Evaluation of the "Water Ways" Web site

Cultural Education Section
Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage web site
www.folklife.si.edu

Barbara J. Soren, PhD
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# Evaluation of the "Water Ways" Web site

## Cultural Education Section

Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage web site

[www.folklife.si.edu](http://www.folklife.si.edu)

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*Barbara J. Soren, PhD*
"What’s folklore?" …folklore is the study of traditions. Things learned by observation, imitation, not from a book. Folklore passed over space and through time: blues singing, basket making, fairy tales, flat foot dancing, herbal remedies, knock-knock jokes.

Betty J. Belanus, *Seasonal*  
Round Barn Press  
Rockville, MD, p. 1

“Water Ways: Mid-Atlantic Maritime Communities” is an Online Exhibition of the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival that will be part of the Cultural Education Section of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage web site ([www.folklife.si.edu](http://www.folklife.si.edu)). Barbara J. Soren, PhD, and Betty Belanus, the web developer for Water Ways, conducted user testing of the prototype web site one week after the 2005 Folklife Festival in the Smithsonian Mall (June 23-27, June 30-July 4, 2005). The six users who reviewed the Water Ways site had a wide variety of experience and represented different gender, ethnic/cultural groups, and educational levels.

User-testing is a procedure used in web development and research to obtain direct feedback from users about the quality of the web site and how they use the site.¹ It generally involves the web developer and/or a consultant working one-on-one with a user at a computer. Users think aloud while they are browsing the web site and respond to questions in a semi-structured interview process. Through user-testing, the web developer can determine, for example, how users make navigation choices, whether they are finding a pathway they expected to find, the ways different people spend time on the web site, and if individuals need more help to find what they need. Research on this form of data collection suggests that responses from six to eight users are typically enough to enable the web team to make decisions about changes to their web site.

**PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

A written participant questionnaire (see Appendix 1a) indicated that the sample of users involved in the Water Ways user testing represented a range of age, gender, and ethnic/cultural groups, and lived both in local areas as well as the Mid-Atlantic region. They had the following demographic characteristics:

- One person was 18-25 years, one was 26-35, three were 46-55, and one was 56-65 (no one was 36-45 or over 66 years);
- Three users were female and three were male;
- Four of the users were Caucasian (one reported being White/European and another White, American), one was African American, and one was Latino;

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Four came from the local (Metro DC) area and two were from outside of Metro DC but from the Mid-Atlantic region.

Betty Belanus will conduct the user test with three more users who represent Maritime museum staff members and volunteers. These users will also be from the Mid-Atlantic region, and hopefully one or more will be within the 36-45-year age group, a group very likely to access the Water Ways web site.

Users represented target markets for the Water Ways web site:
- One was an anthropologist/ethnomusicologist, folklore student/graduate, musician, and ethnographer (User #3) and another was interested in folklife and culture (User #1);
- Two people had expertise in maritime folklife, history and culture (Users #3 and 6) and one person had expertise in maritime ecology/environmental studies (User #3);
- Three people had technology expertise (Users #3,4, and 5) while two users had little technology expertise (Users #1 and 2);
- Three users were former Festival participants (Users #1,3, and 4), one was a Festival activity developer (User #2), and one was a designer, Festival volunteer, and an advisor to the Website (User #6);
- Five users were teachers (Users #1,2,3,4, and 5), and one of these was a teacher/librarian and Web curator (User #5).

We also asked users about their use of the Internet, attendance at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and the 2004 Water Ways Festival, and favorite web sites (one user did not complete this section of the questionnaire).

- Two users had used the Internet for teaching or in a classroom in the last year, and two users had not (one a grade 4 teacher and one who is not a classroom teacher). The two who do use the Internet in their classrooms use it to research formulas for science experiments, download images and PDF guides, and do research on artists (e.g., biographies).
- Five of the users had visited the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and three of these had visited with school-aged children.
- Three users attended, and two users did not attend, the 2004 Water Ways. The grade 4 teacher attended with school-aged children.
- A teacher who works at a Latino Youth Center had not visited a folklife and culture web site. One user had visited the Smithsonian Institution Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage web site, another the online Smithsonian Folklife Festivals 2004 and 2005, and a third the Water Ways/Festival sites in general.
- Users visited web sites to find out what would be at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, to compare good design and accessibility elements for content on culture, for general interest and specific fieldwork outputs, and for work and personal interest.
- One user particularly likes an online Chinese exhibit on the Peabody Essex Museum web site (http://www.pem.org/yinyutang/) because it is elegant, has many layers of information, and offers an engaging use of stills and video. She also likes George Catlin’s Campfire site on the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum web site (http://catliniclassroom.si.edu/cl.html).
Three users had not made online visits to maritime museum or maritime history web sites. The African American ethnomusicologist who was very involved in the Water Ways Folklife Festival responded that the maritime/history web sites he had visited were “Too numerous to say!” His favorite is the Mariner’s Museum web site (http://www.mariner.org/) because it is one of his fieldwork areas and has strong innovative content.

- An intern who worked on the Water Ways Festival visited the Chesapeake Marine Museum, Marine Design Companies, and Boat Manufacturers web sites (e.g., IDFuel, the Industrial Design Weblog, www.idfuel.com/) because he was personally interested in them.

**USER TESTING PROCESS**

*If students’ stories are put up on Kids’ Coast, they will look at their stories online and their mom will print her child’s story out at home. That kid will think “Smithsonian,” and that is going to be with them their whole lives.*

Teacher/Librarian quote

During a one-and-a-half hour user test (see Appendix 1b), we talked with users about:

- How the Water Ways site related to the Folklife site in general
- Feelings about the general look/design of the site
- Ease of navigation
- Impressions of the Water Ways content
- Comments on each part of the site
- Plans for the Kids’ Coast education section.

As the following report demonstrates, the six users were very helpful in suggesting ways the web site could and should be improved. Throughout this report, the natural language of individuals as they browsed the Water Ways web site is incorporated into user responses. For each question, there is an overview of responses across users, recommendations, and specific responses.

**A. RELATING WATER WAYS TO FOLKLIFE SITE IN GENERAL**

**MISSION OVERALL**

*Is the Water Ways site consistent with the Mission statement for the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage?*

Across users:
The sample of users all agreed that the Water Ways site description on the homepage is consistent with the Mission statement for the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. The Water Ways description is an extension of what the Center does, and is more specific about the broad themes for the Center. It tells users about some of the cultural aspects of both the past and of the
future, and how maritime communities have been adapting to changes. Water Ways honors what is going on in the Mid-Atlantic Maritime area. However, the teacher/librarian questioned who is supposed to be using Water Ways. In order for her teachers to have the patience to use it, she would have to mine it the way she mines the Library of Congress.

*User #1:* I think it is [consistent], because it tells you about some of the cultural aspects both of the past and of the future as opposed to telling you what is going to happen. And it talks about how society over the years changes (e.g., how new bridges attract vacationers and second home buyers). So it is taking the old and the new together and talking to you about adapting to change as a time-honored skill.

*User #2:* I think so. This is a good example of getting more in depth, more specific as to what the broad themes are for the Center.

*User #3:* I think it is consistent. It doesn’t overlap or extend the language. It is like a bit of a segue, one flowing from the other. It is almost a stylistic kind of thing, reiterating how this is an extension of what the Center does.

*User #4:* Yes. It has that ring.

*User #5:* I think it does. I think it is important to understand that the Center’s web site does not meet its Mission statement in many ways. It is cumbersome, and I do not know who is supposed to be using it. I know that I would have to mine it the way I mine the Library of Congress in order for any of my teachers to have the patience to use it. I think this is a great introductory statement to this site, and I’ll be interested to see how the user reaches these individual areas because I can see a lot of applications.

*User #6:* Yes, I would say so. It is an introduction to what the site is going to be, what it is going to tell you - to honor, to put forth, what is going on in this area.

**What do you think of the Water Ways description?**

**Across users:** The helm as the logo for the site, the term “Navigat,” and only two paragraphs of text work well. The Water Ways description contextualizes the cultures and the changes that they are facing (e.g., second homes, pollution, and violent storms). It tells people that they can explore, for example, the Maritime cultural heritage, ecology, weather, and pollution. The description helps to make users curious to “Explore this site to meet the people, see the places, hear the voices, and learn how you can be a part of the story.”

