Documentation Project for CHSS IT Coordinators

English 613:001

George Mason University

Spring 2007

Description

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) would like to produce a standardized set of guidelines for Departmental Information Technology (IT) Coordinators. That document, the CHSS IT Coordinator Guidelines, will be your major project for the semester. The CHSS IT Coordinator is Josh Zirger; the IT Director is Danny Collier. They will be the clients for this assignment. I will act as a liaison between the class and the CHSS IT office.

Each Department on campus has an IT Coordinator whose job includes both hardware (equipment inventories, new faculty equipment, work orders) and software (site licenses, software support, web development) duties. For the purposes of this assignment, we'll be limited to Departments within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS). In the interests of full disclosure, I am the IT Coordinator for the English Department. One of the difficulties the IT Coordinators face is the lack of a single set of guidelines outlining the duties, responsibilities, and resources for the job. Some information necessary for equipment inventory, for example, is available from GMU Fiscal Services, while other important forms are housed on the ITU site, and still more at the CHSS IT site.

Complicating the matter further is the differing duties of the IT Coordinator in different Departments. For example, in the English Department, my duties are primarily hardware-related. The English Department is comparatively large, with over 100 individual computers to track, a lab to manage, and networked printers to maintain. Individual faculty members handle web development, although I get involved to troubleshoot. Other problems go to the University's Information technology Unit (ITU); my responsibility is to gather trouble reports and send them to ITU, or direct faculty members to contact ITU themselves if it is a individual problem. Software issues are similarly mixed; if the University has a license, I generally ask ITU to install it; otherwise I have the Department or faculty member purchase it. The English Department does not usually purchase Department-wide licenses, although other Departments do (and we may begin to soon).

Other IT Coordinators do much more web development and less equipment inventory (some Departments have less than a dozen computers to track, and perhaps a single

networked printer). These Departments are also much more likely to purchase site licenses (and the IT Coordinator is then responsible for administering these).

In other words, the job description varies between Departments, but there are some commonalities: hardware and software support, web development, and general troubleshooting.

To compose the new guidelines, I will organize the class into groups of three. Within each group, all members must do some research, writing, and editing. Do not assign one person to research, one to write, and another to edit; in this class I want everyone to be active in all three roles. I am including group worksheets (see Appendix C) so that I can follow the progress of each group and group member. The groups will fill out one worksheet for every group meeting. These group worksheets will be due on Feb 28, April 11, April 25, and May 2.

The project itself has five components, most of which require group work.

Components

1) Gather Information

Each group must gather whatever information is already available at the University, College, and Department levels. These materials may be print or online. Most of the material is available from the ITU, Fiscal Services, and CHSS web sites. I have included a list of resources at the end of this assignment as Appendix A .

Once you have gathered the information, the group will write a brief report (5-7 pages) identifying the duties of the Coordinators, summarizing procedures, and locating redundant and conflicting information. For example, there are two Equipment Procedure forms, one from 2002 and one from 2005. Assuming that the 2005 version replaces the earlier one, you should still seek to identify the differences between them—what changes might be relevant to the Coordinators?

Due: Feb 28

2) Interview Departmental Coordinators

CHSS maintains a list of Departmental IT Coordinators in the College. Each member of the class should interview one of the Coordinators (in person, email, or phone). I will be interviewed by the entire class. In these interviews, you should seek information about the needs of the Coordinators at the Department level. Josh Zirger or Danny Collier will come to class for a group interview session; when you speak with Mr. Zirger or Mr. Collier, you'll be seeking information about the needs at the College level.

We will develop a set of interview questions in class, based on the information you find in step one. In general, you will ask them *what they do* and *what they need* in order to do the job more effectively. You will also want to check the interview subject's availability for a follow-up session once you have a draft of the guidelines (this will part of Stage 4, Usability Testing).

After the interviews, you will write a report (3-5 pages) describing the specific Departmental IT responsibilities and needs you have identified.

The interview and report will be individual assignments, but once the report is complete you will return with it to your groups and compare the varying responsibilities and needs.

Due: March 28

3) Draft the IT Coordinator Guidelines

The guidelines should be general enough to apply to all Departments in CHSS, but specific enough that a new Coordinator will be able to find all relevant information about the job. The guidelines should include

- o Hardware and Equipment Procedures
  - New Equipment Requests and Purchases
  - Inventory and Tracking
  - Equipment Transfer, Loan, Surplus, and Loss
- o Software Procedures
  - Licensing
  - Purchasing
  - Support
- o Web Development Information
  - Design
  - Accessibility
  - Updates
- o Troubleshooting Duties

The draft should be 20-25 pages, including appendices (necessary forms and links for updates). The Fiscal Services "Equipment Procedures" (2005) report is a good template, though you will need to ask your client whether he wants the guidelines in print or electronic formats (or both).

