**In Search of the Lost Book: Improving Library Usability**

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**Background**

- During the years different kinds of usability issues have come up in the customer feedback - most of them have concerned wayfinding in the library
- The collections are divided in 4 floors of which users can access 3 – locating publications is difficult especially for novice users
- Collection and location codes are difficult to remember
  - P1 B 621.396/.397
  - P1 SAK Teknillinen korkeakoulu, Helsinki University of Technology, Systems analysis laboratory, research reports A 66

**Development and design of a locating application for the library** was given as a subject of a practical work for TKK students attending a course of usability during the spring 2005

The results of the practical works and the locating applications developed in other Finnish libraries sparked the idea of developing a locating application based on the needs of the users of TKK library

**Aim of the project**
- to improve the usability of the library
- to provide improved wayfinding by developing a locating application which would be designed based on users’ needs

**Getting started**

Data about users and their information finding processes was collected by usability research

The first usability research ever made in TKK library

The research was done by interviewing and observing eight test persons while they were locating publications in the library

The situation was followed by 2 observers and it was photographed and recorded with an mp3 recorder

The test persons were explaining their actions and describing their thoughts aloud during the information finding process

The collected data was analyzed and it offered both expected and unexpected information
Usability research

People are able to find the bibliographic information of the publication from the database, but they are not able to find the printed publication from the library.

Problems with understanding and interpreting location codes – which is the right shelf and how the publications are arranged (e.g., P1 B 621.396/.397)

Inaccurate and insufficient signage

Shelf labels

None of the eight test persons were able to find the requested publications without asking help from the library staff!

Discoveries

The development of the locating application was started from the basis of the data collected in the usability research.

The aim was that the application would cover the collection that includes the most borrowed books – the B-books collection (about 25,000 items).

The idea was that the application would create a link in the Call number field in OPAC and by following the link the user could see the location of the item on a map.

Locating application

The first test version was introduced to the library staff in the late autumn 2006 and the second one during the spring 2007.

The usability tests with library users were started in June and completed in August 2007.

Aim of the application
– to show the location of the item on a map of the library by one click
– to show the status of the item
– to show the locations of the department libraries on a map by one click
– to have correspondences with the real library.

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Facilities and equipment search

Realization and maintenance

- PHP, MySQL, JavaScript, Perl
- Updating and maintenance via web browser
  - easy
  - no need to know HTML or any programming language
- The biggest work is to set and keep up-to-date the location informations (coordinates)

Desired result...

...a happy user!

Thank you!

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http://lib.tkk.fi/index-en.html