A LOOK AT THE USAGE AND USABILITY OF ELECTRONIC DATABASES WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO LAW DATABASES

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LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY WEEK

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OUTLINE

PART 1: USABILITY

- ❑ What is usability?
- ❑ Components of usability
- ❑ Usability testing
- ❑ Advantages of usability testing
- ❑ Methods of usability testing
- ❑ Unisa usability laboratory

PART 2: USAGE

- ❑ Electronic database usage
- ❑ Electronic law database usage statistics
- ❑ Importance of usage statistics

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

"Unisa, has been identified as one of the top e-Book users around the world and the developer (from The Netherlands) would like to come to SA to conduct a usability test with you"

E-mail by Heather Wills (SWETS)

Dated: 18 June 2013

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PART 1

USABILITY

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Usability

❖**What is usability?**

➢ IT discipline

➢ Also known as "user friendly"

"Usability = system acceptability whose goal is to ensure if systems have all necessary features to satisfy all their intended functions" (Nielsen,1993:24)

- Usability is making systems much easier to use

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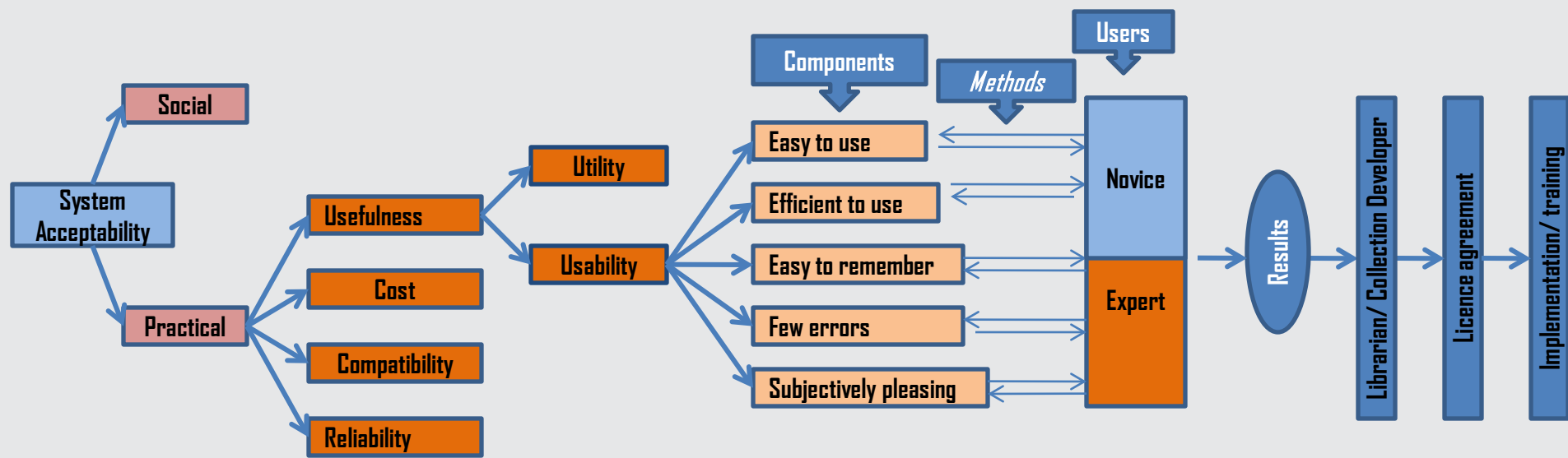# Usability ...cont.

➢ ISO BS EN ISO 9241 defines usability as:

"the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with **effectiveness**, **efficiency**, and **satisfaction** in a specified context of use" (Travis,2005)

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Usability ...cont.

❖ Components of usability

Nielsen (1993) describes the five main attributes of usability:

➢ **Learnability** - easy to learn so that the user can quickly start using the system

➢ **Efficiency** -   efficient to use = high level of productivity

➢ **Memorability** - easy to remember

➢ **Errors** - low error rate, so that users make few errors during the use of the system, and so that if they do make errors, they can easily rectify them

➢ **Satisfaction** - pleasant to use, so that users are subjectively satisfied when using it

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A model of the attributes of system acceptability (Nielsen, 1993)   * Modified by Constable (2013)

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Usability Testing

➢ Bruschi (2011) defines usability testing as the process of testing a system's user interface with the users themselves

➢ Usability testing is a technique for ensuring that the intended users of a system can carry out the intended tasks efficiently, effectively and satisfactorily

➢ Pretorius (2010) defines usability testing as a technique used in user-centred design (ISO 13407): User-centred design is characterised by active involvement of users and a clear understanding of user and task requirements

➢ Usability testing is usually conducted before the system is made available, so that any problems or issues identified can be addressed

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Advantages of usability testing

➢ Assists the developers in identifying faults/errors/bugs, in order to effect changes or modifications to the system

➢ Good product/system before it is released to the market

➢ Use of all types of testing/methods that validate the functionality of the system

➢ Saves on development costs

➢ Increases user satisfaction

➢ Develops trust in the company (Pretorius, 2010)

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Methods of usability testing

Methods of usability testing ...cont.

❖Testing (http://www.usabilityhome.com/)

- Coaching Method

- Co-discovery Learning

- Performance Measurement

- Question-asking Protocol

- Remote Testing

- Retrospective Testing

- Shadowing Method

- Teaching Method

- Thinking Aloud Protocol

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Methods of usability testing ...cont.

❖Inspection

- Cognitive Walkthroughs

- Feature Inspection

- Heuristic Evaluation

- Pluralistic Walkthrough

- Perspective-based Inspection

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Methods of usability testing ...cont.

❖**Inquiry**

- [Field Observation](#)

- [Focus Groups](#)

- [Interviews](#)

- [Logging Actual Use](#)

- [Proactive Field Study](#)

- [Questionnaires](#)

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Unisa usability laboratory

Marco Pretorius (Unisa: School of Computing- Usability Manager & Researcher)

➢ World class usability laboratory

➢ Exists within the School of Computing

➢ Has an Observer room

➢ Has a Participant room

➢ These 2 are separated by a one-way mirror

➢ Tobii 1750 eye tracker

➢ Audio and Video Recording equipment

➢ Event logging, eye tracking software

Available for research and professional usability consulting

http://osprey.unisa.ac.za/facilities.htm

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PART 2

USAGE

Electronic Database Usage

➢ More and more users rely on electronic databases

➢ Increasing percentage of library budget is allocated to electronic database subscriptions

➢ They offer great benefits

➢ Benefits offered cannot be realised if the databases are unusable

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Electronic law database usage statistics

➢ Libraries need statistics to justify expenditure and make the case for continued support

➢ Usage statistics (low ᵥ high)

➢ Discussion on specific law databases, e.g.

- Westlaw   ** JSTOR

- HeinOnline   ** ProQuest (abstract)

- Lexis Nexis

Importance of usage statistics

AALL (2012):

➢ Statistical analysis has the potential to save money and it shows whether money is spent efficiently and appropriately, based on evidence

➢ Tells us what gets used in the library

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CONCLUSION

LAW OF THE LEAST ASTONISHMENT

"the program/database should act in a way that least astonishes the user"

Usability testing of databases should be conducted by librarians more frequently

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