

Bill Wolff

Writing, Research, and Technology, Fall 2006

Sample Midterm Observations and Work Samples

Observations

Please include the following information for *each* observation. Please copy and paste from your Observations document.

Date observed: January 31, 2006

Date entered here: January 31, 2006

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): whole class

Activity: **building a basic webpage**

Observation: I was hoping that this class would help me get past the brick wall that I had when it came to teaching myself HTML. Several times over the past few years, I have sat down and gone over the basic codes, but not been able to progress further. In the second week of this class, I learned how to do tables, which is well beyond what I knew before.

Date observed: February 8, 2006

Date entered here: February 11, 2006

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): individual

Activity: **Reading Nielsen's *Designing Web Usability***

Observation: After reading Nielsen's theories on how people use web sites, I find myself hyper-aware of my own web browsing. I was already aware that I tend to scan sites and see if anything appeals to me (which makes it difficult when we are given web sites as assigned reading), but I wasn't as aware of how much I will skip while looking for those appealing bits. I feel like I am constantly learning new things on the web, which is miraculous now that I am aware of how much I am *not* reading.

Date observed: February 21, 2006

Date entered here: February 23, 2006

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): individual

Activity: **reading the introductory chapters to *Building Accessible Websites***

Observation: I find this whole discussion of learning how to make websites accessible to all users, regardless of physical ability, very interesting. Before this class, I had never considered how people with disabilities use the web. I can see, though, how this is an important concern, how people with disabilities certainly use then Internet as much as or more than everyone else and deserve every accommodation, and so I look forward to learning how to make websites accessible. I think it will be particularly useful to one of the web projects that I would like to start, a site to publish my family's genealogy. I would want the site to be accessible to certain members of my family who I know have mobility-impairments, as well as many people out in

Internet-land are older and have poor vision. Accessibility is definitely something that I'll want to take into account.

Date observed: March 6, 2006

Date entered here: March 6, 2006

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): pairs

Activity: **collaborating on the justification of the site prototype**

Observation: Erin and I worked out the "justification" of our prototype design in an IM conversation. It was probably the most collaborative part of this project so far—we've managed to divide up the work pretty cleanly up to this point. I'm usually not a fan of community efforts on small aspects of a project, like writing a few paragraphs, but I think the final product came out better than if one of us had done it on her own.

Date observed: February 28, 2006

Date entered here: March 6, 2006

Context (Individual, pairs, small group, large group, whole class): individual

Activity: **reading *Website ReDesign 2.0***

Observation: I will admit that I didn't get much out of the first few chapters of this book. It was all too confusing and jargon-y and way over my head and skill-set as a web designer. But the further I read, and the further we got along in the projects (especially this one, the site prototype), the more it made sense and became useful. Having the practical applications (making a wire frame, referring back to the communication brief) to work on while reading really made a difference with regard to my comprehension.

Work Samples

Please include the following information for *each* Work sample (you may copy and paste the list below for each work sample). Place the actual work samples in the Samples-of-Work folder inside your MidtermDocument folder (at the midterm) and FinalDocument folder (at the final). Do not paste the work samples into this document.

Title:

Assignment:

Format:

File name:

Location:

Comments about the work sample:

Title: Finding Suitable Colors for the Prototype

Assignment: Site Prototype

Format: html document

File name: n/a

Location: http://syverson.cwrl.utexas.edu/~wolff/sts311s06/projects/p1/g1/dona_palette.html

Comments about the work sample: When trying to decide on the colors that would be featured on our webpage, our group talked about using similar colors to those in the watercolor artist renditions of the new Blanton buildings. Because it can be difficult to choose colors that complement each other in tone, we also discussed using one of the color schemes available in MS PowerPoint. I took the initiative to look at the available color schemes in PowerPoint and found one that had similar shades to the watercolors, and then visited a few websites that had samples of non-dithering colors in HTML. I chose a palette from those colors, and created a simple webpage so that my group could view the colors on the screen.

Title: Text of IM Conversation

Assignment: Site Prototype> Justification of design

Format: text of IM conversation pasted into MS Word

File name: IM_conversation_06Mar06.doc

Location: Samples-of-Work folder

Comments about the work sample: This is the abridged text of an IM conversation that I had with Erin. We worked together on editing and improving the written justification of our prototype design. This is the best example I have of true collaboration—each of us contributing our thoughts and ideas as to what should be included in the statement. I think the final version, as completed through our collaboration, was much better than if either of us had written it on her own.

