

Cloudworks usability testing February 2011

In this laboratory test four participants were given a series of nine short tasks to complete on the Cloudworks site. They were asked to verbalise their thought processes and were prompted through questions to explain their understanding of what they saw. The test was documented using the Tobii Eyetracker which videoed the tasks and discussion, and recorded the eye movements of the participants around the site.

All the participants were female and were unfamiliar with the site, although three had heard of it. All said that they worked in the HE sector, and reported differing levels of technological confidence and competence.

This report will document the key themes arising from the testing, and make recommendations for the development of the site.

1. Homepage

1.1 First impressions

Where first impressions about the look and feel of the Homepage were expressed they were positive. It was felt that the site was attractive and fresh looking. This may in part be because of the picture of a lilac tree in the featured Cloudscape box during the testing period as this was mentioned specifically by two participants as being 'pretty'. This positive impression of the 'look and feel' continued through the site. Participants commented that they liked the colours and thought the site was clean and "easy on the eye".

During the testing participants were asked what they thought 'Clouds' and 'Cloudscapes' were. Two participants thought that a Cloudscape was a subdivision of a Cloud and two accurately understood that Clouds were collected into Cloudscapes. The two participants who were incorrect were not corrected by the interviewer however their misunderstanding did not seem to significantly impact on their ability to actively use the site. One of these found and read the in-site help about Clouds/ Cloudscape later in the test, and the other asked the interviewer for help in understanding the term.

Two of the four participants were able to quickly and accurately say what and who the site was for. One participant said that she thought the strapline was clear but inaccurately understood that the site was an OER/ course document repository (a way of sharing courses with other universities, and/or 'Jo Public'). Another was confused by the variety of links on the Homepage and was unable to say what it was for or about, but thought it was 'definitely for researchers'. She stated that the content on the Homepage looked 'random'.

One participant said that the busyness of the Homepage was a positive point (because it showed there was a lot going on) and another said that it was confusing as there didn't seem to be a clear theme. The other two did not mention 'busyness'.

Recommendations

Consider putting a short definition of Clouds/ Cloudscapes on the Homepage i.e. Clouds are anything to do with learning and teaching, and Cloudscapes are collections of Clouds about a certain topic (perhaps above create a Cloud). **(Medium priority)**

Reduce the number of links on the Homepage by i.e. limiting number of Events/Popular/Active lists to 4. **(Medium to High priority)**

Two participants commented that it was nice having the News block because it enabled them to get in touch with the team in case of a problem.

One participant felt that the site should be better branded to the OU on the homepage (ie via a statement at the bottom saying 'Hosted by the Open University'). She felt that this would help people feel more comfortable about adding information because they would know that the Open University will not use content commercially.

Overall the page was viewed by participants in a balanced way. i.e. participants did not view primarily the top and left as is commonly seen in website testing.

Consider adding 'Hosted by the Open University' at the bottom of the page.(**Low priority**)

