



The University of British Columbia
Department of Computer Science

201 – 2366 Main Mall
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Letter of Initial Contact

Revisitation of Code-Related Web Pages by Software Developers

We are contacting you to request your help in recruiting subjects for a study on how software developers use the web. The purpose of the project is to measure how often software developers return to code-related web pages they have previously visited, and determine which methods they use to find these pages (e.g. web search, bookmarks, or typing the address). The study will help us assess whether a tool to support web page revisitation could be useful to software developers. This study is funded by a gift from Microsoft Corporation.

This study is being conducted by Nick Sawadsky of the Department of Computer Science, under the supervision of Dr. Gail Murphy, also of the Department of Computer Science. This study is part of Nick's research towards an M.Sc. degree. The results of this research will be included in his M.Sc. thesis, which will be made available to the public in due course.

An individual who consents to participate in our study will be asked to provide no more than 30 minutes of their time. They will be asked to download and run a tool on their computer. The tool will extract a list of web pages visited from their web browser's history database. The tool will attempt to download each page in this list and classify it as development-related or non-development-related. Visits to well-known search engines, such as Google, will also be assigned to a separate category, but search keywords will not be recorded.

To assess classification accuracy, a random sample of the pages classified as development-related will be presented to the participant. They will be asked to indicate whether each page was categorized correctly.

Finally, a report will be generated. In this report, no details which might allow a specific web page to be identified (such as the page address or title) will be included. The participant will be given the opportunity to view the report before choosing whether to submit it.



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The main risk for an individual participating in the study is the loss of time required to run the tool.

The submitted reports will be kept confidential. Participants will be identified by numbers in any written publications. All reports collected will be kept in locked rooms, locked filing cabinets, or access-protected by password.

If you are willing to help recruit individuals in your organization for this study, please contact Nick by email at nicks@cs.ubc.ca. We will provide a recruitment email for you to post or forward within your organization.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to the study, please contact Gail Murphy at +1 604 822 5169.