Title: Email Update

Assignment: Site Inventory and Analysis

Format: Email pasted into MS Word

File name: Email_meeting_summary_16Feb06.doc

Location: Samples-of-Work folder

Comments about the work sample: This is an email that I sent to our group email list, with the dual purpose of informing Chad of what we had discussed and updating the group of our progress on the project at that point. Emails such as this one demonstrate my role of “facilitator” in the group.

Title: “Nielsen Readings 2”

Assignment: Discuss the content of the Blanton Museum site and how you think it might change as a result of Nielsen's discussion of content in relation to usability in chapters 3 and 9.

Format: discussion forum post

File name: n/a

Location: <http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/?q=node/609#comment-1520>

Comments about the work sample: In this post, I discuss the complex usability issues of the content on the Blanton museum website.

Title: First Attempt at Wireframe

Assignment: Site Prototype> Basic wireframes

Format: gif file

File name: Interior_Page_Wireframe.GIF

Location: Samples-of-Work folder

Comments about the work sample: This is a basic wireframe that I created using MS Paint (which was the only software that was available to me at the time). I had not used a paint program since 1997 (my junior year of high school), which is evident by the uneven right borders and the inconsistent colors. The intent of this wireframe was to give the group a visual representation of the design we had discussed in class. I later created a better version of the wireframe in Adobe Photoshop.

Title: Final Draft of Wireframe

Assignment: Site Prototype> Basic wireframes

Format: jpeg file

File name: n/a

Location:

<http://syverson.cwrl.utexas.edu/~wolff/sts311s06/projects/p1/g1/Site%20Prototype/Wireframes/Basic%20Wireframe-%20Interior%20Page.jpg>

Comments about the work sample: I created this more polished version of a basic wireframe for my group to use in the Prototype creation process, as well as to turn in. Notice that the borders

are even and the colors are consistent. I also learned how to use Photoshop to measure pixel size, which was very important in creating the rough drafts and prototypes of the site.

Title: Manipulating Images using Photoshop

Assignment: Using images of varying complexity, practice writing alt tags

Format: html document

File name: n/a

Location: http://syverson.cwrl.utexas.edu/~wolff/sts311s06/kurtz/lro_sample.html

Comments about the work sample: One of the images I chose for the alt tag assignment is a photograph of my mother and sister from 1971. Since the color on the photo had faded over time, I used my newly acquired Photoshop skills to correct the color before adding it to my assignment page. I also created a webpage with the original photo next to the corrected photo, so you can see the difference.

Title: PowerPoint slide

Assignment: unassigned work

Format: PowerPoint slide pasted into a MS Word doc

File name: PowerPoint_Slide.doc

Location: Samples-of-work folder

Comments about the work sample: This is the first slide of a PowerPoint presentation that I created for my boss. In the past I had relied on the templates provided by PowerPoint, but the work done in class creating and manipulating images with Photoshop gave me the confidence to play around with PowerPoint and create a custom slide for this particular presentation. My boss was very pleased with the result.

Title: Screenshot of previous attempt to build a website

Assignment: n/a

Format: jpeg file

File name: Alias_screenshot.gif

Location: Samples-of-work folder

Comments about the work sample: This is a screenshot of my previous attempt at building a webpage, which I created with MS FrontPage. Back in 2001-2002, I was obsessed with the television show *Alias*, and wanted to create a website that would catalog the intricacies of the plot. After spending my entire winter break watching my tapes over and over again, and working on the content and presentation of the site, I was rewarded by ABC using the post-Superbowl timeslot to wrap up all of the previous plot lines in an attempt to track new viewers, so my work was rendered moot and the site never got off the ground. In the screenshot, you can see that the site had several usability issues that I was, of course, completely unaware of, including the use of frames in the header and navigation and lack of relevant content on the home page. I also used frames for reasons I don't recall, but also because I didn't know better.

Title: Basic Homepage

Assignment: Create a basic homepage

Format: html page

File name: n/a

Location: <http://syverson.cwrl.utexas.edu/~wolff/sts311s06/kurtz/>

Comments about the work sample: This is the basic webpage that I created in the first weeks of the class. It is the first webpage that I have created without using a WYSIWYG.