

The Evolution of Information and Interface Usability: from Simply Effective to Effective and Engaging

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Much of the early work done in the field of information and interface usability focused on helping people perform their tasks easily, efficiently, and correctly. Procedures and measures were developed to ensure that people were able to accomplish their task-oriented goals in as short a time as practical while ensuring the completeness and correctness of their results.

Today, however, we have a different relationship with our computing facilities. Our computers do not stand apart from us—in computer rooms or on desktops—they are with us during much of our waking hours—as laptops, tablets, or smart phones. As our opportunities physical interaction have evolved, so too have our expectations for their use and our understanding of usability. No longer is it the case that we want to perform quick, isolated activities and be done; we are frequently engaged in ongoing activities, and our involvement is less structured and more in tune with the rest of our activities. The goal of many social media applications is to have users constantly engaged with the social media sites and the services they offer.

This evolving relationship with media implies an evolving, and expanding, understanding of “usability.” In this session we will explore some of the new understandings of usability and ways that we can assess the usability of interfaces and products that we work with.

Electronic Learning: Modes of Instruction and Models for Learning

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When we hear the term “Electronic Learning,” a number of images may form in our heads. We may think of a student working in isolation typing responses to questions and answering questions with little, if any, interaction with others in the learning environment. Or, we may think of groups of students actively engaged in lectures, discussions, and activities, working closely with others—both synchronously or asynchronously—having a rich and rewarding learning experience.

The forms of electronic learning experiences depend on the resources and technology available. But they also depend to a very large extent to the learning model used to present information and to engage students.

In this session we will talk about the range of “electronic learning spaces” available and study a number of learning models that lead active and effective learning.

Roger Grice’s Bio-Sketch

Roger is a Professor of Practice of Human-Computer Interaction and Information Technology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. He holds a BS in Electrical Engineering from Polytechnic University, an MS in Computer Science from Union College, and a PhD in Communication and Rhetoric from Rensselaer.

He is Senior Member of IEEE and past-president of IEEE’s Professional Communication Society (PCS). He served IEEE as a member of the Publication Services and Product Board and as a member of the Products Committee and on the Transnational Committee. He chaired the Editorial Advisory Committee of IEEE’s Professional Communication Society and was Program Manager for their 1996 International

Professional Communication Conference. He has served PCS as Conference Manager for the 1996 International Professional Communication Conference and as Program Manager for the 1985, 1986, 1995, and 2001 conferences). He received an IEEE Third Millennium Medal and IEEE Professional Communication Society's Alfred N. Goldsmith Award for Contributions to Engineering Communication. He is a Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and has served on their Board of Directors as an as Assistant to the President. He received STC's Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication and the President's Award for Service. Retired from IBM Corporation, he now teaches courses on human-computer interaction, user-centered design, communicating through the WWW, information usability, and technical communication.