**Recommendations:**

- Include a basic, non-interactive map on the homepage to give users a visual or pictorial sense of the region they can explore that stretches from “the Great South Bay of Long Island to Core Sound in North Carolina.” Show how the Water Ways region compares to the whole Maritime coast (e.g., by moving the left sidebar over further to the left or making the sidebar narrower).

*User #1:* This is just the general area, and when you go and navigate it is going to be more in depth. It tells you that Water Ways is exploring the region that stretches from “the Great South Bay of Long Island to Core Sound in North Carolina” but people need
something more visual. A map could be added to the description of Water Ways on the next part of the screen or as a watermark so that it is just in the back.

*User #2:*

- I love the logo, a steering wheel [or helm], in Water Ways. I love the fact that you have “Navigate,” which is a great term to use for Water Ways. That term along with the other items outline things on the left sidebar. Reading from left to right [as we would a book], I’m looking to see how the left sidebar parallels what is being said on the right-hand side. To me it is kind of a jump to read on the right-hand side about things that were broader than what I saw on the left-hand side. But I like the broadness of the statements on the right-hand side.
- I’m not used to reading about an area described as possible second homes and pollution and violent storms. Right away I realize, this is not all paradise here. There is a juxtaposition there that surprises me. It is not what I usually think of when I think of Water Ways from my personal and professional experience. I realized at the end that I very much liked what it said: “Explore this site to meet the people, see the places, hear the voices, and learn how you can be a part of the story.”
- I really like the fact that it builds on different senses, prepping me that I am going to see, hear, and learn. I am going to feel a part of this. Even if I was not living in this area I would think, ‘You’re reaching out to me. This is going to be two way communication,’ which I like. I also like that it is only two paragraphs. I might read it, or I would probably skip it and go right to the left and say, ‘What do I want to learn about?’
- We are very pictorially-oriented. There should be some kind of a map here that indicates the region along the Atlantic coast that stretches from the Great South Bay of Long Island to Core Sound in North Carolina, something that shows Florida to Maine and then a different color that indicates that part in the East Coast that Water Ways includes. When you see violent storms and pollution, and you know coastal, then you can understand since you are seeing that every day on the weather reports.

*User #3: I think it is good. I have written things in which I try to contextualize the cultures in terms of the changes that they are facing (e.g., an introduction to the Northern Neck of Virginia).*

*User #4: Very scholarly. Reads like a textbook. But when I read it, I know what it is about. It was not clear what the site was about when Water Ways was mentioned over the phone or even with the title in the description, “Water Ways: Mid-Atlantic Maritime Communities.” When you read the description, it gets right to the point of what it is about.*

*User #5: Something to think about is what you want to get at the web site level. If I read this - the ecology, the Maritime cultural heritage, the weather, pollution - what kind of information can I be expected to get? Is it something I could easily get? Is it very general?*

*User #6: I think it has to be pretty concise. With a web site, people are more apt to read things, because that is what you are doing - looking at pictures and reading more. With [physical] exhibits, people tend to go to the pictures and if they have questions, then they will read the labels and go back to the pictures. First users will see Water Ways and then they are going to read. It is the most important text on the page. A basic map, not an interactive one, just to show off where Water Ways is could be on the left sidebar if that bar could move over a bit.*
Is the description helpful where it is on the web site?

Across Users:
All users felt that the description of Water Ways is helpful where it is on the web site. The description is concise and compact - every word counts. Rather than having to scroll down and find numerous paragraphs or click a button that says “About Us,” users can read what Water Ways is about right away. The description leads users into the Center’s Mission. Teachers could find information for their new environmental science department about weather along the east coast, which will help students immediately understand the site as their own.

Recommendations:
- Expand the space to the right on the template (e.g., as an ideal margin for a map of the Water Way’s region, which can open and show what area of the region is being highlighted in each section of the site).
- Include on the Water Ways site a two-sentence connector to the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage’s overall purpose and a link back to the Center’s Mission Statement.
- Make it clearer in the Center’s Mission statement that this is what the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage does, and what the Center is bringing to users in the Water Ways web site.

User #1: When it says “environmental, technological, and economic change,” that tells you that it is the past and the present and the future. With all of the storm stuff that is happening then and now, you know that things do change (e.g., “Violent storms open new inlets or submerge whole islands”).
User #2: My only concern when I see the “Navigate” bar is that scrolling down, I wonder if there are going to be just two paragraphs, or many paragraphs. Is there any way to expand the space to the right? If that can be expanded, this is an ideal margin for a map. When I open up the map it could indicate that I am looking at two-thirds of the coast, but am only going to go down another third or so. That is another visual clue that there is not a lot to read on this page and that it is very compact - every word counts.
User #3: There could be a two-sentence connector to the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage’s overall purpose with a link back to the Mission statement.
User #4: The description is helpful. I like to go to web sites and know. I don’t like to click a button that says “About Us.” I want to read what it is about right away.
User #5: I think so. The description certainly leads you into the Center’s Mission. You should make it very clear that this is what your Center does and what the Center is pulling together for users in the web site.
User #6: Yes, that is the first page you are going to see.
THE GENERAL LOOK/DESIGN

Betty Belanus explained during the user testing process that the graphic design with a helm on the banner of Water Ways was a design element to unify the whole site - one fish or one boat was too specific. The Web development team was looking for something general, but something that had some significance. Communities charting their own course or finding their own direction was implied. The web designer’s idea was to unify the whole Festival using big banners with the wheel at the Festival, and the team carried this idea over to the web site.

Across Users:
All users found Water Ways consistent with the Center’s web site. Both web sites have similar graphics and page layouts. Users will want to know they have not left Smithsonian’s Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and will want to be able to find their way back to the Center’s site after browsing Water Ways.

The Water Ways homepage clarifies how the whole site is organized and the typeface is bold, dramatic, and graphic. The graphic logo is very effective, both on the banner and repeated next to “Navigate.”

The Center’s maroon links and light grey text are different than Water Ways blue and green colors. The Water Ways colors are consistent with the signs at the Festival, which were blue, orange, and white. The blue and green colors help users associate the site with water, and the deeper blue font works well for the text on the site. People had mixed reactions to the mauve color on the left side panel. There is continuity from the color of the left sidebar to the font color for “Online Exhibitions” on the Center’s site and “Navigate” and “Water Ways: Mid Atlantic Maritime Communities” on the Water Ways site. However, there would be more of a unifying affect if the color scheme for Water Ways matched or was complementary to the left sidebar and users could visually see that Water Ways is, in part, about Maritime music.

Recommendations:
- Compared to the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, the top banner on the Water Ways site is bolder. It has more writing and more playful graphics.
- The template being used for the Center web site could be more appealing. The Water Ways site could be a model for improving the Center’s site (e.g., graphics, being able to scroll through to different things quickly, and highlighted words when users touch sections in “Navigate”).
- Narrow the left sidebar in order that there is less visual emphasis on Festival Music and Stories.
- Make it clearer how the helm fits in as a design element to unify the whole area, and that it implies that communities chart their own course or find their own direction (as big banners with the wheel were used to unify the whole Water Ways Festival).
- Try to make the Water Ways site look more like the Mid-Atlantic to make it stand out more and say, “Look at me. I’m really interesting.”
- Include a Site Map to help users (and particularly teachers and students) use the Water Ways site easily.
To improve Water Ways accessibility, consider including ‘alt tags,’ which are required by the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) to describe pictures. Alt tags allow a sight-impaired person to use a scanner, which will read the script out loud to them.

Is the general look/design of the Water Ways exhibition consistent with the Center’s site as a whole?

User #1:
- I like the blue with the green. The coloration makes you think of the water. I like the continuity of the colors - the mauve color on the left, then the “Navigate,” and then the Water Ways.
- Since “I’m an older person with poor eyesight, I don’t know if you want to make that a larger font.”
User #2: It is consistent in terms of layout, but in terms of appeal another template might work better.
User #3: I like it. The only thing I would say is that it seems like it overemphasizes Festival Music and Stories on the left. The problem is that the Festival Music (even the music from Water Ways) was largely marginal to the actual activities. Sometimes the music is very important during the Festival, but it can divert from what is going on if it is not contextualized more. The visual emphasis on the left sidebar makes it feel like the Water Ways site is subordinate to the Festival Music. I would narrow that strip.
User #4: Yes, it pretty much flows with the other Smithsonian web sites (e.g., with the sidebar).
User #5:
- The user who explores the main Center’s different aspects will be able to navigate the Water Ways template, and that is very good. Users want to be able to find their way back to where they were before. They want to know that they have not left Smithsonian’s Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.
- Accessibility is important. You can get yourself in trouble from one of the blind organizations that stumble on this site. You have not added ‘alt tags’ yet, and alt tags are required by the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) to describe your pictures (http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm). When you run your mouse over the picture, a little bar will come out and will say, “Banner for Waterways Mid-Atlantic.” Alt tags allow a sight-impaired person to use a scanner, which will read the script out loud to them.
User #6: The general look/design is consistent - graphically and the layout on the page.

