



# Website Redesign and the Devil's Work

CALI 2003, Duke University

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# I'm the Web Manager, and What I Want Doesn't Matter

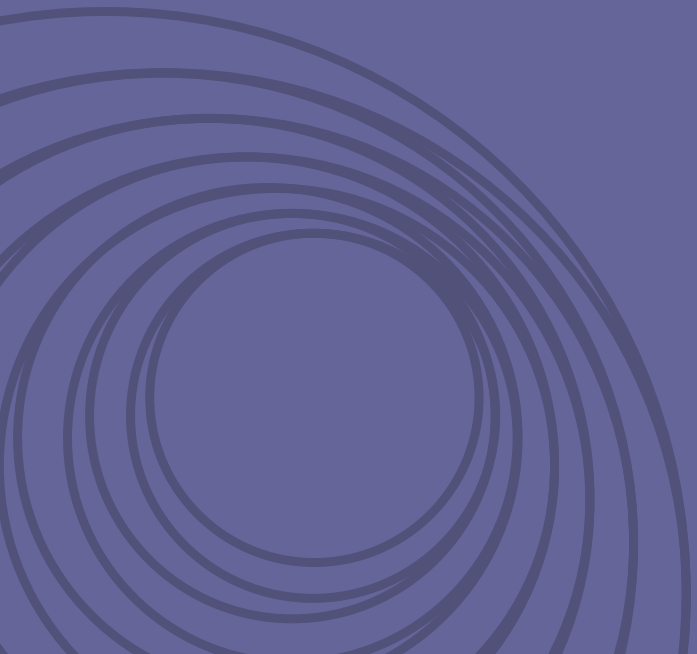
- I don't use the Web sites I create...
- In most cases, designers and programmers are not the ones that will use it...
- Neither are the department managers and executives...
- End user opinions are most important. But at launch time, it's too late to change much.
- The Web is a new medium, different from paper or television – new rules apply.
- You can't change people (like it or not) – but you can change your site.



I'm not a real user,  
but I play one on TV

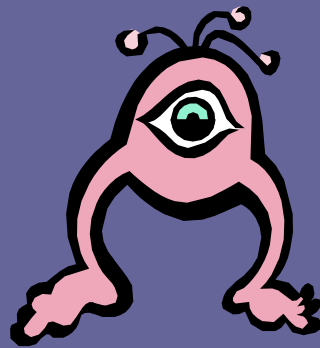


# What are we talking about today?

- Focusing on Users: When, how, why, what, where
  - From the Front Lines: User behaviors interpreted
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# Differences between users and “us”

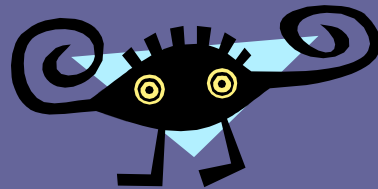
- We’re “power users”
- We know our organization
- We know our site – the flow, how deep the site is
- They look for info or to complete a task
  - Scan for keywords
  - See text first, graphics last
- They don’t know your layout – so they guess
- They view the center of the screen, then look randomly
- About half of users immediately look for search
- They tend to report positively on both design and load time – if they can accomplish their task
- They blame themselves for “mistakes”



Don't look now, but I think it's following us.

# Asking Users: informal user testing


- Not focus groups, not surveys
- Start early; use paper prototypes if you have to
- Move quickly (you're aiming at a moving target)
- Find 4-8 people; don't worry too much about profiling
- Test one at a time in a realistic setting
- Give each a realistic task
- Be supportive of the user; explain that there are no wrong answers – it's the product being tested
- Ask them to think out loud; remind them occasionally
- Observe what they do in addition to what they say
- Let them struggle a little (but not too much)
- Be the expert: interpret results
- Address biggest obstacles, then retest



“Where's the  
'home' button?”

