the slide where I tell you about what I’m going to tell you about

• usability matters
• we did usability testing and so can you
  – challenges
  – processes (i.e. how we confronted challenges)
  – ultimate triumph
what is this “usability” thing I keep hearing about?

• “ease of use and learnability of a human-made object”
  – Wikipedia

• “if the user can’t find it, the function’s not there”
you’re a federal library; has this ever happened to you?

• your websites live on the intranet
  – so much for cool usability testing web apps
• you have a limited budget for usability tools
  – so much for Morae
• you lack access to in-house expertise
  – so much for...hold on, it’s not as hard as you think!
Supreme Court Library: it’s all about the research

• performs research for justices’ chambers
• curates resources for said research
• maintains information applications...to help with research
  – among them, the Virtual Library
the Virtual Library, our electronic resources access portal

- contains 1,000+ links to subscription, non-subscription, and local electronic resources
- maintained by Content Team composed of five Research and Technology librarians
- built with ASP.NET, JavaScript, Dreamweaver
- originally built in 2004, grew organically
to redesign a Virtual Library, in convenient flowchart form

design site
migrate content
usability testing prep
usability testing
modify site
revise scenarios
usability testing
modify site
usability testing prep, elaborated

- configure testbed
- devise a test plan
- role of observers?
- observation recording strategy?
- recruit users
- test users
usability testbed: the free software that makes it happen

• Usability Testing Environment (UTE) v2.0
  – free to feds
  – Windows XP compatible
  – IE-based task administration
  – http://utetool.com/

• CamStudio v2.0
  – free/open source
  – Windows compatible
  – screen and audio recording
  – http://camstudio.org
usability testing environment

- enclosed office
- PC equipped with microphone and testbed software
- one user at a time
- one hour time block
- two observers
devise a test plan: what do you want to test today?

• what do you want feedback on?
  – well, what design decisions are you most ambivalent about?
  – breadth versus depth
  – you can’t test everything
where the rubber hits the road: translate test plan into scenarios

• navigational task
  – what page should user start on/end up at, and how should s/he navigate between the two?

• feedback
  – more open-ended

• codify expectations in a document that observers can quickly annotate in test session
example scenarios

• “where would you expect to find resource X?”
• “what would you label this?”
• “is there anything that strikes you immediately?”
• “what are your impressions of the text size?”
• “where would you look for a tool that does X?”
• “is there anything you feel that is missing?”
example: single scenario from observer note-taking sheet

• Find Justice Kennedy’s testimony before Congress on the Court’s Fiscal year 2008 appropriations.

  1. top nav link: ‘Links by Subject’
  2. right box: ‘About the Supreme Court’ / ‘The Court as an Institution’ > Appropriations
  3. lower right box: ‘Supreme Court Appropriations Documents by Year’ > drop-down for specific year > FY2008
recruiting users

- find most passionate users
- how many is ‘enough’?
- breadth versus depth
- don’t let them fall off the giant, floating keyboard

Free Stock Photos Library
administer usability test

• start UTE and CamStudio
• consent form
• instructions
• observer intervention, as needed
observer summary spreadsheet template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Navigation Path</th>
<th>Scenario Responses</th>
<th>User Suggestions</th>
<th>Observer Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User #1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User #3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User #4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Scenario Response** – noteworthy comments
- **Navigation Path** – (if applicable) what path did the user take?
- **User Suggestions** – incidental suggestions about any aspect of the site
- **Observer Comments** – summary of all user feedback plus observer comments
### scenario 9 (of 10)

- Find Justice Kennedy’s testimony before Congress on the Court’s Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations.
- Expected path: Links by Subject > Appropriations > FY2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Navigation Path</th>
<th>Scenario Response</th>
<th>User Suggestions</th>
<th>Observer Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| User #1 | 1. Links by Subject  
2. Legislative  
3. Legislative History | • Would probably go directly to THOMAS.  
• Would use LexisNexis or Judiciary Committee website.  
• Conflated “Legislative History” and “Legislative.” | • Use “Supreme Court Annual Budget Hearing” label rather than “Appropriations.” | • Even having been primed with “Appropriations,” no users thought to look for a section by that title.  
• Three users went directly to Links by Subject, then had trouble from there. |
| User #2 | | | | |
| User #3 | | | | |
| User #4 | | | | |
after the users have clicked and spoken: results analysis

• enhance observer session notes by re-watching videos
• distill all notes into summary findings
• present findings to redesign team
• not all findings are actionable; users aren’t always right!
examples of feedback-informed modifications

• removed non-interactive interface elements that users thought were interactive
• removed superfluous graphics
• renamed top-level nav categories
• made text entries more concise
• added controls to change text size
• kept quick link-type shortcuts on home page
• prioritized deployment of site search
outcomes and lessons learned

• outcomes (i.e. ultimate triumph)
  – more unique users
  – better website
  – better framework

• lessons learned
  – don’t discount accessibility
  – users are unpredictable
  – librarians and users think differently
  – a little bit of usability testing goes a long way!
usability is a journey not a destination: how could we improve?

• perform usability testing earlier
• recruit more users
• recruit more representative users
• survey users after “final” design changes
• better utilize quantitative data
the slide where I ask if you have any questions
appendix: federal government usability resources

• Usability.gov, http://www.usability.gov/
• GSA Usability Resources, http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/105114
• Section 508, http://www.section508.gov/