
Human Computer Interaction

User Support

Lecture#14b



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User Support

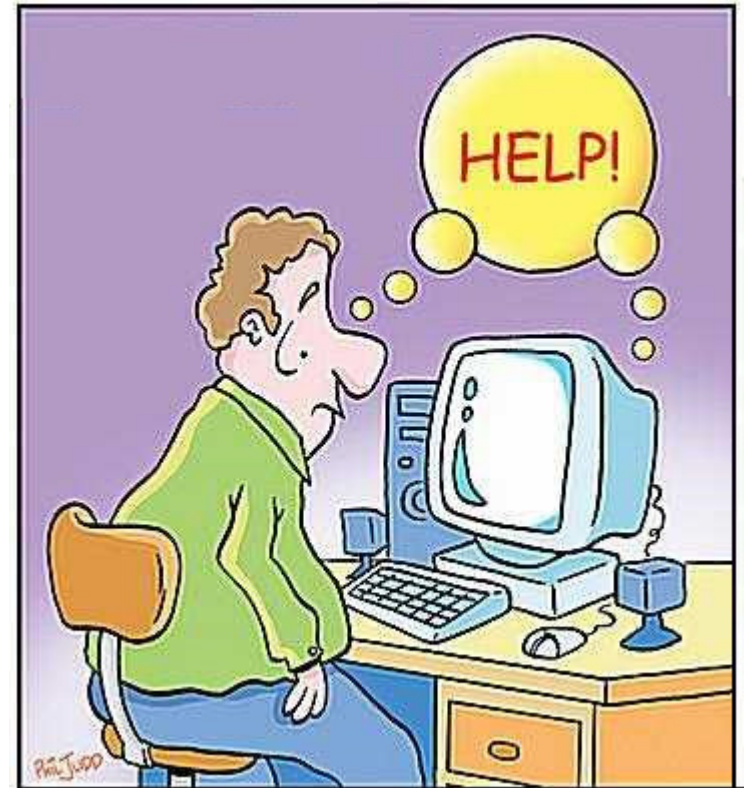
- Types of user support
 - Quick reference
 - Task specific help
 - Full explanation
 - Tutorial

User Support

- Provided by help systems and documentation
 - Help Systems - problem-oriented and specific
 - Documentation - system-oriented and general
 - Same design principles apply to both

Requirements

- Availability
 - User able to access help any time during interaction with the system
- Accuracy and completeness
 - Help matches and covers actual system behaviour
 - Should cover the whole system
- Consistency
 - Between different parts of the help system and paper documentation



Requirements (Contd...)

■ Robustness

- ❑ Help System – People in difficulty, System failure
- ❑ Correct error handling

■ Flexibility

- ❑ Allows user to interact in a way appropriate to experience and task
- ❑ Hyperlinks

■ Unobtrusiveness

- ❑ Does not prevent the user continuing with work



Approaches to User Support

- Command assistance
 - User requests help on particular command
 - *help java, help copy* etc.
 - Good for quick reference
 - Simple and Efficient
 - Assumes user know what to look for
 - Cannot cover the commands user does not know

Approaches to User Support

- Command prompts
 - Provide information about correct usage when an error occurs
 - Good for simple syntactic errors
 - Also assumes knowledge of the command

Approaches to User Support

- Context sensitive help
 - Help request interpreted according to context in which it occurs
 - Examples
 - Tool-Tips, MS Office What's this?, Web page roll-overs etc.

Approaches to User Support

- On-line tutorials

- User works through basics of application in a test environment
- Can be useful but are often inflexible
- Not intelligent – No information about user and his experiences
- May fail to recognize correct answers simply because it is not in the expected format

Approaches to User Support

- On-line documentation
 - Paper documentation is made available on computer
 - System Manual – Paper or Computer
 - Reading Text on paper is preferred
 - Constrained to one physical location
 - Online manual – Available to large number of users concurrently
 - Search capabilities
 - Hypertext used to support browsing

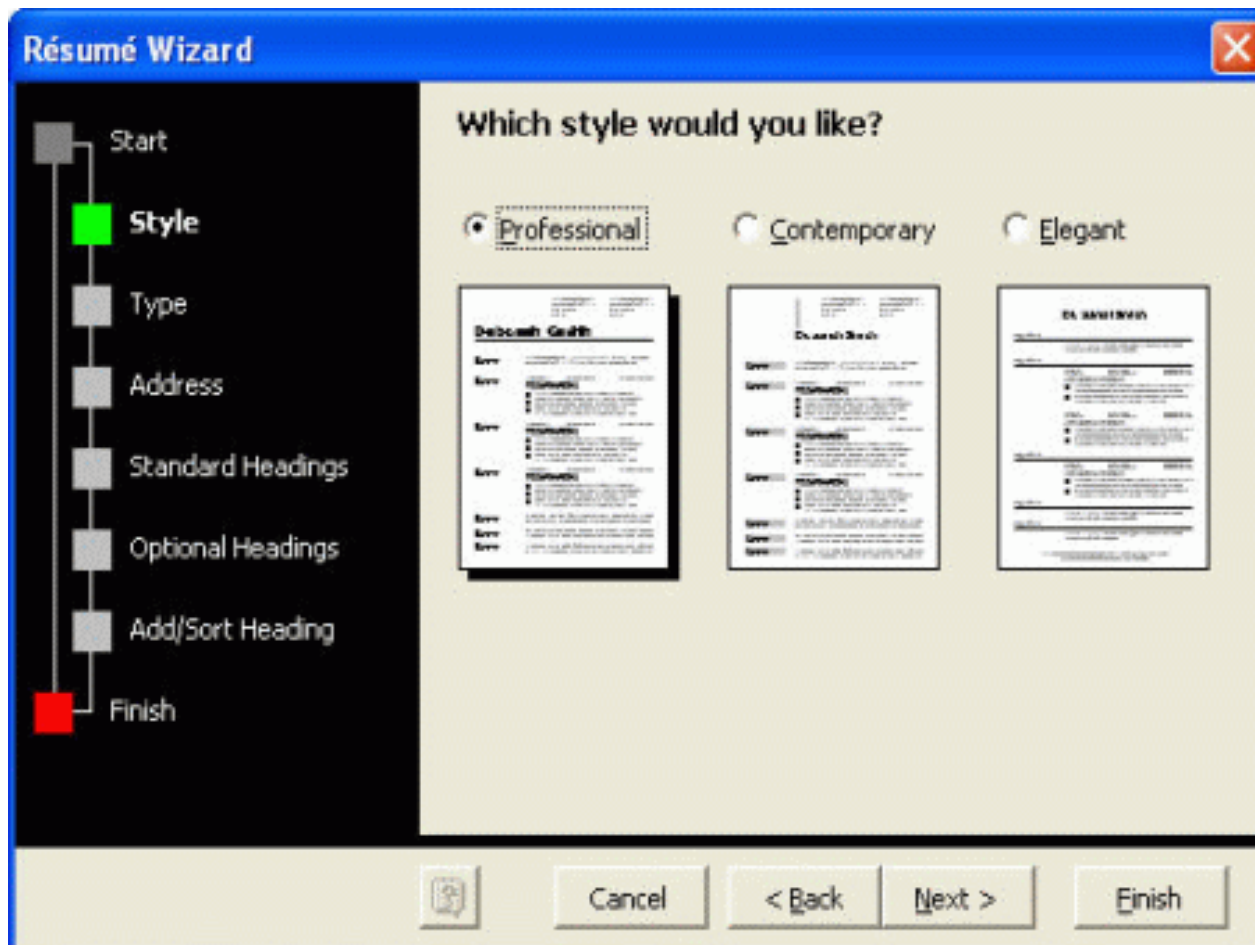
Approaches to User Support

■ Wizards

- Task specific tool leads the user through task, step by step, using user's answers to specific questions
- Example: resumé
- Useful for safe completion of complex or infrequent tasks
- Constrained task execution so limited flexibility
- A good designed wizard:
 - Must allow user to go back and forward
 - Must have a progress indicator



Approaches to User Support



Resume Wizard

Approaches to User Support

Résumé Wizard

What is your name and mailing address?

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

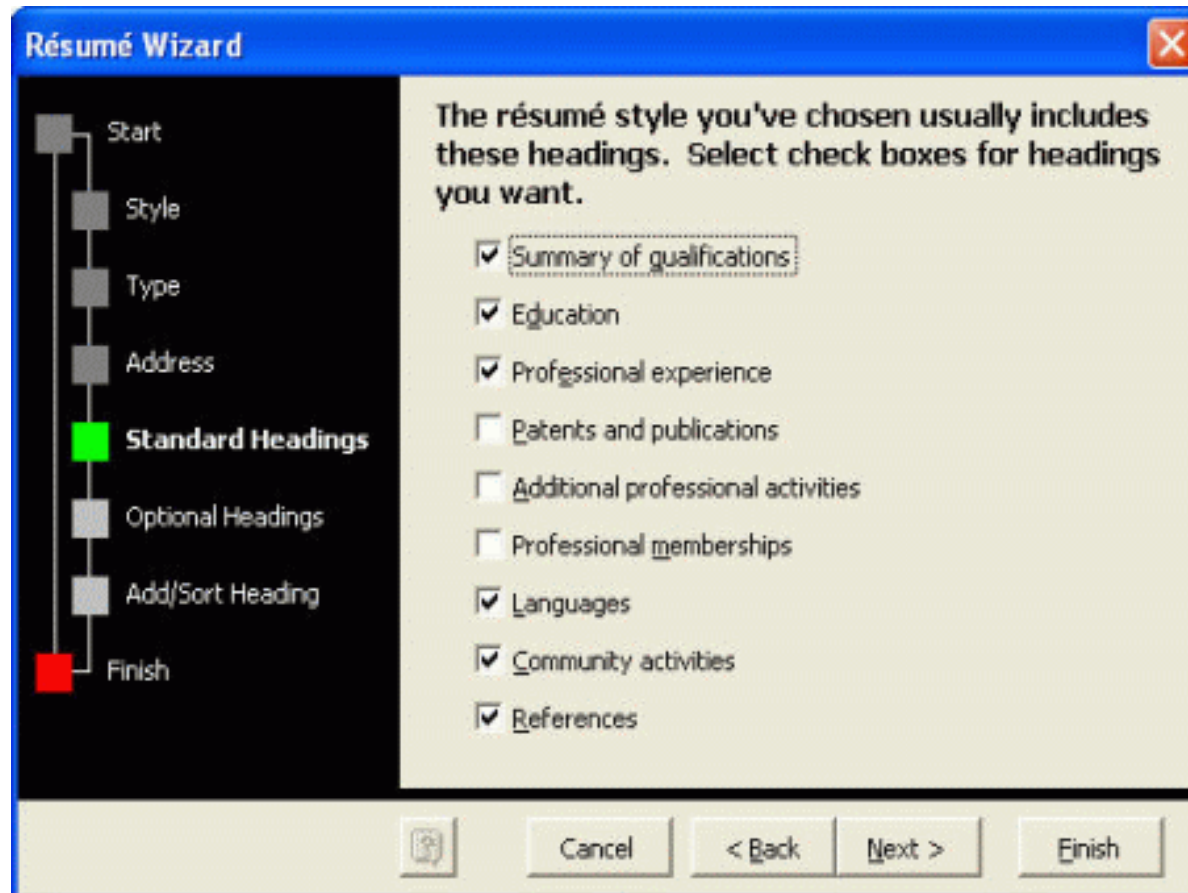
Email:

Start
Style
Type
Address
Standard Headings
Optional Headings
Add/Sort Heading
Finish

Help Cancel < Back Next > Finish

Resume Wizard

Approaches to User Support



Resume Wizard

Approaches to User Support

■ Assistants

- Monitor user behaviour and offer contextual advice
- Can be irritating e.g. MS paperclip

It looks like you're writing a crap song.
Can I help?



Designing User Support

- User support is not an `add on'
 - Should be designed integrally with the system

Presentation Issues

- How is help requested?
 - Command, button, Menu ...
- How is help displayed?
 - New window, whole screen, split screen, pop-up boxes, hint icons
- Effective presentation requires
 - Clear, familiar, consistent language
 - Instructional rather than descriptive language
 - Avoidance of blocks of text
 - Clear indication of summary and example information

Implementation Issues

- Structure of help data
 - Single file
 - File hierarchy
 - Database
- What resources are available?
 - Screen space
 - Memory capacity
 - Speed

References

- Chapter 11 - Human Computer Interaction by Dix et al.