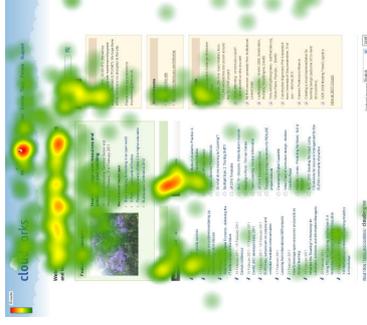


Figure 1 Participant 1: Homepage first look

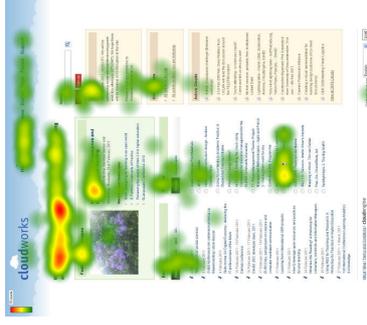


Figure 2 Participant 2: Homepage first look

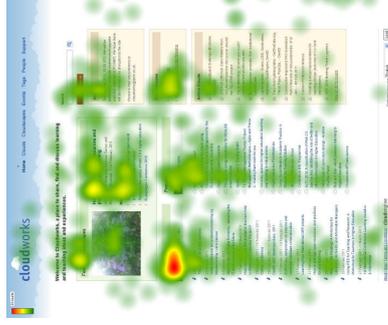


Figure 3 Participant 3: Homepage first look

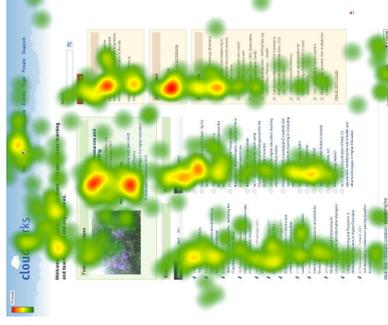


Figure 4 Participant 4: Homepage first look

1.2 Finding the most recent activity

When asked to find the most recent activity on the site, two participants thought they would find it under Events. Both these participants understood the word 'Events' as being incidences of site activity rather than workshops or conferences. One participant thought they would find the most recent activity under Active Clouds. All participants experienced some confusion between the headings Popular and Active - in that they couldn't define the difference - and none used the correct 'All activity' link even though the heat maps suggest that they all looked at it.

1.3 Finding the tags list

All participants quickly and successfully found the tags list from the Homepage, although one participant did not know what tags were or why they might use them.

1.4 Finding a specific Cloud or Cloudscape from the Homepage

Three of the four participants found it difficult to find the Cloud that they had just created. These three had expected to find a link on the Homepage under Events or Active Clouds. All had forgotten what they had named it so couldn't immediately use the Search box. One remembered the tag she used and put that into the search box and found her Cloud was 3rd on the Search list. Two found their Cloud by clicking on the 'Clouds' tab at the top of the page and one through her profile page, although this latter participant said that it was not obvious that she should search for it here because she thought that profile would just include name, date of birth and region.

1.5 Logging in

All participants quickly and successfully logged in using a temporary user name and password.

1.6 Setting up a Cloud

All participants quickly and easily found the 'Create a Cloud' link on the Homepage.

1.7 Sending a message

Participants were asked to send a message to the interviewer pointing her to the Cloud they had set up. Each participant went about doing this in different ways: one went to People and one went to Messages (using the tabs at the top of the Homepage); two went to their Cloud first, one because she said she 'felt safe there', and the other because she was expecting to see a 'Share this Cloud' type tab under 'Improve this Cloud'.

2. Search and navigation

2.1 Free browsing activity

Participants were given the opportunity to browse at will from the Homepage. The strapline and tabs along the top were a particular area of interest for three of the four participants. The fourth participant focused on Events. When asked to find something of interest two clicked on the 'Clouds' tab in order to start finding something interesting and one clicked on a link under 'Popular'.

Clarify what is meant by 'Events' i.e. by renaming header 'Events calendar' or 'Conferences and events'. Consider also the 'Events' tab along the top of the page. 'Events calendar' probably too long here. **(High priority)**

Remove 'Active Clouds' from the Homepage but increase the impact of activity on the generation of 'Popular' Clouds. **(High priority)**

Rename links under 'Cloudstreams' to indicate that these are where you will find most recent activity. i.e.:

Cloudstreams

- ▶ [Recent activity on the site](#)
- ▶ [Recent activity on things you are following](#)
- ▶ [Your recent activity](#)

(High priority)

Consider renaming 'Profile' in dropdown box - 'Profile and activity'. **(Medium priority)**

Consider adding a 'Create a Cloudscape' link to the Homepage alongside 'Create a Cloud'. **(Medium priority)**

Consider adding a green 'Share' button to the Cloud page under Cloud/ Cloudscape title (in short term share via DM but eventually via FB, Twitter etc??). **(Low to Medium priority)**

2.2 Using the search box

When asked to use the Search box to find something interesting, two searched using subjects ('German courses' and 'Psychology'), one searched 'Educational technology in schools' and one 'PhD skills'. All were presented with long lists and three of the four said that they found the lists overwhelming. Two felt that many items in the list didn't really match what they had searched for. As a result of the search, three found items of interest and one didn't. The images to the left indicate the length of the search lists for participants 1 (German Courses), 2 (Psychology) and 4 (PhD Skills), unfortunately a screenshot of the 3rd participant's search list (Educational Technology in Schools) is unavailable but it was of similar length to participant 4's. Two participants said that they were not clear how the order of the lists was decided and suggested filtering options.



