USABILITY STUDY SHOWS MU EXTENSION STYLE GUIDE WEBSITE IS USABLE AND HIGHLY LEARNABLE

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ABSTRACT

A think-aloud usability study of the revised MU Extension editorial style and usage guide addressed usability and learnability of the navigation and search function of the MU Extension online style and usage guide. I conducted usability tests of the new database-driven design with three users who work for MU Extension and use the current style guide. Each participant completed nine usability tasks, answered post-task usability questions, and completed a System Usability Scale survey.

The style and usage website received an A+ for learnability, a B+ for overall usability, and a B for usability. Participants completed most tasks without assistance and liked the new ability to search the database and to personalize the database based on their usage with the “My selections” and “My comments” features.

User difficulties included having to scroll to the top of the page after locating a style, seeing the “Advanced search options” link, understanding the “Show styles that apply to all uses” link, finding the “Clear all” button, and understanding that they must log in to use the personalization features.

These results show that usability studies can, in addition to experiments and other types of traditional journalism research, be used to inform communicators about issues with the usability of websites. Also, this particular study shows that a database-driven house style guide can be highly learnable — even by people who do not use style guides in their day-to-day work.