Cloudworks Usability Testing

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My initial thoughts about Cloudworks is that it has three major functions: a repository of resource material; a place for sharing, discussing and debating the material; and a social space which provides Cloudfests and upcoming events. The nearest analogy I can come up with is that of a Public Library. There are no barriers to entering the library; it has a wealth of resource material; many libraries have book clubs where participants can discuss books; and libraries advertise local events, arts festivals etc. As a library it needs to get users to come in and have relevant material that is easy to locate. This relies on relevant material and good navigation.

I have looked at the site as a naïve user, which primarily I am, since I've not used the site to any great extent. First impressions are that this is a busy site with a lot of information and no obvious starting point for navigation. This could lead to users becoming overwhelmed and not get the best from the website. Going back to my analogy, you need better labelling and signposting, so that people know where they should go for a topic of interest. This means you need fewer clear high level labels and less complicated labels.

The colours on the website do not all conform to a basic colour contrast analyser and the suggestion is that for further accessibility of the site is conducted by Dr. Chetz Colwell. I have however, highlighted contrast problems on the front page of the website. In this brief report I've worked through the pages and reported on each page as I progressed.

Front Page

- Initial reaction that this is a very busy page with lots going on. **Recommendation:** to reduce the amount on this first page and make it simpler.

- Can't change font size easily – OU pages have accessibility size change. If you use View, Text Size and set it at the largest text setting then the display breaks up. **Recommendation:** review text resizer.

- Using a colour contrast analyzer on the Front Page indicates that the grey colour on the pink background is not of a high enough contrast, and the burgundy colour of the clouds and wording is mistaken for black as a user. **Recommendation:** reconsider the colours and use a contrast analyzer.

- I couldn't tab through the web page.

- Cloudworks logo covers search box, so can't use search box. I know that if you click on the Search button then a search box appears, so why have a search box on the Front page. **Recommendation:** Move search box or logo.

- Banner – Inspiration for creating new learning activities? – Is that supposed to inform the user what Cloudworks is about? If so, it's not very clear and you have a better explanation in the central column. **Recommendation:** remove or change banner

- 'Burgundy/Black' Clouds not 'very friendly'. **Recommendation:** try different colours with some users.

- It is difficult for the user to know what they should be doing or where to go to first, or the relevance of each of the areas. For example there are clouds at the top, one of which, 'Tags', refers to the tag list in the right hand side. Do you need the tag cloud at the top? **Recommendation:** Redesign front page to be less 'busy'. Remove Tags cloud button at the top of the page.

- Notice telling me there are 378 clouds so far. Useful information, but what can I do with it? Does it have to be manually updated? In which case it could easily fall into disuse. **Recommendation:** Move to under the latest news and ensure it's automatically updated.

- Grey banners on left hand side. The top one has no heading until the person logs in, but the other two have headings when not logged in. **Recommendation:** Give this a heading e.g. Using Cloudworks or make the 'Log in' a cloud at the top since you can't Create a Cloud unless you are logged in.

- My Cloudscapes would be better as a cloud at the top and I think the cloud labelled 'People' could be put somewhere else.

- There is a need for more information about Following People and how to follow people. **Recommendation**: Write instructions somewhere on the People page.

- Research that Chetz and I have conducted where we have asked participants about what tags are, and how they can be conveyed, has resulted in finding that not many people understand the Tag concept. Particularly that size indicates there is more content there than smaller sizes. **Recommendation:** Consider whether it is worth having the Tag Cloud on the right handside.

- The term 'Clouds' is quite amorphous, but personally I like it. The problem is if people don't take it seriously. However, it could be a good term if Google are now using it. Have you tried the word Clusters on users, or has Clusters already been used on a similar website? **Recommendation:** Try out different names with users.

What it is and how it works

- There is a typo on this page (conference) and other pages, so the site needs a good editorial look at it.

- What does the last sentence mean? "All the clouds from these Cloudscapes and people will display in your Cloudstream." This is the first time you have mentioned Cloudstream, so as a new user I wouldn't know what you meant.

- There are no Back buttons on any of the pages. Is that intentional to make people use the browser back button?

About Cloudworks

- There needs to be consistency of spelling. On this page it is also spelled CloudWorks see last spelling in this section: "in the development of CloudWorks". **Recommendation:** Have editorial input.

People Cloud

- As you already know the long list is intimidating and is oddly structured so that William John comes after Ali Wyllie and is followed by Sharon Altena. This list needs some work and is the ordering by first name how you want it to remain, or second name ordering as well?

- When I look at other people in the People Cloud e.g. Ann Jones there is a link to Assign Cloudscape permissions for Ann Jones. Does every user need to be able to see that? **Recommendation:** Hide permissions in the name list.

My Cloudstream

- I think that there needs to be an explanation of the difference between My Cloudstream and My Cloudscapes.

- The Cloudstream is a very long list. Is there any way of grouping them to a set of smaller lists?

Recent Clouds

- It's difficult to see the difference between My Cloudstream and Recent Clouds. Users need to be aware of the difference or one of the areas will fall into disuse.

Recent Cloudscapes

- The heading on this page says Recently Updated Cloudscapes. This is not the same title as the heading Recent Cloudscapes. Again you need to have an editor review all the pages.

- It is very easy to get lost in the whole site and this is a prime example where if I click on Mobile learning practices and go to the next page and I then have to click on one of the Clouds in the Cloudscape. When I've read that cloud and then look at the

comments, I have no way of knowing where I am. There is no breadcrumb trail or Back Button. **Recommendation**: Improve the navigation on the site.

Create a Cloud

- In this editor you have boxes that require information e.g. Tool and you give examples. This could either be a drop down box that participants can choose from a list, which can in itself be restricting, but it does give you consistency which is something you need if you are going to use search terms. **Recommendation:** Policy decision about drop down boxes.

Cloudworks News

- This is similar to Latest Cloudworks News although it contains more of the news items. It depends on how up to date the Cloudworks News will remain and if it doesn't stay updated it just becomes another repository. **Recommendation**: Remove Cloudworks News and leave Latest Cloudworks News in its place.

The social aspects of this website is less easy to define and I would like to review this further when more people are using it as a way of communicating. There are at the moment very few comments on Clouds. I'm happy to continue to look at the website on an iterative basis, so please let me know when you would like me to have another 'walk through'.