Focus Group:
Arkansas-water-center.uark.edu

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University Relations
Digital Design and Development
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Executive Summary

Navigation

Three out of four participants though the process of submitting a water sample “confusing” and “clunky.” All participants like the online form and would like the form to be interactive.

Three out of four participants thought the newsletter was easy to locate.

Three out of four participants thought the website should showcase more projects.

All participants agreed that the information on the site was easy to locate.

All participants agreed that finding data about the Illinois River would be difficult for the general public.

Recommendations

- Consider providing a step by step guide for the water quality lab page to simplify the process.
- Make the online form interactive.
- Change the terminology of the data reports to a name that is shorter but similar to the project title. This will help with search engine optimization and usability.

Content

Three out of four participants thought the website should showcase more projects than just a special project.

Two participants thought grants were difficult to locate because of the terminology.

For the participants who had been to the office, they liked the specific instructions to the building and stated that the Google Maps directions are not as specific as they need to be.

Three out of four participants agreed that a trend analysis of publications with highlights would be helpful as opposed to only an entire publication.
Recommendations

- Add more projects to the site and push those out on social media for more exposure.
- Use “grants” or “104B grant” as the key word to simplify the terminology for the audience as opposed to “104B.”
- Provide additional directions to the specific location of the office on an interior page.
- Provide trend analysis and highlights on the site and distribute to the public on Facebook or Twitter.

Detailed Findings

Action Item: Go through the process of submitting a water sample.
00:02:04

Question: Was this an easy or difficult process? Please explain. Should this be more prominent or stay where it is?
00:07:25

- Participant #3 found the process difficult as he was not familiar with the site. He tried to figure out where to go but then decided to Google it.
- Participant #1 found it right away. Preferred filling the form out online rather than printing out the form and filling in by hand. This may make it hard to match the online form with the mailed in or dropped off sample. Also suggested that the form allow tab to next line feature to make process quicker.
- Participant #2 searched for Arkansas Water Resource Center. She works with the center but finding it was not easy. Found water quality lab page confusing. He also said he would rather have an online form. Participant #3 agreed. Felt the process was clunky and confusing. Both would probably just print and fill it out. Both would rather do on line if it was easier to do.

Action Item: Locate where you can subscribe to the newsletter.
00:11:33
Question: Was this easy or difficult to find? If you don’t already, would you subscribe to this newsletter?
00:14:30
- Participants #1, #2 and #3 felt that the option to subscribe to the newsletter was easy but does not currently subscribe.
- Participant #4 currently subscribes to the newsletter but found the option to do so difficult. She scrolled to the bottom of the page but didn’t find the option until she scrolled back up. Felt like the option blends in with the other tabs.

Action Item: Locate the water quality data information about the Illinois River Watershed.
00:16:45

Question: How did you navigate to this information? Was this an easy or difficult task? Please explain.
00:19:27
- Participant #2 felt the process was somewhat difficult. They used the search tool and typed Illinois River Reports. Participant #3 followed the same process and also found this difficult. Participant #3 also did not like that there were not any dropdowns to help locate where the information was.
- Participant #4 went to the Water Quality Lab, Data Reports, Public, Project title. Participant #1 used the same process. They both found this process easy. Participant #4 stated that this process may be difficult for the general public and suggested making a section for Data Reports listed by water shed.
- Participant #3 stated that the site has no dropdown boxes and as a new visitor to the page, those are very helpful.

Action Item: Find some of the projects the AWRC is working on.
00:24:40

Question: Do you think this information appeals to the audience of this website? Why, why not?
00:26:35
- Participant #1 feels that this information does appeal to this website’s audience. She also likes how the projects are broken down into sections.
• Participant #2 feels that the site was easy to find and does appeal to the audience. Doesn’t like that the only items listed under Projects are special projects. Would like to see feature stories. Participant #3 agrees.

• Participant #4 feels that the information does appeal to the audience and is easy to find and appealing. Agrees that not all of the projects are listed but should be. Suggests condensing the given information about the listed projects with a click to read more. Pull all of the projects that are currently listed in different places and put them all here to let us know what you are doing.

Action Item: Find information about applying for a grant.

00:32:29

Question: How did you navigate to this information? How important is this information to you on a scale of one - being most important – and three – being least important?

00:34:40

• Participant #1 felt like the importance level of this information ranges between a one and two depending on the person and the information they are seeking be it water samples or grant information.

• Participant #2 feels like this information is very important but the grant information is only for specific activity.

• Participant #4 felt like this information was moderately important. Personally they visit the site mostly for contact information. Without knowing where to find the grant information because the word ‘grant’ is not in the title.

