

NoVA: Non-Visual Access to the Digital Library: the use of Digital Library Interfaces by Blind and Visually-Impaired People.

Experimental Framework

Navigation is a major problem within digital library systems. A good example is the use of frames in a web environment to enable the user to perform complex selections across categories. A sighted person navigates between frames in a complex, non-linear manner which displays strong parallelism. A non-sighted person has to navigate linearly within one frame at a time, and may need to backtrack a long way (again in a linear manner) in order to reach the desired point (and then maybe track forward again).

The aims of the NoVA Project are:

- To develop an experimental framework for exploration of serial searching and retrieval in non-serial environments
- To undertake a series of experiments with serial searching and retrieval, and subsequent use of digital content
- To map serial and non-serial approaches to searching.
- To report on findings and to make recommendations for digital library system design.

The overall objective of the NoVA Project is to develop understanding of serial searching in non-serial digital library environments, with particular reference to retrieval of information by blind and visually-impaired people. To help achieve these objectives you will be asked to comment on a number of electronic resources and then to undertake a variety of structured tasks. You will be asked to search for something specific - there is no right or wrong way to undertake each task - you can choose how you undertake each one. For example, you might choose a to use the search options or you may prefer to look at the home page for appropriate links. Some personal data will also be required, however all data will be treated as strictly confidential. The experiments aim to map the searching processes of both sighted and partially sighted people, and will in no way be a test of searching abilities.

Questions 1 – 5 User profile characteristics, to be stated before the task commences:

1. Please state your age range:

Under 21 21-30 31-40 41-50 50+

2. Roughly how often do you use the Internet?

Every day Every other day Once or twice a week
Every other week Once or twice a month

3. Where is your main location of access to the Internet?

Home Work Library College/Univ

Where else do you access the Internet?

4. Which services do you use to find information on the Internet?

5. Do you consider yourself to be visually impaired?

Yes No

If yes, please briefly describe your visual impairment.

Question 6 & 7 Initial comments on the Interface: verbal responses before the search is undertaken:

6. Go to the bookmarked website

a. How do you know the page is loading?

b. How do you know the page has finished loading?

7. Layout of the screen

Briefly describe the layout of the screen in rough areas.

Question 8: verbal description (without further prompting) of the task undertaken – Screen Cam or Notes and recording dialog.

Please perform your search as directed in the 'TASKS' section, verbally describing each step you take. Please indicate when you wish to end the task – for example if you are satisfied with the results you have retrieved, or if you do not wish to search any further.

**Questions 9 - 10: Overall comments on completing the task:
verbal response after each task**

9. Consider the task you have just performed:

- a. Overall, how easy did you find navigation of the interface to be?
- b. Could you easily locate the mouse pointer/cursor position?
- c. Was it clear where you were up to in the task?
- d. Were error messages (if they occurred) clearly explained?
- e. Were the results pages displayed easy to 'read'?
- f. Overall, how satisfied are you with the task performed?

10. Given the choice, which electronic resource would you have used for this task?

Thank you for taking part in this experimental framework.

All results will be dealt with in strict confidence.