What do you like about each?

User #1: The Water Ways homepage is very bold. It really stands out. This is very dramatic, very graphic. It looks like a block print. I like the consistency and continuity (e.g., the side bar and the top banner). There is more writing on the top banner on the Center’s site than on the Water Ways site. I think the Water Ways top banner is better. The banner on the Center site should be more graphic. If the Center site is the first site you see, then you know where to look on the Water Ways site.
User #2: I do like that this is bold typeface, a little bit larger. It clarifies for me how the whole thing is organized.
User #3: The style is very similar. I like Water Ways very much.
User #4: I like the graphics and to be able to scroll through to different things quickly. It is really fast how things are highlighted when you touch them. The Center’s web site does not have those things.

User #5: The Water Ways site certainly looks “Waterwaysie” but it is pretty generic looking. Do you want it to look like the Mid-Atlantic? It does not stand out and say, “Look at me. I’m really interesting.”

User #6: The colors are good, helping to clarify differences in the sites. The Center links are a different color (light grey) than the Water Ways colors, which are kept blue and green. Since the signs at the Festival were blue, orange, and white, that is good. Blue is obviously appropriate. The maroon of the Water Ways navigation bar matches the navigation bar in “Online Exhibitions.” On the Center’s Mission page, the colors on the left navigation bar are green.

What could be improved?

User #1: The Center’s web site needs to “come up” to the Water Ways site. I like the idea of the watermark map of the region (e.g., the map in Ports of Call), which is not overpowering. When I was reading the Water Ways description my mind stopped reading and I was visualizing a map in my head. Also, the font size should be larger.

User #2:
- I have a desire to read from left to right. Perhaps navigate towards the right from broad introduction to more specific, similar to how you look at a book (later when she was browsing the Boat Yard section she realized that this did not make sense since there is more detail on the right throughout the site).
- You might want to move the logo to Water Ways, but I love having it next to the word “Navigate.”
- I like the colors very much. I like the idea of combining the green with the blue. I usually think water ways are mainly blue. The maroon reflects what is on the left-hand side but it stands out. I like the color of the typeface, the deeper blue that is not quite black.

User #3: You could tweak the template in terms of the content on the left sidebar, which is used to unify the two sites (i.e., the Center’s Folkways Recordings). If the color scheme matched or was complementary to the sidebar, it would have more of a unifying affect. Reading the content, you realize that there is Maritime music but it does not look like it is the same thing.

User #4: The sidebar makes me think of a textbook. Is the background color part of the site? I like flash; I like things that pop up more. I don’t like the maroon or earth red color. The little ship wheel or helm is simple but it does not attract me that much, or make me want to go through the site. I keep staring at the Water Ways sign. It is very dominant. I think the helm graphic is sort of childish, a bit comical. When I read this, I was not sure how the helm fits in - whether we are talking about navigating, Water Ways, or communities.

User #5: The site needs a site map. If a group of ninth graders who are pegged to be failures in high school were doing an economics project on water ways, as a librarian I would come to this site and look for what they can find using the site, and if they can use it easily.

User #6: I would change the green to yellow or white. Blue, yellow and white always seem to be very nautical - green not so much.
**EASE OF NAVIGATION**

**How easy or difficult is it to find Water Ways on the Folklife site?**

*Note: the Water Ways exhibition will be placed under the Center’s “Explore Culture/Online Exhibitions” when it goes live.*

**Across Users:** It was quite challenging for users to find Water Ways in “Online Exhibitions” on the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage web site. It is not intuitive or obvious on the Center’s site where to go to find “Online Exhibitions.” One user associated online exhibitions with Tibetan Buddhist events at one of the Folklife Festivals or a temporary exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian. People will likely look for Water Ways by going to Google and typing key words, such as <Folklife>, <Festival>, <Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage>, or <Water Ways>.

**Recommendations:**

- Have links in both “Explore Culture/Online Exhibitions” and “Smithsonian Folklife Festival/2004 Festival” with a rollover that explains the site is an in-depth exploration of the Festival.
- Have a link to “Online Exhibitions” on the Center’s side navigation bar.
- Perhaps use “Cultural Education” rather than “Explore Culture” as an overall title for the section of the Center’s web site (i.e., with Education in the title).
- List the themes of the Water Ways Festival on the “Smithsonian Folklife Festival” homepage, where there is plenty of space. Then when a user googles <Water Ways>, The Center's “Smithsonian Folklife Festival” would come up.
- Consider adding an index with sections users might want to browse to the “Smithsonian Folklife Festival” section of the Center's web site, which people could save as one of their favorite sites.
- On the Center’s site, put Folkway Recordings in a Shopping and Recording section.

**User #1:** Before the interview, I looked under “Smithsonian Folklife Festival/2004 Festival” to find the Water Way’s web site. You need to have a link back to where it says “Smithsonian Folklife Festival” if Water Ways is something that is coming out of the Folklife Festival page. Maybe you could say, “in depth exploration of the Festival site.”

**User #2:** Are the “Online Exhibitions” up all the time? They are not in any particular order in terms of chronology? I think it is a good place for Water Ways. Are you thinking of any particular audience for Water Ways? Working within the framework of what is in “Explore Culture/Online Exhibitions,” I would put it this section, as well as in with “Festival 2004.” “Smithsonian Folklife Festival/Education and Exhibits” would be the first place I would go. From there you can go to “Cultural Education” [another subcategory of “Explore Culture”]. “Cultural Education” might be a better overall title than “Explore Culture.” If I click on “Cultural Education” then to “Online Exhibitions” then to “Water Ways,” it is three steps.

**User #3:**

- I went to the “Smithsonian Folklife Festival,” not the Center’s homepage, where you come up with a page that has the Festivals listed by year (on “Festival 2004” he saw Haiti, Nuestra Música, Water Ways, and Images of the Festival, but not the homepage.
for Water Ways). Most people looking for Water Ways are going to Google the key words (e.g., <Folklife>, <Festival>, or <Water Ways>).
- The problem is that the Center's site has so much stuff that it is not easy to navigate in general. I have been trying to find something that I know is there. Sometimes I can discover things I never knew were there and were very interesting. When you look at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage web site there is nothing obvious about where to go to find Water Ways.
- The themes of the Water Ways Festival could be listed on the “Smithsonian Folklife Festival” homepage, where there is plenty of space. If the themes are listed on the Festival page and somebody were to google it, Water Ways would come up and give them information that would enable them to navigate some place useful. The Center's “Smithsonian Folklife Festival” would be a site that I would save if it had a useful index to things you might want to get to.
- The Center’s site is segmented in ways that are not terribly useful, by categorizing things by era. That thread goes from 1950 to the present, which is the way a person would normally navigate. Unless you were interested in history, you would want to know what your connection is with some past event. And the way you would do that is by following a thread that reaches from the present backwards, so it is almost synchronic instead of diachronic. The Center’s web site is not intuitive. I am always looking for a site that is going to give me useful information.

User #4: I would probably look under “Explore Culture” more than “About Us.” If I was coming to see the Folklife Festival, I would want to see images of the Festival. So if you could find it several ways, you could get a lot of hits that way. I have used the Center’s web site. Although there are so many resources for teachers on the Smithsonian site, it becomes a bit difficult to find what you need.

User #5:
- I do not think you can find it at all, can you? Where is it? One of my biggest complaints about the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage site is that I have no idea what you want to do. You have to think about who your users are and why are they using your site, and understand that attention spans are pretty small. “They will click to their heart’s content if there is content in the click.” It is important to have a site that is for the public who is looking for education and entertainment, and not so much for the Mission statement (e.g., Gen Air have a consumer web site and an investor web site, http://www.cleancraft.com/genair.html).
- I would put and Folkway Recordings in Shopping and Recording (e.g., a user who found a Folkways publication at school in 1972 knows that the Smithsonian owns it now and they will be able to purchase it).
- I am pretty savvy, but I am not very sophisticated in my thinking. I would think of an online exhibition as the Tibetan Buddhist thing from one of your Folklife Festivals or something new from the National Museum of the American Indian. An exhibit has two connotations - permanent and temporary exhibits. In my experience temporary exhibits are showcased, and permanent exhibits are called something else.

