

Case Study

Medical Research Council – User Testing & Training September 2005

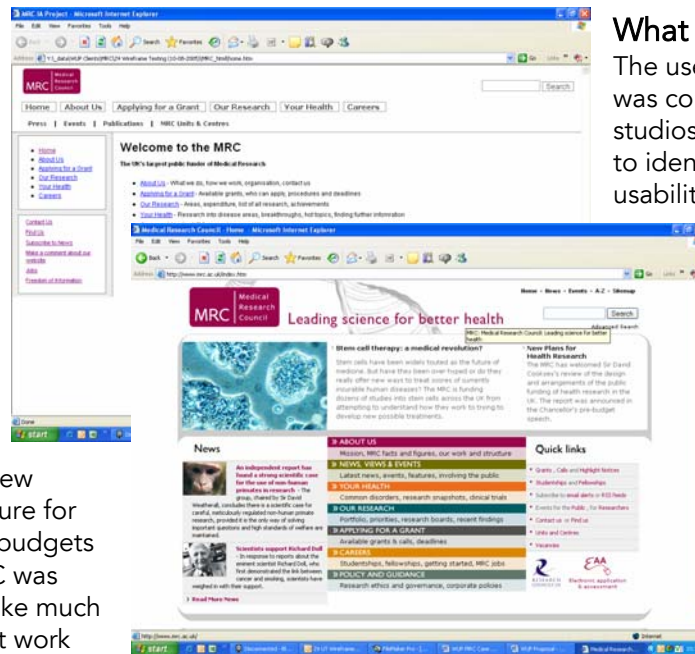
The Brief

MRC was redeveloping its website and was particularly keen to make the new site usable (and useful) to members of the general public as well as to their traditional audiences (i.e. medical research academics). The MRC also wanted a new Information Architecture for the site but because budgets were limited the MRC was proposing to undertake much of the redevelopment work themselves and therefore wanted appropriate training in support.

How we responded to the brief

Due to the funding constraints, we proposed a combined research and training project that included:

- User testing and research with 10 testers: 2 from each of the principal target user types. The testing was followed by a facilitated discussion of the issues to agree actions.
- Developing a 'first draft' information architecture informed by an 'open' card sorting exercise with 3 testers.
- Testing this draft information architecture with 6 testers.
- Training and consultancy support to help MRC staff develop the Information Architecture and the skills required to test it.
- User testing with 3 testers on the final prototype developed by MRC staff



What we did

The user testing and research was conducted in observation studios in London and was used to identify both user goals and usability issues with the site.

From this research c.50 main user goals were identified. Open card sorting research was then undertaken to understand how users would group information and the language they would use to describe the groups.

With this evidence, a prototype Information Architecture was developed. This was then tested with 6 respondents. At the same time members of MRC staff were trained in how to undertake user testing of subsequent drafts they developed themselves.

The outcomes

The user research gave greater clarity to the goals the site should support. The skills transfer helped MRC develop a user focused information architecture and wire frames that were used to develop the final version of the site.

"Not only did WUP deliver on the user testing and IA development, they gave us the skills and confidence to develop and maintain the quality of the site post-launch" Allen O'Leary – MRC Web manager

Timing and costs

The project was conducted in summer 2005 and took 12 weeks to complete at a cost of £15,000.