2.3 Using tags to search

Three of the four participants were able to say accurately what was meant by the word 'tags'. Three participants chose a tag from the boxes in the centre of the page and one chose a tag from the 'Top 10' list on the left hand side. The search list that was offered each participant after clicking on a tag word was significantly shorter and more accurate than the list offered after a key word was put into the search box. One participant chose the 'Web 2.0' tag and was offered only one link which was actually tagged 'Web 2' (bug).

2.4 Using user profile pages to search

Only one participant chose to click on a user profile in their browsing of the site and this was to read the profile, rather than look at and browse that individual's activity.

2.5 Clouds and Cloudscape lists

The Clouds and Cloudscape tabs at the top of the page were particularly well used both when browsing the site and when searching for specific items. The Cloud/scape list pages were used to provide definitions of a Cloud/scape and the 'New Clouds' box was used to find recently set up Clouds as discussed before, but the A to Z filters were not used and all participants left the page very quickly. The reasons for this were not captured but it may suggest that they did not find the A-Z format interesting or useful to browse through.

Search function needs significant work. Too many returns are listed and these are not sufficiently accurate. In the short term a solution may be to limit the number of returns on the list to 25-30. **(High priority)**

Clarify the way the lists are generated. In the longer term add 'sort by...' options i.e. alphabetical, popular, active etc **(High priority)**

Add 'What are tags' in-site help to tag page. **(Medium priority)**

Again, allow 'sort by...' options and/or tag search box. **(Medium priority)**

The two representations (Top 10 and tag cloud) give the same top 10 results. Consider removing one of these **(Low priority)**.

Fix bug **(Medium priority)**

Improve the layout and attractiveness of Cloud_list and Cloudscape_list pages as this usability test suggests that they may be used for serendipitous searches more than anticipated. Add i.e. Active Clouds to Recently added. **(Medium to High priority)**

3. Clouds

3.1 Headings and layout

Participants were asked to visit a specific Cloud and were asked questions about the headings and layout of the Cloud page.

There was some confusion experienced by all participants to a varying extent in relation to the difference between the headers 'Extra Content', 'Contribute' and 'Improve this Cloud'. Extra content was generally thought to be the place for discussion and this misunderstanding appeared to be exacerbated by the discussion appearing below the fold. Of the three headings 'Improve this Cloud' was the one that was best understood.

Three of the four did not know what 'Embedded Content' was despite an example from Scribd embedded on the Cloud they were exploring.

Only one participant found 'Links' unaided. When participants clicked on 'Links' they were taken back up to the top of the page which caused some confusion until they realised where they had been taken and that the links list could be found below the fold.

Only one participant of the four could correctly explain why it might be useful to 'add a tag'. Participants generally thought tags were automatically generated from the Cloud content text.

All four participants were confused by the header 'In Cloudscapes'. Partly this was because of a lack of confidence in their understanding what a Cloudscape was, and partly because the header appeared after the 'Tags' header. Two of the four participants thought 'In Cloudscapes' meant tags which appeared specifically in that Cloud, one thought it was a folder in the Cloud and the other went to the tab along the top of the page- 'Cloudscapes', before correctly explaining what 'In Cloudscapes' might mean.

All participants could correctly explain what was meant by 'Improve this Cloud' and three of the four likened it to a wiki. This term seemed familiar to them. One participant commented that 'Add a reference' should read 'Add an academic reference' for clarity.

