

## Case Study

British Library – Web 2.0 Catalogue usability testing with eye tracking July 2008

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### The Brief

The British Library has a catalogue which can be accessed in the Reading Rooms or online. This catalogue is being redeveloped, and the new version will incorporate a number of Web 2.0 features including user-generated content (reviews) and 'tagging'. In advance of its launch in October 2008, the British Library wished to test a prototype version of the catalogue with target users.

### How we responded to the brief

We recommended testing the site with 3 testers – a frequent reading room user, an infrequent reading room user and someone who has not used the reading rooms. By obtaining user experience feedback WUP would be able to give the British Library insight into both usability (ease and intuitiveness of the prototype site) and users' attitudes to the prototype, including the new Web 2.0 features.

In order to ensure buy-in to the research results we recommended that key British Library staff actively observed users on the site and then discussed the research outcomes to achieve a shared understanding of the issues and actions to address these.

### What we did

We conducted an observed testing session in a facilitator-led environment, with 3 testers in the morning, followed by a facilitated debrief. The facilitator-led environment encouraged testers to follow routes which would be relevant to them, but also ensured that pertinent attitudinal feedback was gained. Eye-tracking was also



used during the testing in real time so the observers could see where the testers were looking – this helped provide greater insight about which elements of the page the testers actually looked at.

British Library stakeholders discreetly observed the research in our viewing studio 'live' via a one-way mirror, and captured issues arising which were mapped to

help guide the subsequent facilitated discussion of the issues and an agreement of actions.

### The outcomes

The testing highlighted a number of usability issues with the prototype catalogue. The facilitated debrief allowed British Library stakeholders the opportunity to discuss these issues, and come up with ways of addressing them. It also revealed some very interesting view points and behaviours about users' perceptions and use of Web 2.0 features such as writing reviews and tagging content. The British Library concluded that they appear to be 'ahead of the game' in relation to these features, and they will implement them and monitor their success over the coming months.

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*"Thanks for a very good day yesterday. Everybody said how much they got out of it and they are all itching to get on and change the system."* Roger Butcher, British Library

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### Timing and costs

The project was conducted in July 2008 and took just under two weeks, at a cost of approximately £6,000.