Web Site Design

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SWE 432
Design and Implementation of Software for the Web

Usability of Web Site Design

- Users only find information they are searching for on web sites about <u>42%</u> of the time

- When given an interactive task, they can only accomplish the task about <u>26%</u> of the time!

"Introductory" Web Pages

When a web site is not complete:

- Don't tell users what is not yet available – it is frustrating

- Don't release a web site until it is ready

Web Site Home Pages

- Many web sites have a "home page" – the introductory landmark page to the company or organization
- Home pages should look different from interior web pages
  - No HOME button
  - State purpose of the entire web site
  - Provide a directory of the web site
  - Include a search facility
- All interior web pages must link to the home page

Search Facilities

- More than <u>50%</u> of the users start by searching
- The search should be in the web <u>site</u>, not the entire WWW
- Make the search available on <u>all</u> pages
- People do not understand boolean:

  "*I am interested in SWE 432 and CS 450*" should be:
    - 432 OR 450

  but most people will enter:
    - 432 <u>AND</u> 450

  Do not use boolean operators in the search facility

Screen Width

- Try not to design to a specific width – keep the HTML as flexible as possible

- Users do not like to scroll horizontally

- If you have to specify the width:
  - 600 is reasonably safe
  - Remember to leave room for browser borders
  - Put information that is not particularly important on the right side of the screen

URL Design

- Unfortunately, we must <u>type</u> and <u>remember</u> URLs
- Help the users avoid typos:
  - Do not use <u>upper case</u> in domain, directory, or file names
  - <u>Underscores</u> require the shift key – <u>hyphens</u> are better, but not much
  - Avoid <u>zeros</u> (0 or O?) and <u>ones</u> (1 or l)?
  - Do not add unnecessary directories
  - Choose <u>short</u>, <u>common</u> words
  - Use standard <u>abbreviations</u>
- Use URL <u>aliasing</u> to be be <u>error tolerant</u>:
  - Allow <u>x.com</u> and <u>www.x.com</u>
  - Provide aliases for common misspellings
- Use the standard ".html", not the non-standard ".htm"
- Fully specify URLs in HTML links:
  - Do not use this: ise.gmu.edu/~offutt
  - Do use this: http://www.ise.gmu.edu/~offutt/

HTML Design Hints
(Repeats HTML lecture)

- **Put searches on the front page (speed)**

- **Do not use frames (SS, errors, speed)**
  - **Confuse navigation**
  - **Bookmarks do not work**
  - **Make printing hard**
  - **Browsers render them differently**
  - **Slower**

  Use <TABLE> to partition web pages

- **On site maps, "low light" current page**

- **Remember the page may be too big for one screen**
  - **Put navigation buttons on top and bottom**
  - **Put action buttons on top and bottom**