3.2 Setting up a Cloud

Participants were asked to set up a Cloud with a link to a specific external website. All participants easily found 'Create a Cloud' on the Homepage, and had no difficulties setting up a Cloud.

3.3 Adding embedded content

Participants were asked to embed a video from YouTube in their newly created Cloud. Three of the four had

When 'Links' is Clicked on take user to top of links list rather than top of Cloud. **(High priority)**

There was significant confusion over the meanings headings and of key terms. Recommend significant relabeling and some restructuring of the Cloud layout:

- Add green 'Share' button under heading (see earlier recommendation)
- Remove 'Create a Cloud' (Clouds tab easily accessible at top of page)
- Move Tags to under Cloud content text
- Extra content could become i.e. Further information
- After 'Embedded content' add text '(videos, images and slides etc)'
- Move 'Links' and 'Academic References' to RHS again but only show first 4 and then 'see more'.
- Contribute could then become 'Discussion'
- Move 'Improve this Cloud' to above the fold to where 'Tags' currently sits OR remove completely and just have improve buttons next to relevant headers
- 'In Cloudscapes' should become i.e. 'This Cloud belongs to these Cloudscapes'

See alternate layout at bottom below **(Medium to High priority)**

difficulties finding their recently created Cloud (see point 1.4 above), and three participants needed to be told what embedded content was (see point 3.1 above), however once these issues were resolved they were all easily able to add embedded content and all participants spontaneously commented on how easy it was.

All participants were able to explain what an 'Accessible Alternative' was but none added any text to this box.

4. Cloudscapes

4.1 Headings and layout

Participants were not specifically taken to a Cloudscape page but one participant tended to search and follow links to Cloudscapes rather than Clouds from the Search list page and visited several Cloudscapes. The misunderstandings about what headings meant evident on Cloud pages did not seem to occur on the simpler Cloudscape pages.

4.2 Adding a Cloud to a Cloudscape

Participants were asked to add their Cloud to an existing Cloudscape called 'Accessibility, inclusion and personalisation'. All participants had difficulty in adding their Cloud to a Cloudscape for one or more of the following reasons:

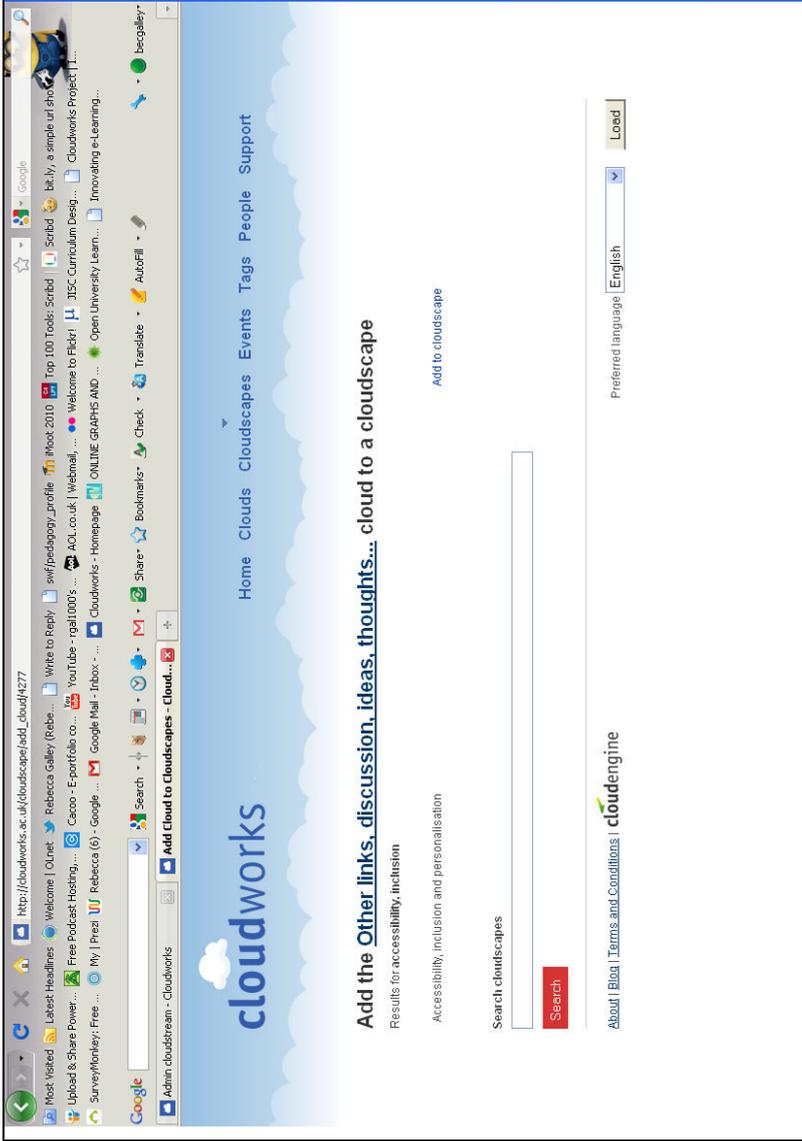
- Participants went to the Cloudscape, expecting to be able to add a specific Cloud to it but there is no link to do this on a Cloudscape page (only create a new Cloud)
- The 'Search Cloudscapes, Search box did not find the Cloudscape unless full title was input. i.e. one participant searched for 'accessibility inclusion' and the Cloudscape was not found.
- Cloudscape name and 'Add to Cloudscape' link not sufficiently prominent so was missed by participants and so they continued to search (see image below):