User #6: Yes, I would call it an “Online Exhibition.” There is not a direct link or file tab to the main page. If people were going to look it up, most would google <Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage> or <Water Ways> or <Folklife Festival>. If it takes them to “Online Exhibitions,” I think this is fine.
Browsing the site and why decisions are made to look at specific sections

Across users: Initial browsing decisions depended on users’ purpose for visiting the web site, their interests, and their experiences at Water Ways if they attended the Festival. One user thought that Ports of Call would be where to go first because users would be able to pick regions and communities with which they have some connection. Kids’ Coast was generally friendlier and easier to read for users because of the font size, contour of the letters, and a more natural flow. Users could stay within the Kids’ Coast template when they clicked on icons and text in navigation bars. The teacher/librarian’s first impression was that Water Ways was interesting and fun to listen to, and that there would be tangible connections to the site, particularly if a teacher lived in one of the Maritime communities on the coast.

User #1: Initial decisions depended on her “purpose” for visiting the web site. Knowing that I did something with kids I would probably go to Kids’ Coast first. That would be my first interest. If I had been involved with the lifeguard from Jones Beach and he was interesting, then I might go to Keeping the Waters Safe. Or to the Boat Yard because my daughter’s boyfriend worked in the boat yard and my daughter helped me build a boat last weekend.

User #2: I am interested in Kids’ Coast. I love the promises idea. I also like the fact that there is a little bit of a picture on the left sidebar [for Fun & Games]. This is a different font. I like the size of the font, it is really easy to read, and spacing is better. There is a firm lower case. The font on the Water Ways site is kind of monotone. This is more interesting because of the contour of the letters. I like how it wraps around the picture, the way that you click on icons on the left navigation bar or the text on the top navigation bar, and that the user stays within the template. It helps me remember where I am so I can go back to it. This to me flows very naturally. I can easily get back in the main structure I need to get to.

User #3: I would be looking to see my stuff. I would go to Ports of Call first because my involvement with this project was geographic. Most people would be in the communities that they have some connection with. I would think the Ports of Call would be where you would go, and this is really well done because it means that people can pick their region. I would look on #11, the Northern Neck, or at #7, Lewes, Delaware. I did most of my research on Reedville, so I would be looking to see how they represented my research and to see if any of my phrases made it in whole.

User #4: I might like to click on the big helm, and I am looking for something that went with the helm. “It seems so lonely. I see the green letters that say Marsh Life, and I see the helm, and I see the Water Ways, which is pretty faded, in the background. This almost gives you the illusion of movement because of the way the letters are done and because of the helm - because it moves in real life. If it was flash, they would be moving - these things would be playing with your eye.”

User #5: In Ports of Call, she first clicked on #14 because she and her husband go to Beaufort and Harper’s Island every year. She noticed a link to the North Carolina Maritime Museum where they had seen an exhibit that she loved of photographs of people. She played the audio clip with Herber Guthrie. Next she clicked on Tuckerton, NJ (#3), and played another audio clip with Carl Tarnow. Then she chose to go to Commercial Fishing. In her recent mining of Virginia Standards learning she could see...
that fishing and economics were connected. Her initial impression was that Water Ways was interesting and fun to listen to. If a teacher lived on the coast in Alexandria or Beaufort they would have a more tangible connection to the site than a teacher in Iowa. 

*User #6:* My first thought is to read “About the Project.” Is this supposed to be another overview of the “Navigate” sections? I would then go to Boat Yard because of personal interest. The Boat Yard was the most interesting thing I saw at the Festival. Is there a link for pictures taken at the Festival? [i.e., the link in Shore Memories]

**How do you find the navigation (i.e., finding your way) within Water Ways?**

**Across users:** Users liked the straightforward navigation, the map as an entry with links in Ports of Call, multiple images, hearing a voice, and sections listed on the left with the description of the section on the right. Users liked having options such as “meet, see, hear, read, visit” and that when the user clicks on the pictures, there is a caption with information about what the person is doing underneath. Since the photographs are detailed and have good resolution, teachers could download them and get a good print off of them for students. Biology and environmental science teachers might be interested in a topic such as “Some Common Fish of the Mid-Atlantic Waters.” Recipes would be useful since less cooking is done in schools and libraries have fewer cookbooks.

*User #1:* In Ports of Call, what I love is clicking on the map below and finding a link and realizing that I have been there (“My maiden name was Bass so this is good to have me work on Water Ways!”).

*User #2:* I love the multiple images, being able to hear a voice, and having the options “meet, see, hear, read, visit.” I didn’t notice the “Media Links” at first. This works well for the sheer amount of information that needs to be conveyed. Overall, I like how many options there are.

*User #3:* This is fine. The map as an entry is really nice.

*User #4:* It is very nice. I like how sections are listed on the left and then the description of the section on the right, and when you click on the pictures it gives you a full description. A lot of web sites leave no documentation. I know Folklife is known for documenting everything they do; it is good to see it on the web site. The photographs are very nice, detailed. I could probably get a good print off this, if I were to download and print it for my students. It looks like good resolution. And there is information about what the person is doing underneath.

*User #5:* It is very straightforward, kind of brainless. The only improvement would be to put in more substance (e.g., the fowl in Marsh Life). I can see recommending the site to both biology and environmental science teachers and for instance the section, “Some Common Fish of the Mid-Atlantic Waters.” Now that I know you have recipes, I might come for a recipe. In our school we are getting rid of a lot of the cookbooks. Different classes used to do a lot of cooking but, unfortunately, they don’t do that anymore.

*User #6:* It is pretty straightforward. I like this, the “hear, meet, see, visit” - that’s very good.
How could navigation be improved?

Recommendations:

- On the pages of each section, have a “Back” button at the top and the bottom.
- Make the links to sections more prevalent on the homepage.
- Make the font bigger with more contour, and have the words wrap around.
- Make the text easier to read by using less text, enlarging the font, and adding more white space between text.
- In “Navigate,” the name of the section could be in a different color (rather than italics) or fade to lighter blue when a user clicks on a section.
- Perhaps remove “Navigate” links in each section and add more pictures (e.g., the boats, boat yard, and people building boats at the Festival in Boat Yard). Add a brief caption when the user clicks on a photograph (e.g., as a rollover, “Joe and Fred at this place, working on this boat”).
- Include images of people who are speaking on audio clips.
- Consider making a series of stills look as if they are animated or give users a feeling that they are watching something in motion.
- Instead of using the term “Visit,” add “Links to” other web sites with a disclaimer that the Center is not responsible for content on the linked site.
- Help users make connections between cultural heritage and the people who do the work (e.g., clear and uncluttered information about flora and fauna along the coast). What does the fishing and maritime do to the overall economy of the region, the country? How do we compete?
- On Kids’ Coast, have more contrast between the icons/text buttons and the background (the rollover on the links makes them easier to see).
- Note if species are endangered and where a student would see that (e.g., for students in special education and English as a second language). For schools to be users of the site, have interns research what schools are doing related to mid-Atlantic Maritime communities.
- Add a link from Kids’ Coast back to the homepage of Water Ways.
- Move Folkways Recordings down to the bottom of the far left sidebar and have a map higher up on the sidebar to make the homepage more visual.

User #1:
- On the pages of each section, instead of having the “Back” button only at the bottom, it could probably be at the top and the bottom. That is what we are used to.
- Colors would be better than italics when you click on a section of “Navigate” (e.g., green).
- In Kids’ Coast the color is good, but there is not enough contrast on the side and top bars to see the icons and text buttons (the rollover on the links makes them easier to see). But because the coloring is different and the format has been changed, that makes people have to think differently. Also, you need to close Kids’ Coast down to return to the homepage of Water Ways.

