the user does not have to go back to the directions. On the Eligibility page, there is a line that prompts the user to click to an external link, but that is a broken link. Additionally, there isn't very much information on most of the pages under the "Get Started" menu.

Understanding

The three guidelines that primarily deal with effective understanding are clarity, concreteness, and style.

1. Clarity is making sure that the information is clear to the users. The information on this website is very clear, and most college students will be able to understand the information being presented.
2. Concreteness refers to being specific and definitc. The information in the website follows this guideline very well as it very specific to college students at Virginia Tech and helping them find an internship.
3. Style includes the writing style and convenetions such as active vs. passive use, capitalization, punctuation, etc. For the most part, the website follows this guideline, but sometimes switches between second and third person (see "How to Consult Your Advisor" and "Internships for Credit" pages).

Navigation

Navigation is the user's ability to easily find what they are looking for. This can be split into three guidelines as well: organization, retrievability, and visual effectiveness.

1. Organization refers to how the information is presented in the website. The information is very well organized, as the topics are sorted into various categories that make sense for the user, yet do not overwhelm them.
2. Retrievabiltiy is how easily the user can go from one topic to another and back, without getting lost. The website ranks very highly in retrievability, as there is a sidebar as well as the drop-down menu on every page allowing users to move from page to page without getting lost.
3. Visual effectiveness is a multi-faceted guideline that brings all the others together with a goal of encouraging users to interact with the site. The WebHelp accomplishes this by having a consistent design across all the pages. The navigation buttons are very clearly titled and allow users to quickly find what they are looking for. The color scheme is also easy on the eyes, enhancing accessbility for those who may have a visual impairment. All of the external links that are properly linked are displayed in a different color so that it is obvious to the user that it is a link.

Chapter

3

Usability Evaluation

Overall, the website was easy to use and filled with useful information and resources. As a student, I would want to visit this website simply for its abundance of links and resources. The following bullet points are positives and negatives regarding the usability of the website.

Positives

- Information is nicely organized, and all of the subtopics are placed into topics that make sense
- Within each page, the information is organized in a logical way (for example, there is information about unpaid internships followed by information about paid internships
- The layout of the pages make it look neat and organized, and are not too cluttered
- The drop-down menus at the top make it easy to find the information you are looking for

Negatives

- Some of the links (about 1/4) when clicked on are met with a 404 Error
- Some of the pages are filled with "notes" at the beginning of many sentences. This makes the page feel somewhat overwhelming, as it is bolded and draws my eye towards too many things at once. It also makes the information on that particular page harder to find, because everything is bolded so it seems important
- It is unclear to me whether the website is geared towards just English students or all students, as there are many specifics related to the English department but not enough to make me turn my back on the website if I weren't an English student

These negatives are very minor, and overall the website is super simple and easy to find the information you are looking for.

Chapter

4

Recommendations

Here are a few suggestions for making the WebHelp even better!

- Navigation Bar- There are many different ways to have a navigation bar bring you to the different pages of your website. While there isn't anything wrong with simply listing the topics horizontally, it is not the most aesthetically pleasing because of the number of topics. A more user-friendly navigation bar could be making less topics appear in the bar so as not to overwhelm users.

- Justify your color scheme- The red and black with blue text does not seem to have a purpose behind it. There is nothing wrong with it, but there doesn't seem to be a reason why these colors were used. This scheme does not work into the theme of the site.

- Fix the layout of the "Benefits of Internships" page- The layout here looks amiss. The text is to the left of the picture and it appears like the text was intended to be above, similar to a subheading. Fixing this will make the page look much better.

- Get a better title- Making the site titled simply "Internships" is not the best option. If this was a real resource for students to go to to learn about this subject, what would the name be? Try a more detailed and less general title.

- Site clarification- We weren't sure whether the site is intended for only English students, as there are many things specific to English students, or for all students at Virginia Tech, because there are a lot of generalities as well. Making the site more specific can help students visiting the site determine if they should stay on the site or look elsewhere. Naming the site "English Student Internships" or something along those lines could cause less frustration amongst visitors to the site as they try to determine if the information is pertinent to them or not.

This is a good site, but if these recommendations are considered, it could go from good to great!

Chapter

5

Conclusion

Here is our overall assessment of the internship group's site.

We found that this WebHelp was largely successful. The only things that we found an sort of issues with were related to accuracy and completeness. The only major omission had to do with clarifying whether this site was meant for any student or just English majors, although there were some links that didn't work.

With that said, we found it to be aesthetically pleasing and effective overall. It would actually be a great way for internship-seekers to gather information.