Add accessible alternative guidance as in-site help (**High priority**)

Add 'Add a Cloud to this Cloudscape' link to Cloudscape page (**High priority**)

Check Cloudscape search for bugs (**Medium to High priority**)

Improve visibility of Cloudscape search listing and 'Add to Cloudscape' link (perhaps by using green 'Add a Cloudscape' icon) (**High priority**)



- Participants could not tell whether they had been successful in adding their Cloud to the Cloudscape
- One participant became very disorientated and could not tell what kind of page she was on, or how to find somewhere she was familiar with.

Add a 'You have successfully added a Cloud to this Cloudscape' message. **(High priority)**

Improve labelling of pages i.e Cloud/ Cloudscape/ profile page etc. **(Low to medium priority)**

[Home](#) [Clouds](#) [Cloudscapes](#) [Events](#) [Tags](#) [Messages](#) [People](#) [Support](#)

How to use educational technology quickly (Under Ten Minutes)

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Cloud created by: [Nathaniel Dean](#)
 14 March 2011

Search

[Rebecca Galley](#)
[Sign out](#)

[Improve this cloud](#)

[+ Add a tag](#)

[+ Add extra content](#)

[+ Add embedded content](#)

[+ Add link](#)

[+ Add reference](#)

[+ Add a podcast](#)

[+ Add to a Cloudscape](#)

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This site allows users to upload, share or suggest videos (up to 10 minutes in length) on educational technologies of all kinds.

In Cloudscapes

[elerlearning](#) [webwatch](#)

More information

Provided by the mad cap videos by @mwater and co for their forthcoming presentations at the ISC online conference I've decided to create this cloud to share and discuss ideas around how universities of the future might look like. Here are some questions to stimulate the debate.

- ▶ In a world where increasingly both content and expertise is freely available, what does a university offer?
- ▶ What are the ways in which technologies are likely to impact on education?
- ▶ Will the current set up and number of Universities stay the same or are we likely to see a radical reduction?
- ▶ Are students' attitudes towards education changing, is it becoming less valuable?

Feel free also to add extra questions to the list

Tags

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[educational technology](#)
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[Under Ten Minutes](#)
[video](#)

Embedded Content (videos, images, slides etc)

Discussion

Discussion (0)

Format **B** **I** **L** **U** **Code** **Table** **Quote** **Link** **Image** **Video** **Embed**

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