User #2:
- The “Navigate” link can be highlighted as a color so I know I am in one area. Italics are not clear.
- The lettering is hard. I’m a person who prefers contours. The font in Kids’ Coast is nice. The fonts could be bigger and the words could wrap around.
- Sound related to the images makes a site come more alive. It should be possible to enlarge images with a lot of detail. And it would be great to see the images of people who are speaking on audio clips (a few sites I like have not had the necessary volume).
- Another possibility is making a series of stills close enough so you think you are watching something in motion to give the effect of moving.
- How can I find out about something I am not familiar with on the site (e.g., "Barnegat Bay Sneakboxes" in Port of Call #3, Tuckerton, NJ)?
- You could show connections between text and images with different colors to make users curious to look at the photos after reading the text. For example, link the photos of Joy Parks skipjack’s new mast in the Boat Yard/Boatbuilding and Mastmaking section with the colored text at the bottom of the Boat Yard homepage, which explains that “At the Festival, ship restoration workers shaped and raised a new mast for the Joy Parks skipjack.”

User #3: You have plenty of room in the sidebar at the front. I would move Folkways Recordings right down to the bottom because it really is not relevant and have a map in the sidebar. For a front page, this is not visual at all.

User #4: This is done well.

User #5:
- I would have the picture of people in the audio clip while they are talking.
- If you want schools to be your users, then a good project for one of your interns is to have them look and see what schools are doing in the area. And if schools are going to be your focus, there is a lot of text and really small font. The font needs to be enlarged a lot and needs more white space in between. It is hard to read.
- It is hard trying to make people see there is a connection between cultural heritage and the people who do the work. What we need is clear and uncluttered information about flora and fauna along the coast. What does the fishing and maritime do to the overall economy of the region, the country? How do we compete?
- You might consider noting if species are endangered and where a kid would see it. Endangered species are taught in several levels (e.g., special education and English as a second language).

User #6:
- I think the links to sections could be more prevalent on the page. When I click on Boat Yard, I don’t necessarily want to see the “Navigate” links. I want to see pictures of the boats, the boat yard, and people building boats at the Festival. The web site is about what the Festival was about.
- Why is there a frame around the pictures on the homepage of sections? When you click on a picture, you should get half a sentence about it (e.g., “Joe and Fred at this place, working on this boat”). People want to see more detail in pictures (e.g., the boat and what they are working on).
- Instead of using the term “Visit,” have the link to another site and a disclaimer that the Center is not responsible for content on the site.
- In “Navigate,” when you are in a section, the title should stand out more (e.g., fade to a lighter blue or highlight the title in a background color).
B. WATER WAYS CONTENT

Is the “About the Water Ways Project” information adequate for introducing and explaining the site (i.e., information about The Mid-Atlantic Region’s History, Seasonal Cycle, and Maritime Communities Today)?

Across users: All users agreed that “About the Water Ways Project” should be at the top of “Navigate.” This section is an overview of the Water Ways online exhibition, highlights how different Maritime groups are holding on, and helps users see how their stories are going to be tied in. The first paragraph is the overall justification of the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival and what the online exhibition is about. What ties it all together is the history of the Mid-Atlantic region as a whole, why the region is so important, and why the water is so important to the region.

Recommendations:

- Move “About the Water Ways Project” to the top of “Navigate.”
- Separate out the different cultural groups and geographical areas in the first paragraph (e.g., with bullets or hyperlinks), which would help to make the text more engaging.
- Revise the statement, “Africans brought to work as slaves on tobacco plantations became accomplished fishermen and boat pilots.” It is only partially true.
- Consider having the topics in the navigational menu fit the statement about the project better. For example, use “The Mid-Atlantic Region’s History,” “Seasonal Cycle,” and “Maritime Communities Today” as navigational points of interest. Ports of Call could be part of the History section. Seasonal cycles could be Commercial Fishing, Recreational Fishing, and Marsh Life. People who are talking about why they did and did not get into occupations such as being a fisherman or a boatman could be in Maritime Communities Today.
- Develop an education package and sell it at the Smithsonian Library’s night for teachers.

User #1: “About the Water Ways Project” sounds more like an overview. If this is about the whole project, maybe it should be at the beginning. There is a lot of text in small font. I would bullet each of the different cultural groups (i.e., “Dutch settlers on Long Island turned oysters into a cash crop,” “Early European settlers,” Africans, and “descendants of English shipbuilding families”). You get lost. For some people who wanted to know more about the Dutch settlers, hyperlinks on some of the groups would be easier for them. There are so many different things that could be separated out (e.g., “The deep harbors of New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore” and “As sail power gave way to steam and diesel”).

User #2: This information should be at the beginning. It is discouraging to read this, but it is about how the groups are holding on. I see their stories are going to be tied in.

User #3:
- I think it should be at the top.
- It says, “Africans brought to work as slaves on tobacco plantations became accomplished fishermen and boat pilots.” That is only partially true. Of course, that was South Carolina more than North Carolina.
- It would be nice to have a parenthesis after muskrat (i.e., swamp rabbit) in “how to skin a muskrat and bone a shad.” I love the guys who talk about a swamp rabbit sandwich.

User #4: I wish it was at the top.
User #5: The history is very interesting but there is not a lot of connection in the body of the web site (e.g., not too much about Native Americans) There is too much text and too little space. It is really difficult to read. It is hard to see where the topics in the navigational menu fit in the statement about the project. Instead of using “Navigate” as your navigation tool, use “The Mid-Atlantic Region's History,” “Seasonal Cycle,” and “Maritime Communities Today” as your navigational points of interest. Ports of Call could be part of the History section. Seasonal cycles could be Commercial Fishing, Recreational Fishing, and Marsh Life. You could put the people whom you have talking about why they did and did not get into occupations (e.g., being a fisherman or a boatman) into the Maritime Communities Today section.
User #6: Yes, the first paragraph is very good, especially the beginning of it, because it is the overall justification of the entire Festival and what the whole online exhibition is about. What ties it all together is the history of the Mid-Atlantic region as a whole, why it is so important, what the water has to do with it, and why the water is so important to the region.

Are there ways the existing information could be improved? and What other information, if any, would you add to this section?

Across users: The “About the Water Ways Project” section provides a good synopsis of the content on the site and is well-written, describing something broad in scope. The first few sentences of the first paragraph are the most important. Users may not read the second part of the Project description, but it definitely should be there. Users had the following suggestions for improving the existing information on “About the Water Ways Project” and in other sections of the site.

Recommendations:
- Use more of a magazine or newspaper format to make the site more visually interesting and compelling with photographs that represent some aspect of the text and a call-out quote underneath them. This format will help to attract users to the page, entice them to “dwell” on the page, and encourage them to read the content.
- Add to each section’s homepage its own picture and heading (e.g., Boat Yard could be a picture of a boat built, or the skeleton of a boat), and maybe part of the wheel, similar to the signs at individual tents or areas at the Festival.
- Instead of “Media Links,” add a list of links at the bottom of each paragraph of text. Use a link to “Read more about” with the sections that have long text to split up the text more and make the site less text-heavy. Then include iconic links (e.g., “Hear” could be a little ear or a speaker with sound) to click on images, photos, slide shows, and audio or video clips.
- Make sure users do not have to make more than two mouse clicks to go to the bottom of a page and do not have to scroll down too much on a page. In “About the Water Ways Project” users have to make only one mouse click to read through the text on the page.
- Have the word “Home” in the right of the top banner stand out more (e.g., by making it bolder).
- Make it possible for the user to click on a picture, enlarge it, and print it. Consider enlarging photos but also have a deeper story that the photo depicts to encourage users to navigate further throughout the site.
- Add a caption contextualizing photographs with a phrase in the text that refers directly to the activity, and more connections to the image and text later on.
- If possible, change the template to increase the width of the right side of the website and add more space on the right in the navy blue space. Reduce the size of the left “Explore Culture” panel in each section.
- Perhaps include a Glossary where users could click and find out what a word means.

User #1: In the right of the top banner, the word “Home” could be bolder to make it show up more. I also like the idea of the virtual tours - everyone does that.

User #2: I like the map in Ports of Call but I am a little confused about what the numbers are on the map until I go to them [and there is a rollover with the name of region]. I go to the picture of the map first.

