

Usability Study of Area Agency on Aging Websites in the State of Ohio

**Schwerha, D.
Industrial and Systems Engineering,
Ohio University**

Older adults age 50 and older are the fastest growing segment of the computer using population (Russell, 1998). This cohort of adults may or may not have used the computer for work, but they understand its use in such applications as email, word processing, shopping, and search for health and services. Because of increasing amounts of information that are delivered over the web, a term “the digital divide” has been coined for those people who use the web and those who don’t. Although the digital divide may result from users not having a computer, it may also result from users not wanting to use the computer. This desire to not use it may be more a function of poor design than inability on the part of the user.

The long-term goal of the proposed study is to determine recommendations for good web design for the AAA sites so that the utilization of the sites will increase and the digital divide will be reduced. It is hypothesized that the websites with the most senior friendly design will be determined to be most usable. The objective of this application is to perform a pilot study to determine the usability of several representative AAA sites from the state of Ohio. Unlike other usability studies related to older adults, this study is innovative in that it will first determine what types of information that the older adults would like to learn from the sites, and then the usability testing will involve determining task performances and usability ratings about those very questions. The end result will be recommendations for re-design that are focused on what the older adults need and want to learn from the specific sites. Specific aims are listed below:

- Specific Aim 1. Classify the usability of AAA sites in the state of Ohio by using established guidelines.
- Specific Aim 2. Survey a group of older adults to determine individual characteristics as well as what they would like to learn from the web, especially health and social services sites.
- Specific Aim 3. Test the usability of representative AAA sites using input from Specific Aim 2. Provide recommendations on website re-design based on the results from this data.



**University of Cincinnati
10th Annual
Pilot Research Project
Symposium
October 1-2, 2009**

Main Menu

Hosted by: The University of Cincinnati Education and Research Center Supported by: The National
Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
(NIOSH) Grant #: T42/OH008432-05

- ◆ **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
- ◆ **Keynote Speakers**
- ◆ **Podium Presentations**
- ◆ **Poster Presentations**
- ◆ **Video Montage of the 10th Annual PRP
Symposium**
- ◆ **Participating Universities**
- ◆ **Steering Committee Members**
- ◆ **Acknowledgements**
- ◆ **Problems Viewing the Videos**

Produced by Kurt Roberts Department of Environmental Health
Copyright 2009, University of Cincinnati