Question: What is your impression of this website?

00:39:00

• Participant #1 likes the blue strip on the homepage because it is different from the UA website but it is only on the homepage. The bottom looks the same as the UA site which is good. Participant #2 and #4 agrees.

• Participant #3 stated that it took a while to familiarize themselves with the site.

• Participant #4 was reluctant to use the search because it is the U of A search and would bring up everything from the U of A site. They like the new website. She likes the professional feel of the water quality center on water research.

Question: Is the terminology on this website confusing?

00:43:19
• Participant #1 reiterated that the grant program should have the word ‘grant’ listed in the title.
• Participant #4 agreed and stated that they know they did grants for research but didn’t know the specific name of the grant.

**Question: After viewing the content, what, to you, is the purpose of this website?**
00:45:00
• Participant #2 felt like the purpose of this website was to submit info to the lab. Participant #1 and #4 agrees. They all feel like this satisfies that goal.

**Question: How often do you visit this website?**
00:45:58
• Participant #1 stated that she doesn’t visit this site very much.
• Participant #2 visits the site monthly to download current research publications. Always visits on a desktop.
• Participant #3 stated that this was the first time they have visited the site but will return.
• Participant #4 visits the site once a month. Visits on a desktop or phone.

**Question: Is the information on this site easy to find?**
00:47:16
• All participants agreed that information on this site is easy to find.

**Question: Do you feel that any information is missing from this website?**
00:47:31
• Participant #4 stated that when the site was redesigned the map to the office was taken down and that it was very helpful as the building is quite confusing. The directions now only include Google maps which doesn’t navigate you through the building. Participant #2 agrees.

**Question: What are some positive experiences you had with this website?**
00:49:27
• Participant #4 likes the visual and graphics/images of the site. Likes the post conference wrap-ups. Drop downs are nicely laid out.
Question: How do you feel about the image rotator? Does it engage you?
00:50:20
- Participant #1 likes the pictures. Would like more to show what is going on. Participant #4 agrees. Suggests 3-4 images maximum that are clickable to more information for example, a conference wrap up.
- Participant #2 thinks more highlight stories would be good.

Question: Is there anything that you find confusing about this site?
00:52:14
- Participant #2 suggested specification between the lab and the office. Participant #4 agreed.

Question: Do you have any suggestions for improvements?
00:53:21
- All participants like the site.

Question: What would bring you back to this website?
00:55:03
- Participant #2 suggested a synopsis of the publication that is easier to read like a trend analysis with highlights. Participant #3 and #4 agrees.
- Participant #4 suggested a breakdown of the scientific info that is easier to read perhaps listed in order of location. The information could be updated annually or when each project is finished. Participant #2 agreed.

Question: Are you active with social media for the AWRC?
00:58:51
- Participant #2 stated that they are not big on social media.
- Participant #4 wanted to amplify the message of the water quality. A link to the projects and blogs would be good. She feels that the office is a liaison between the different groups and is great for promoting all of the research side.
Demographics

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Participant Demographics

Participant number: ___
Age: _________________
Gender: _____________

Participant type
   a) Student
   b) Staff
   c) Faculty
   d) Other _______________

Familiarity/Involvement with the Arkansas Water Center:
   a) Not familiar/involved
   b) Slightly familiar/involved
   c) Familiar/involved
   d) Very familiar/involved

How comfortable are you at using the internet:
   a) Very comfortable
   b) Moderately comfortable
   c) Not comfortable
Participant One
Age: 23
Gender: Female
Participant type: Student
Familiarity/involvement with the Arkansas Water Center: Very familiar/involved
How comfortable are you at using the internet: Very comfortable

Participant Two
Age: 38
Gender: Male
Participant type: Other
Familiarity/involvement with the Arkansas Water Center: Familiar/involved
How comfortable are you at using the internet: Very comfortable

Participant Three
Age: 60
Gender: Male
Participant type: Other
Familiarity/involvement with the Arkansas Water Center: Not familiar/involved
How comfortable are you at using the internet: Very comfortable

Participant Four
Age: 38
Gender: Female
Participant type: Other
Familiarity/involvement with the Arkansas Water Center: Familiar/involved
How comfortable are you at using the internet: Very comfortable
Research Methods

Research Goal:

To improve website usability for students.

Research Design:

Erin Scott recruited the participants for this focus group. The focus group was about one hour in length. This focus group had four participants and the participants were provided lunch.

How the Information Will Be Used:

The research will be used for the targeted audience to improve usability on University of Arkansas websites. This includes students, faculty, staff, the Fayetteville community and legislative members. Reports from the findings will be sent to departments, webmasters and be made available on the digital publication WebFirst.