User #3:
- It is good reading, a nice synopsis. You might want to intersperse some more images, like a magazine format, to make it a little bit more visually interesting and attract them to the page, but the content is lovely. It is well-written and what I like about it is that it is describing something that is really broad in scope. You want people to dwell on the page.
- I think the headings are good the way they are. You could add a photograph that represents some aspect of the text with a call-out quote underneath it to add more visual interest (i.e., a provocative quote in a magazine or newspaper that stands out from the text). A quote from a person is a compelling feature that grabs people’s attention and draws them into the text (e.g., a photograph of a decoy and “They carved lifelike decoys” as a call-out underneath it).
- Photographs should have a caption contextualizing them. They should not be dissociated images, but a means of drawing people into the text. Is there a phrase in the text that refers directly to the activity (e.g., you could say that a photograph of a fisherman and his son is an example of “following the water” and there could be more connections to that later on with photographs and a QuickTime movie of them taking fish out of their net). Another variation that I have never seen would be to enlarge a photograph and also have a deeper story that it depicts. Every time people visit the site they would get something that would encourage them to navigate further throughout the site.
- It would be very difficult to put more information and still have the text be compelling. I like that “About the Water Ways Project” is one page. You could have links to go deeper, a way of referring people further, but even that might be busy. You have one mouse click to go to the bottom now, and you could probably go up to two. But you do not want people to be scrolling down too much.
User #4:
- I wish I could click on this picture so I could print it. I am always looking to take pictures from the Internet, especially from the Smithsonian web site because they take such nice pictures.
- Some type of glossary would be helpful where you could click and find out what a word means. I guess you are trying to reach audiences 6 to 12 years, or 6 to adulthood?

User #5:
- There is so much information (e.g., in Duck Carving). Have the most important parts, and then, “Do you want to read more?”
- Develop an education package and sell it at a Folklife and Cultural Heritage Center night for teachers at the Smithsonian Library. Otherwise, I would have to think hard about how I would present this to high school teachers. I know a most extraordinary elementary art teacher that would pull in the music and duck carving and have students do duck carvings in clay.

User #6:
- I would like to see more pictures, or a variety of pictures. Besides the graphic of the wheel, each section’s homepage could have its own picture and heading (e.g., Boat Yard could be a picture of a boat built, or the skeleton of a boat), and maybe part of the wheel, similar to the signs we had at individual tents or areas at the Festival.
- I want to increase the width of the right side of the web site so you could see the pictures better. I keep wanting for “Explore Culture” in the left panel to move over a little bit and add more on the right in the navy blue space. Once you go into the individual sections the left panel could ease off a bit. You can always go back to the top if you want to find out more about the Center.
- The first few sentences of the first paragraph are the most important. People may not read the second part of it, but it definitely should be there. Similar to reading the newspaper, the front page is the picture and the big headline, and then you can read the first paragraph and decide if you want to read more or not. Maybe this could be broken up - have the first few sentences be one paragraph. I like the feature, “Click on more.”
- Have some icons in addition to words in “Media Links” (e.g., everything that says “Hear” could be a little ear or a little speaker with the sound).
- Instead of “Media Links,” you could add a list of links at the bottom of each paragraph of text. A link to “Read more about” could be used with the sections that have long text, instead of having so much text on some of the pages. Iconic links could be added to an image or small picture, a slide show, or an audio or video click. You could split up the text more so it is not so text-heavy.

COMMENTS ON EACH PART OF THE SITE
(See Appendix 2 for user comments on each part of the Water Ways web site)

Across users: Users tended to work from the top of “Navigate” to the bottom. People wanted more multi-linking options (e.g., linking photos and audio clips) and liked multi-tasking possibilities as they browsed sections of Water Ways (e.g., listening to music or stories in Shore Memories). These options help users become hooked on the process that there is always another level in a section of the site.

One visual arts teacher was very interested in downloading and printing photos. He liked that his students could easily do a research paper with all of the information on the site, and that the information is in an easily accessible format. Female users
appreciated hearing women in audio clips. One user would come to Water Ways because she liked hearing the history of the Maritime communities and what it means in the Maritimers’ words. Another user liked that things quickly popped after clicking on sections in “Navigate” and “Media Links,” yet he could easily go back to other sections. He also found it easy to navigate Folkways because it was in same format and had the same interface as Water Ways. A third user commented that the Photo Galleries in Shore Memories advance the notion of cultural heritage. The photos document the image itself, and the images have a quality in and of themselves. Now that she knew about the Water Ways content, the teacher/librarian would be able to say to teachers whose students are doing oral history projects that students can find people talking about Maritime occupations (e.g., being fishermen) on the site. She felt that the oral history really added to the quality of the Water Ways site because a “regular person” is talking about his job, his life, and what he likes, and most people like that.

Two sections of the site were considered to be exemplars in designing sections of Water Ways. Weather and the Water is a good example of short, to-the-point text with related details in the “Media Links.” In Shore Memories, as users get deeper into it, the left “Navigate” sidebar is designed to appear to be less obvious or visually disappear. Users are less inclined to navigate to other sections, and are more focused on each section of Shore Memories (e.g., when Music pops up, it says only Shore Memories Music).

Users suggested ways to improve the user experience in sections of Water Ways generally, and made a few suggestions specific to sections that they chose to browse.

**General Recommendations:**

- Add a short caption about what is going on in the top left picture on the homepage of each section for users to read if they want to, and that does not get in the way if they do not want to read it.
- Find a way to link what is in the text with what is in the “Media Links” (e.g., using color and a larger size font).
- Add “Cooking” to “Navigate” because cooking is something people remember about the Festival, and also keep Cooking and Recipes in the Commercial Fishing section.
- Have pictures of the people talking when audio clips are playing, particularly for kids who have very little experience with visualizing.
- Consider having key ideas in audio clips repeated in the text and text presentations available as audio.
- Indicate how audio clips compare and differ (e.g., different areas the people talking come from, a key word that individuals say, or an angle that is different from someone else).
- Fix the color balance and exposure in the photos to make them more visually compelling, edit the audio clips more, and do some audio analysis to bring up the voice of the questioner.
- Add credits for the photographs taken by Smithsonian photographers.
- Look at the photos on different computers. The color of photos depends on what monitor people use.
- Enable users to enlarge the pictures and download them in a bigger format.
- Use the term “Link to” or “Use this link to learn more” rather than “Visit” to distinguish between “Media Links” and links to other web sites.
Recommendations for Each Section of Water Ways:

Ports of Call
- Correlate the numbers with the name printed on the map, in addition to the rollover when a person points at the number. Make it more evident on the map in Ports of Call that the user can click on the numbers to find out more about specific regions.
- Use little anchors or wheels rather than numbers.
- Move the link to Reedville Fishermen's Museum from East Hampton, Long Island (#1) to Northern Neck of Virginia (#11).

Commercial Fishing
- Consider calling the section “From Water to Table.”
  - Make “Cooking and Recipes” into a separate category in “Navigate.”
  - Change the link “Browse” recipes to “Cooking” or “Recipes” in bold and maroon.
  - Remove underlines in Fishing Techniques if there is not a hyperlink.
  - Consider changing the title “Types of Fish” to Mollusks, Common Ocean Life, Fish Food, or Sea Food.
  - Have someone talk about Types of Fish to give users a bigger picture than reading only text.
- Update the caption for the Fulton Fish Market, which just closed.

Recreational Boating and Fishing
- Make it possible to click on the Bait & Tackle photo and enlarge it to find out more about Bait and Tackle Shops.
- In Recreational Fishing Crafts, add “Fish Taxidermy and Rod and Reel Repair” to the “Media Links” since they are featured in the text.

Marsh Life
- Move the overall history in Marsh History to the top.
- In Duck Calling, make the duck and goose calls more immediate. Users are clicking on the Duck Calls to hear the calls. Demonstrate the difference between the Duck Calls with a text introduction and only the different duck calls on the audio clip.
  - Break up the calls, give the caller’s name, have a little picture of the caller, and have individual links to each one of the calls.
  - Help users appreciate the sounds by having them hear the calls when they click on the Duck Calls photo and have the sound constantly repeated while users listen to the audio clips and/or read a script about the audio clip.
- Add an audio link from Duck Decoy Carving to Duck Calls to animate the decoys.
Boat Yard
- Link the audio clip, “Meet shipwright Mark Donahue,” with the photos showing the raising of a new mast for the Joy Parks skipjack.

Keeping the Water Safe
- In Lighthouses, invite users to “Read more” after the first paragraph. When users click “Read more,” have all of the rest of the text pop up. Then when users click “Back” to go back to the initial paragraph, invite them to explore further by clicking on individual icons in “Media Links.”
- Change “Take a virtual tour” to the Lightship Overfalls website to “Visit” or “Link to” the site, or link to a section of the site that has a virtual tour.
- In Weather and the Water, use dramatic photographs of storms.

BODY OF SITE SUMMARY

Across users: Questions about the body of the site were asked at the end of the user test as a way of summarizing and crystallizing each person's impressions after exploring Water Ways in some depth. Suggested improvements were based on each individual’s technological expertise, personal and professional experiences, and knowledge of the content of Water Ways if they had attended the Festival. People in this sample of users did not think there was too much or too little information, or that it was inconsistent or confusing. Although there is a lot of information, it is well organized and users can access little bits of information at a time. If users are interested they will explore the site. Students and adults alike may scan the information quickly. If they see words they like or that interest them, or something in the last sentence or paragraph of a section, they may go back and read the whole section. Online information is well linked to the titles in the “Navigate” panel. A strength of the site is having users go to progressively deeper levels by clicking on something and having surprises, more ways of discovery and something that leads them deeper. Younger people want to move on, click on a link, and then may come back to something that interests them. Kids’ Coast with its larger, more attractive font and less information will be easier for young people to read.

To find the Water Ways Online Exhibition, teachers would have to be familiar with the content of the exhibit in order to do a Google search. Key words that might get them to Water Ways on the first page of a Google search might be <Chesapeake Bay> or <Mid-Atlantic Maritime>. If teachers heard through word-of-mouth or a brochure that the Smithsonian Folklife Festival had an online exhibition about Water Ways, they might go to the Smithsonian web site and look for Water Ways from there.
Summary Recommendations:

**Online Information**
- Make the site “very lively” by, for instance, breaking up thought patterns and lengthy text passages with bullets, paragraphs, or more spacing. Find a way to make lists less dry.
- Edit the content and link users to places where they can read more text and see more pictures with captions. For example, add a caption to the photograph on the Commercial Fishing homepage about how continuing to work the water is being transmitted from one generation to the next, a father to his son.
- Since studies show that people will scroll down, create a little bigger space.
- Since there is a lot of information on the site, a larger, more attractive font would make it easier for users to read.

**“Navigate” and “Media Links”**
- Link the information on the right side with what is highlighted on the left sidebar. Show the material from which conclusions were drawn for the “Navigate” and “Media Links” sections.
- Have less of the sidebar and less visually on the screen when you get into the deeper aspects of the Water Ways site. Better explain links to other pages and eliminate some of the links as you get there. It needs to make sense where you can find sections, but you don’t need “Navigate” on every page. Users can use the “Back” button to go back.
- Show as many images as can fit on the site to help users see creative process, and understand how people from the Maritimes think and work. Use a variety of techniques for showing photos, such as dissolving into one another or using time frames for watching a video. Add more graphics (e.g., of a ship), and make it possible for users to click on the graphics.
- Link audio clips with slide shows.
- Indicate which “Media Links” are part of the Water Ways site and which links are going to take users out of the site. Add a disclaimer such as, “We are not responsible for any content other than ours.”

**Mission**
- Make it easier to get back to the Center’s Mission Statement. Better link that the intention of the Center and Water Ways is to promote “the understanding and continuity of diverse, contemporary grassroots cultures.” Both the Center’s web site and Water Ways help to acknowledge that these communities still exist and are struggling. Communities are in danger of being swamped by changing interpretations of their uses.
- Have more available on Water Ways about how a lot of these communities are under siege and about people’s efforts to ride the change, to continue a tradition even as it is changing. Provide more explicit examples of how working people are being displaced by new uses, for example, how the skipjack is becoming a tourist activity and tourism and retirement villages are common themes in Maritime waterfront communities.
Promoting and Marketing Water Ways

- Ensure that Water Ways is easy to find on the first page of a Google search for teachers, students, Folklife Festival goers, and others. Add keywords and content (both images and text) that have metadata (information about images in order to provide access to them) and meta tags (codes used in web page programming that categorize and classify the content of the web page and help better place web pages on search engines).
- Produce and distribute a brochure about Water Ways to help teachers find the site and promote ways of using it in their classrooms.

Is there too much information in the body of the site?

User #1: If you are going to put a lot of information in the web site, you need to break the thought pattern a little (e.g., through bullets, paragraphing, or spacing).
User #2: No. Never enough.
User #3: No, I think that on balance that the amount of information is about right.
User #4: No. There is a lot of information but it is nicely organized so that you can access little bits at a time. For me, the font is a bit small. The font is more attractive on Kids’ Coast. The font is readable, but it needs to be a bit bigger.
User #5: I would edit it again. Glean out the very best for the web page.
User #6: No.

Is there too little information?

User #1: I would say no. If somebody does not have enough information they will go into other web sites. I think it is a good amount. For Ports of Call you could give people a whole encyclopedia but that is not what they want on here.
User #2: No.
User #3: No, about right. Having people go to progressively deeper levels by clicking on something and having surprises, something that leads them deeper and invites more ways of discovery.
User #4: No. It is a good amount.
User #5: It could have another place to go to read more. You can say what you want to say in a space that is a little bigger. Studies show that people will scroll down, so it can be a bigger page.
User #6: I would say there could be more, yes. You could add more information if you had little paragraphs and then the word “More.” That way people who want to learn more can get it. And that does not necessarily mean more text. It means more pictures with captions.

Do you find the information inconsistent?

User #1: No, I found more about the Water Ways project. This is the section that I really focused on (i.e., cultures, groups, and places). I really did not do much reading on Kids’ Coast. This might be easier for kids to read and they are reading less because you have a lot of big print and you get information to them.
User #2: It is good.
User #3: There are some areas of the site that I have difficulty linking up. Somehow the flow could be more developed (e.g., the difference between the Center’s mission and the statement about Water Ways). For instance, more links in the site could be made to Storytelling in Shore Memories. One section could be made to link to several other different ones. It is about more about ways of discovery than connecting the different elements. I would reduce each one of the stories, and each place on the site, to a set of key words, and look for words as if you were developing a searchable database. Then you develop keywords that can lead you in a particular direction (e.g., you might not necessarily associate storytelling with storms, but there may be a reference to a storm in a story).
User #4: No.
User #5: The person looking at the site should know which of the “Media Links” are part of the Water Ways site (e.g., add the links on the right) and which links are going to take them out of the site (e.g., add the URL on the left). There should be a little line that says something like, “We are not responsible for any content other than ours.”
User #6: I can’t think of anything, no.

Do you find the information confusing?

User #1: There is just a lot of information. I would not find it confusing because I am interested in it (e.g., in Commercial Fishing everything I have read sounds interesting to me). If somebody were finding it confusing, it would be because they are really not that interested and they are getting bored with the information.
User #2: No.
User #3: No. I do not think there was anything confusing about it.
User #4: No, the description is not confusing. The information is very well linked to the titles. Then it takes you there and gives you a good description. Anyone could read this. Any young person could read this and know what it is about. Students would read the information, but they would not likely read the whole thing. They may scan it, but they want to move on, click on a link, and then get back. I do the same thing. I will look at it, scan it really quickly, and if I see words I like or that interest me, I will read the whole thing (e.g., “Violent storms open new inlets or submerge whole islands. Pollution causes blooms of harmful algae, which may kill species of fish.”). Or I may read the last sentence or paragraph, and then go back and read the whole thing.
User #5: No response.
User #6: The layout and hierarchy on the page are confusing, and the links to other pages need more explanation.

Is anything missing?

User #1:
- In Recreational Fishing and Keeping the Waters Safe, there is information about economics and the life but nothing about swimming. When you think of water you think of swimming.
- In Ports of Call, the link to Reedville is incorrect – it should be in Northern Neck, Virginia.
User #2: Something should show the linkage between how the information on the right side is balanced with what is highlighted on the left side. And points that are made in the
text on the right-hand side could be reinforced on the left-hand side. Help me figure out how conclusions were drawn from the material on the right for the “Media Links.”

User #3: A lot of these communities are under siege in one way or another. New uses having to do with tourism and retirement villages are the real common themes of these waterfront communities where the working people are being displaced by new uses. I would like to see more of that stuff available on the site and maybe more thematic material on people’s efforts to ride the change, to continue a tradition even as it is changing (e.g., making the skipjack a tourist activity). In the Festival this was not specifically represented except on the narrative stages. I think it is actually really important.

User #4: I do not know what is missing. I would not know how to answer that.

User #5: You could have slide shows going along with audio clips.