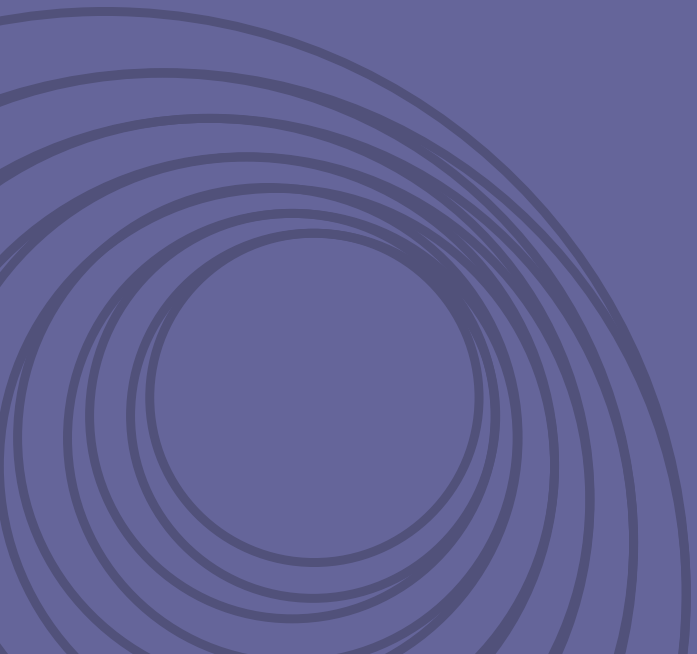


# From the Front Lines: Good Ideas

- **Provide a focus.** Give your users a clear starting place, and make it be the most important thing.
  - **Avoid clutter.** Embrace white space and achieve inner peace.
  - **Avoid distractions.** Motion may amuse you, but it distracts me.
  - **No more splash screens.** Or make them opt-in links.
  - **Organize around tasks.** Does it really matter what department has provided this section of the site?
  - **Humanize.** Be as friendly as you can – but don't breathe on me.
  - **Good writing matters.**
  - **Simplify and consolidate.** It's easier for users, and you'll appreciate it when updates are due.
  - **Square graphics are ads.** Especially at any screen edge, users ignore them.
  - Avoid popup windows.
  - **Ease change.** Sweeping changes are dramatic, but also unsettling. Incremental changes help ease the transition.
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# From the Front Lines: Home Pages & Category Headers

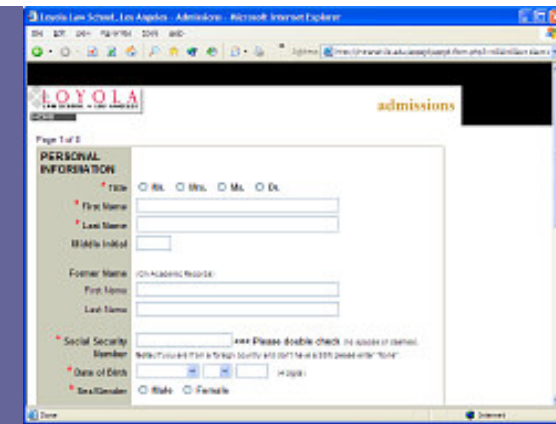
- **User Goal:** Get somewhere else
  - Place **#1 choice** in the center
  - Limit choices and differentiate (add synonyms, avoid jargon)
  - **Limit “noise”** such as feel-good intros
  - Avoid **scrolling** (make it clear)
  - Keep it fresh – change relevant stuff
  - Know your **key audience** – design for them
  - **Key Elements:** Branding, Navigation, Search, Contact Us
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# From the Front Lines: Content Pages



- **User Goals:** Where am I? What can I do here? Is this where I want to be? Where else can I go? Is this information reliable?
- Use **signposts:** branding, breadcrumbs, headlines, dates
- **Write** for the Web (pyramid)
- Summarize text – put critical info “above the fold”
- **Highlight** key words
- Create information **chunks**
- **Related navigation** is key (and a link to Home)
- **Scrolling** is OK if it’s clear
- Be careful retasking documents – limit PDF use

# From the Front Lines: Applications Pages

A screenshot of a web browser displaying the Loyola University admissions application page. The page is titled "LOYOLA" and "admissions". It shows a "PERSONAL INFORMATION" section with various form fields and radio buttons for gender and marital status. The fields include Title, First Name, Last Name, Middle Initial, Former Name, First Name, Last Name, Social Security Number, Date of Birth, and Email Address. There are also checkboxes for "Male" and "Female". The browser window title is "Loyola Law School - Los Angeles - Admissions - Microsoft Internet Explorer".

- **User Goals:** Accomplish a task
- **Be clear** what the task is, how long it will take, what info is required
- **Limit navigation** and distractions
- Consider **several steps** rather than one, long block
- Use **default buttons** for “next” or “submit” (you know, the ugly ones)
- **Provide a linear path** through each page (avoid requiring both vertical and horizontal activity)
- **Limit instructions.** Users only read instructions if there are no form fields to fill in (and maybe not even then)
- Be clear with labels; be consistent; use best practices
- **Provide useful feedback** (both errors and successes)
- Avoid asking for information you don't need
- **Support the back button.** It's the only one users know how to use.
- Consider both power and novice users



# Resources

- “Don’t Make Me Think,” Steve Krug, Circle Press
- [www.uie.com](http://www.uie.com)
- [www.useit.com](http://www.useit.com)
- [www.webpagesthatsuck.com](http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com)



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