Due: April 11

4) Conduct Usability Testing

Once you have a complete proofread draft, you will need to test it for usability. If your initial interview subject is available for a follow up, you should submit the draft to him or her and request feedback. If he or she is not available, you can find another Coordinator. I will be reading and commenting on all of the drafts. In addition, you will need at least one other reader/tester; this third tester should be someone who is relatively unfamiliar with the procedures. This may be another graduate student (not from this class), a colleague, or another professor.

We will develop a comprehensive list of questions for the usability test, but in general we will be looking at comprehension, the ability to locate requested information quickly, and the ability to perform certain tasks. Once the tests are complete, the group will submit a report with the following information

- o Descriptions of the tests
- o Profiles of the users
- o Results of the tests
- o Changes you will need to make as a result of the findings

Due: April 25

5) Submit Final Copy of IT Coordinator Guidelines

The final copy of the guidelines will be submitted to me and to the CHSS IT office. I will grade each final report; the CHSS IT office will use them to develop their own IT Coordinators Guide. They may use one, or parts of several reports. You retain some intellectual property rights over the work: please see the enclosed contract (Appendix B).

The final Guide should be 20-25 pages, including appendices (necessary forms and links for updates). The cover page should list the names of all contributors. You should also submit the last set of group worksheets, as well as a confidential final evaluation of the group. A Final Evaluation Form is included as Appendix D.

Due: May 2

Grading

The project grade will be a combination of individual and group grades. The group grades will be the same for all members of the group, unless it becomes obvious that a group member is not participating.

Although each stage is essential, not all stages will be graded.

Stage 1: Summary of existing documentation: 15% of course grade.
    This will be a group grade.

Stage 2: Interview reports: 10% of course grade.
    This will be an individual grade.

Stage 3: Drafts: not graded, but required for next stage.

Stage 4: Usability test report: 5% of course grade.
    The tests themselves will not be graded, but I will be one of the test-takers.
    The report will be a group grade.

Stage 5: Final copy: 50% of course grade.
    Most of the grade (75%) on the final copy will be the group grade. The   other 25% will be an individual grade based on the group worksheets   (Appendix C) and the final evaluation worksheet (Appendix D).

If any stages are missing, there will be no grade given on the project.

When you submit the final copy, you should include the Summary, Interview, and Usability reports, as well as any remaining group worksheets and the final evaluation worksheet.

Appendix A

Resources

University Level

Hardware

Fiscal Services Equipment Procedures (2005)
<http://fiscal.gmu.edu/Procedures/equipman.pdf>

Fiscal Services Equipment Inventory Forms
<http://fiscal.gmu.edu/forms/index.html#EquipmentInventory>

Central Receiving Equipment Surplus Form
<http://fiscal.gmu.edu/forms/index.html#CentralReceiving>

Information Technology Unit (ITU) Support
<http://itusupport.gmu.edu/>

ITU Forms
<http://itusupport.gmu.edu/forms.asp>

ITU Equipment Procedures (2002)
<http://www.gmu.edu/service/fiscserv/policies_procedures/
        EquipmentProcedures.pdf>

Software

ITU Administered Software
<http://itusupport.gmu.edu/mslicense.asp>

Campus Computer Store Site License Info
<http://compstore.gmu.edu/site.html>

Web Development

Mason Web Development
<http://www.gmu.edu/mlnavbar/webdev/>

College Level

CHSS IT Office
<http://chss.gmu.edu/itdept/index.php>

CHSS IT Newsletter
<http://chss.gmu.edu/itnews/current/>

Department Level

CHSS IT Coordinators List
<http://chss.gmu.edu/itdept/CHSSIT_coordinators.pdf>

English Department Web Resources
<http://mason.gmu.edu/~dtaciuch/webdev/index.html>

Appendix B

Final Project Contract for English 613:001

George Mason University
Spring 2007

Client_____
Phone Number_____
Email_____

Document title: CHSS IT Coordinator Guide

Document type: _____
Length (pages/screens): _____

Tasks:

- o Identify existing documentation at Department, College, and University levels
  - • Review date: 2/28/2007

- o Identify needs of Departmental IT Coordinators
  - • Review date: 3/28/2007

- o Produce draft of Guide
  - • Review date: 4/11/2007

- o Test for usability
  - • Review date: 4/25/2007

- o Revise and deliver final product
  - • Due date: 5/2/2007

Intellectual Property: The authors of this document may use it and its parts in their professional portfolios, available online as well as in print. Other uses will require separate permission from CHSS.

_____   _____
author   date   client   date

Appendix C

Group Worksheet

Fill out one copy of this form for each group meeting

Date_____

Time: from _____ to _____

Group members present:

Work Completed:

Work Remaining:

Discussions:

Problems:

Next meeting: _____

Appendix D

Final Evaluation Worksheet (Confidential)

Name: _____

Members of Group: _____

Did you miss any group meetings?

If yes, how did you make up for the missed contributions?

Did any other members miss group meetings? If so, who and when:

If yes, how did the member make up for missed contributions?

Were there any other problems within the group? If yes, please explain in detail:

Do you feel the grade for this project can be fairly divided between all of the group members? If not, please explain: