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Usability Testing

Purpose of the testing
The purpose of the system is to assist those in the LSDD Master's program in developing their portfolio. The purpose of user testing is to see where the system excels and where it falls short in regards to user interface and usefulness for student needs.

A brief introduction to the system or component of the system
The system is called "LSDD Portfolio Assistant" and is just that: a tool which assists LSDD students in the development and completion of their portfolio. It also assists advisors in the management of their roles in the process, but that component will not be evaluated right now. This contains only the student component of the system currently.

Profile of the user
The profile of the user is a person who is familiar with the LSDD program second-hand (has seen me go through the program) and is familiar with computers at a programming level. This is a male, 34 years old, but not a student with University of Missouri-Columbia.

I understand this is a disadvantage of the user is that he is not a current student of the LSDD program. However, having a person whom I could be present with and see use the system was important to me.

Preparation of the user
The user was a willing participant and eager to learn more about the LSDD Portfolio assistant as well as evaluate its functionality and usefulness. The user was heavily debriefed on the LSDD program as it is important to understand what the program itself entails. The user was lightly debriefed on the portfolio process, as that is more than likely what other graduate students coming into the process not knowing a lot of information about the process would have as well.

The user was also told what was expected of him during the user testing using the "introduction of the activities" as a model. He was informed he was not being evaluated himself, but it was a means for seeing what issues may exist in the current assistant. He was told to be honest and not be afraid to think aloud, critique, or voice anything he didn't like. Vice versa, it was also good to voice things he found he did like or finds works well. A demonstration of thinking aloud with Amazon.com was demonstrated so he could understand a little better what the think-aloud process might look like and not feel as insecure about attempting to do the "think aloud."

The task list users needed to complete during the testing
- You're not sure about what the portfolio is supposed to contain. How do you find out?

- You are confused about what different portions of your portfolio are supposed to look like. Where do you go?
- You want to add another professor access to your portfolio to give you feedback. How do you change that?
- You want to contact your professor to ask her for feedback. What would you do?
- You want to update some of the links for your resume. Show me what you would do.
- You want to get an overall snapshot of where you are in the process. How would you be able to see that?
- You want to plan a timeline for getting things done.

Debriefing of User

The debriefing questions were modeled after the debriefing questions given to us.

- Is English your first language?
- Were the terms used in the application easy to understand?
- Were the images or icons used in the interface easy to understand?
- Do you think the structure or organization of the application is appropriate?
- What do you like best about the application?
- What do you like least about the application?
- What parts of the application would be most useful to you?
- Do you have any other suggestions for improvements to the interface of the system?

Summary of aspects that seem appropriate for use

- The overall format is easy to use and intuitive (tabs with changing menu on the left)
- Like the snapshot upon logging in.
- Like the ability to find out more information about specific parts of the portfolio and see examples, especially without going tons of places or lots of clicking.

Summary of aspects that seem problematic for use

- The feedback and communication section are a little difficult to figure out. How to initially contact an advisor? How is it advantageous over email?

- Didn't find a place to jot down notes or plan out my timeline. Helping me in providing me information but not supportive enough in the process for planning and assisting my thought process.

- *My own thoughts: It was brought to my attention that because it looks like Sakai, users could potentially be confused and wonder why it doesn't have all the functionality that Sakai has.*

Recommendations to Improve the system or component of the system

- **More intuitive and useful messaging system.** Look more into the feedback area and how to make it more intuitive and useful over email. Perhaps an email notification along with the message in the email box, along with more intuitive buttons on the messaging system.
- **Places for jotting down thoughts and ideas.** Add places where students can jot down their ideas and thoughts to support them in their process.
- **Timeline management.** Add a management tool where they can also manage their timelines for the creation of their portfolio in addition to just seeing their progress
- **Different color scheme and logo.** Use a different color scheme and Logo from Sakai. That way the users get the overall feeling they "understand" how to use the system (because it is like Sakai) but aren't confused because if the look is different, they may come to the system not expecting the same functions. This would have to be tested with users; unfortunately my user was not currently a user of Sakai so this was not tested. In the future I would like to test a user who currently uses Sakai--one with this same color scheme and logo, and one with a different color scheme and logo.