How This Project Fits Into Our Department:

As a content strategist, one main focus of this job is to use qualitative and quantitative data to improve the usability of the University of Arkansas’ websites. Currently, this is accomplished primarily through Google Analytics and the Google Search Application. Focus groups would be another piece to the usability puzzle that will create a better user experience. Focus groups allow us to interact directly and observe students to see how they use University of Arkansas websites and what they would like to see improved. From this information, changes can be implemented after cross-referencing the data from the focus groups with our existing sources of data.

Expected Results:

Based on data accumulated, we expect the majority of participants will push for changes to be made on both landing and interior pages varying in significance from website to website. Often, search queries collected from the Google Search Console and Google Search Application suggest that users are not able to quickly locate information and instead will search for the information. A few examples of these occurrences are search queries for degree programs,
email accounts and UAConnect. We fully anticipate the difficulty in locating information to be one main issue.

Why This Method Was Chosen:

The Digital Design and Development team uses Google Analytics, the Google Search Console and the Google Search Application that provide quantitative analysis. So, the Digital Design and Development understands the “what?” question through the data already obtained, but the focus groups will explain the “why?” question. For instance, if a specific page has a high bounce rate, a focus group will essentially act as a real-time heatmap that will provide answers as to why users choose to leave a page or continue on to other internal pages.

Focus Group Agenda:

Welcome

Thank you all for agreeing to participate in this focus group for the AWRC.

My name is Chad Woodard and I am the Content Strategist for University Relations.

Kelly Bostick will assist me today.

This is a focus group designed to improve the usability of the AWRC website. Please feel free to give your honest opinion throughout the course of this focus group as it pertains to the AWRC website.

Guidelines

- There are no right or wrong answers. We value everyone’s opinion as it pertains to the AWRC website.
- We hope to have many opinions throughout this focus group, so speak up if you agree or disagree.
- We would like everyone to participate. You could be called on if you have not spoken often.
- We will be video recording this focus group. We will not call you by your name and you will remain anonymous in our report.

Action-Item Questions: 45 minutes
Go through the process of submitting a water sample. Was this an easy or difficult process? Please explain. Should this be more prominent or stay where it is?

Locate where you can subscribe to the newsletter. Was this easy or difficult to find? If you don’t already, would you subscribe to this newsletter?

Locate water quality data information about the Illinois River Watershed. How did you navigate to this information? Was this an easy or difficult task? Please explain.

Find some of the projects the AWRC is working on. Do you think this information appeals to the audience of this website? Why, why not?

Find information about applying for a grant. How did you navigate to this information? How important is this information to you on a scale of one – being most important – and three – being least important.

General Questions: 45 minutes

1. What is your impression of this website?
2. Is the terminology on this website confusing?
3. After viewing the content, what, to you, is the purpose of this website?
4. Does this purpose satisfy your needs or expectations?
5. How often do you visit this website?
6. Do you most often visit this site from a desktop, smartphone or tablet?
7. What are some reasons you visit this website?
8. Does the content match your reasons for visiting this website? If not, what content do you expect to find?
9. Are you able to easily find information you are looking for? If not, is there too much, too little or missing information?
10. What are some positive experiences of this website and what made these experiences positive?
11. Was there anything about this website you found confusing?
12. Is this website easy or difficult to navigate and what makes it easy or difficult to navigate?
13. What suggestions do you have to improve this website?
14. What content would bring you back to this website?
15. Would you be interested in a social media feed of graduate school content on the homepage?
16. Is there anything we have not discussed pertaining to this website that you think should be addressed?
Strategy for Analysis

After the focus group, the responses will be gathered and transcribed from an audio and video capture. From here, comments from the participants, as well as nonverbal communication, will be tracked to reveal common themes about the experience of the particular website in the focus group. A written report will then be created after the common themes from all of the resources are compiled. The written reports will provide recommendations for change based on the findings from the focus groups and the other data tools. The recommendations will be sent to the department webmasters to implement the changes. The results of this analysis will also be made available on the digital publication WebFirst.

Specifications for Time and Location

The focus group took place 10 a.m., November 17 in room A354 in the Arkansas Union. The room consisted of computers for the participants and the ability to project the website onto a larger screen.

Who Fulfilled the Leadership Roles of the Focus Group?

Erin Scott gathered the participants for this focus group. Chad Woodard led the focus group and interviewed the participants. Kelly Bostick took notes of the participants during the focus groups. Chad Woodard, Kelly Bostick transcribed the responses from the participants. Chad Woodard and Kelly Bostick grouped the information into common themes and trends for the written report as well as published a report of the findings on WebFirst.