Perception, Memory and Problem Solving

IT350 Fall 2008
Set 5: Human Computer Interaction
(and some SSI to help)

How People Think

• Key factors:
  – Perception
  – Attention
  – Learning
  – Memory
Mental Models

• Involves unconscious and conscious processes, where images and analogies are activated based on a particular view

• Deep vs. shallow models

• Lesson? Match UI to expected paradigm
  – Example:

Memory: A golden rule?

• How many items in a list can people remember?

• Miller, 1956: The Magical Number …. 

• Lesson: If you don’t exceed this number…
  – Content more likely to be remembered
  – Faster recall

• Corollary: Don’t expect users to remember many shortcuts etc.
Exception #1

• How many do you know?
  – Phone numbers?
  – Names?
  – Passwords?

• What’s the key difference?

Exception #2

• Do I have to remember everything?
  – People can scan lists of bullets, tabs, menu items till they see the one they want
  – They don’t have to recall them from memory having only briefly heard or seen them

• Lesson:
  – Make pages easy to scan
  – Group similar things together visually
  – Make wise use of screen real estate
How People Act (part 1)

- Alternative strategies:
  - Goal Based
  - First Available
  - First Reasonable
  - First Attention

How People Act (part 2)

- Attention Focuses
  - Color
  - Sound
  - Moving/Flashing items
  - Boundaries

- Learned Procedures
Perceived Affordance

- Book: Don Norman “The Design of Everyday Things”
- Affordance – a “quality of an object, or an environment, that allows an individual to perform an action”
  - Do users realize they can act?
  - Do they feel like they (their group) are included by the site / activity?
  - Lesson: need to know your audience
- “Perceived affordance”
  - Norman argues that what really matters is that users perceive the site to be actionable, and reasonably inclusive of them – regardless of whether it was actually designed for them

Providing Perceived Affordances

- Consider your audience – but don’t include content that will drive non-typical users away
- Follow conventional usage
  - Both images and allowable interactions
- Use words to describe desired actions
- Use a metaphor that users understand
- Use same model throughout
  - Consistent ease of training, ease of use
Feedback

• Newton’s Third Law of Motion
  – “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction”

• What is most frustrating about trying to perform some action?

• Lesson:
  • Obvious principle – but doesn’t always happen?

Providing Feedback

• Design in feedback from the beginning

• Change color / shape / size
• Popup Dialog boxes
• Add sound
• Plan for user mistakes…warn them
• Allow users to see results, confirm action was taken
Other things users need

• Consistency
• Navigation

• How to provide without HTML duplication?
  – Frames
  – SSI

SSI Example
main.shtml

SSI Example Part 1

<?xml version = "1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.1//EN"
"http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml11/DTD/xhtml11.dtd">
<html xmlns = "http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml">
<head>
<title>Internet and WWW How to Program - Main</title>
</head>
<body>
<!-- #include file="navssi.html" -->
<h1>Welcome to Our Web Site!</h1>
<p>We have designed this site to teach about the wonders of <strong><em>XHTML</em></strong>. <em>XHTML</em> is better equipped than <em>HTML</em> to represent complex data on the Internet. <em>XHTML</em> takes advantage of XML’s strict syntax to ensure well-formedness. Soon you will know about many of the great new features of <em>XHTML</em>.</p>
</body>
</html>

navssi.html

SSI Example Part 2

<div style="float:left; margin-right: 2em; margin-bottom: 99in">
<p>

<a href = "link.shtml" >
    <img src = "buttons/links.jpg" width = "65"
         height = "50" alt = "Links Page" />
</a>
<br />

<a href = "list.shtml" >
    <img src = "buttons/list.jpg" width = "65"
         height = "50" alt = "List Example Page" />
</a>
<br />

<a href = "contact.shtml" >
    <img src = "buttons/contact.jpg" width = "65"
         height = "50" alt = "Contact Page" />
</a>
<br />

...
</p>
</div>
Other SSI commands (depends on web server)

<!--#include file="inc.txt"--><br />
<!--#fslastmod file="inc.txt"--><br />
<!--#fsize file="test1.stm"--><br />
<!--#echo var="DOCUMENT_URI"--><br />
<!--#config timefmt="%m/%d/%y %H:%M:%S"--><br />
<!--#echo var="DATE_LOCAL"--><br />
<!--#config sizefmt="bytes"-->
<!--#fsize file="inc.txt"--><br />
<!--#exec cgi="/scripts/testcgi.exe"--><br />

See http://www.4images.com/ntperl/isiall.htm