User #6: I do not know if anything is missing from what is there, but I would like to see more.

Is there anything you would like to see more of?

User #1: Virtual tours are interesting.

User #2: I like to scroll through images. I’m very image-oriented. Whether it is done in the format of going forward or back or whether they dissolve into each other or whether they are done in the time frame as if I am watching a video - give me as much information as you can. If it says, you will learn to carve a duck decoy, show me as many images as you can fit on the site. I want to see that creative process not because I want to do it myself. It helps me understand how that person thinks, how he works (e.g., the video clip of the man who says, “I love to fish” is short and to the point, but could be related to an image of him out on the water that shows him in operation).

User #3:
- I would like to get to the Center’s Mission Statement very easily. The Mission Statement states that the Center “promotes the understanding and continuity of diverse, contemporary grassroots cultures.” Water Ways could be picking up that theme of promoting the understanding and continuity of contemporary grassroots cultures as a major thematic. Develop the concept that communities are in danger of being potentially swamped by new uses, and changing interpretations of that (e.g., the Lewes case where there was no acknowledgement that there ever was the menhaden fish industry in the area and it was the biggest fishing port in the United States in the ’60s). Acknowledge these communities that still exist but are struggling.
- On the Commercial Fishing homepage, I like the photograph of the father and his son because it shows the generational transmission in the context of a couple of guys that plan to continue working the water.

User #4: The helm is so cute. I would do other graphics, too (e.g., like a ship), but I would like to be able to click on those graphics.

User #5: No response.

User #6: No response.
Is there anything you would like to see less of?

User #1: We have to face the facts that a lot of people do not read.
User #2: No.
User #3: I do not think there is any reason to have less. The only thing I might be somewhat critical of is the lists of fish - that stuff is fairly dry and the site should be very lively.
User #4: No. Overall it is very good. As a teacher, I would likely use Google to find the site but if I were to search for <Water Ways> I would get a thousand things. Another key word might be <Chesapeake Bay> or <Mid-Atlantic Maritime>. I would have to be familiar with the content of the exhibit in order to do the search. If I heard from someone that Folklife had this whole thing about Water Ways, I would just go straight to the Smithsonian web site and look from there. A brochure about the site might help teachers find it. When you search a big site like the Smithsonian, you get so many things (e.g., articles in PDF files). If I want to find what is at the Hirshhorn that week, I ask one of my students to do a search from the Smithsonian web site.
User #5: No response.
User #6: Less of the sidebar and less visually on the screen when you get into the deeper aspects of the Water Ways site. Maybe eliminate some of the links as you get there. You can use the “Back” button to go back. It needs to make sense where you can find sections, but you don’t need “Navigate” on every page, every time.
C. KIDS’ COAST EDUCATION SECTION

Kids’ Coast is experimental and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage’s first Online Exhibition for kids. It is being developed outside the context of the site because it is going to have Flash elements and other things that cannot be done with the current template. For the user testing process, the Kids’ Coast section was a preliminary prototype and the most undeveloped of the sections users’ browsed. It had three main sections - Fun & Games, Teachers Learning Tools, and Build Your Own Maritime Story. Hyperlinks had not yet been added but users were told that kids will be able to link back to the main Water Ways site to listen to a song or hear one of the storytellers (e.g., for a Scavenger Hunt and Quiz in the Fun & Games section). Users also looked at draft hard copy of some of the content and lesson plans for teachers. The Teachers Learning Tools section will have lesson plans, a PDF file with the program article, a bibliography with reading, web resources, a webography, and a sample lesson plan that will relate back to the main site. There will also be a Site Map that users can navigate, which will give an overview of what is on the Kids’ Coast section of the site.

Across users: Users liked the way the logo has been reworked on Kids’ Coast and the bright colors (although the difference in color from the rest of the Water Ways site may be confusing). The last line of the homepage invites users to link back to the content of the Water Ways site (i.e., “The games and activities will also link you to the ‘Water Ways: Mid-Atlantic Maritime Communities’ site, where there is a boat load of information to explore”). The font is easier to read than the sans serif font on the main site, even though one user described it as busy and more florid.

Kids’ Coast sounded to users like it is for young kids with fun, games, and activities to reach out to that audience. Build Your Own Maritime Story and having students post their own stories about Maritimers in Mid-Atlantic communities were most interesting to the users in the user testing sample. Kids from coastal communities, in particular, could connect to their memories.

Users thought that teachers on the east coast and in the Water Ways area might use the site more than other people. The hard copy planned for Kids’ Coast has helpful information for kids who are doing a Chesapeake Bay study, and great questions and photographs with captions. The teacher/librarian felt that the games may be for students in grades 2 to 6, or middle school. The sample lesson plan could be for students from grades 2 to 12 and could be adapted to different levels. She commented that when students start to study Pocahontas, they start to realize one of the very first industries in the country was fishing. If students’ stories are put up on Kids’ Coast, they will look at their stories online and their mom will print her child’s story out at home. That kid will think “Smithsonian,” the teacher/librarian commented, and “That is going to be with them their whole lives.” Users also had creative and innovative ideas for making Kids’ Coast an engaging, memorable web site for kids and teachers.

Recommendations:

Involve Kids

- Have kids design Kids’ Coast, and have their own world on the site.
- Choose a great blown-up photo with a kid or kids, and have a Photo Gallery on Kids’ Coast with photos of kids doing different things at the Festival and artwork that kids have done at school.
- Add little bios of kids (e.g., one kid from each state) that describe their experiences with boats, the water, sailing, or duck calls.

- To add interest and highlight kids’ experiences related to the Maritimes, add some sideboards in Build Your Own Maritime Story. Tell kids how to right click on a picture or slide show and write a caption for it, and take or find their own family picture, scan it in, and write a caption or a whole story about it. Include video clips of kids (e.g., “Meet the Fisherman” where the fisherman is a seven-year-old and Danny from the main site video clips accompany him).

- Set up a contest by age groups in which the best student stories are posted in Build Your Own Maritime Story. Students can do research for stories through a Glossary in Kids’ Coast, with links on key words to where the words are used in the main site. Add simple boating terms to the Glossary and make the words in the Glossary part of a crossword puzzle in Fun & Games.

- Have kids feel ownership of Kids’ Coast. Have pictures of kids and kids’ stories on Kids’ Coast (e.g., have kids interview kids who have parents involved in Maritime activities, other kids who live in Maritime communities, and people working in the Maritimes and Maritime museums as a school assignment). Invite kids to make up stories, take photos with easy-to-use digital cameras, compose songs, and interpret what they see. Kids from coastal communities, such as El Salvador or Mexico, could compare fish and fishing they know with Mid-Atlantic communities.

**Design and Navigation**

- Use more contrast between the background color and the icons on the sidebar and bring out the text on the top banner by being more playful, iconic, and having larger text.

- The “Home” button on the bottom left should be more visible and bolder and should also be in the right of the top banner to be consistent with the main site.

- Move the links for Scavenger Hunt, Game, and Design a Skipjack in Fun & Games (or written “Fun and Games” in this section) from the bottom of the page. Kids should not have to scroll down to find them.

- Include an interactive map of the different states represented on the site, which is more ‘kid friendly’ than the map in Ports of Call.

**Teachers’ Coast**

- Have a link from the main site to Teachers Learning Tools or Teachers Resources with, for instance, teachers’ quotes, books they can order, downloads, and photographs.

- Make another section of the web site, perhaps called Teachers’ Coast, or make Teachers Learning Tools the last link in Kids’ Coast on the top banner.

- Include a lesson plan that focuses on the concerns about change for each of the communities in the Ports of Call section. Add links to sites where students have been working with people in specific Maritime communities.

- Include links to Web sites such as National Science Education Standards (http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/nses/html/) or marcopolo, Internet Content for the Classroom (http://www.marcopolo-education.org/home.aspx) to see how the Standards cover Maritime or Mid-Atlantic communities.
Promoting and Marketing Kids’ Coast

- Add more direct links to Kids’ Coast in the “Online Exhibitions” section of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage site, and promote Kids’ Coast as a new feature for kids and educators with a link to “Kids” on the far left sidebar.
- Advertise Water Ways to web programs that cater to teachers, and are linked to teacher web sites (e.g., related to science, economics, music, culture, and way of life).

LINKS TO BODY OF SITE

User #1: “A boat load of information” - I like that!
- This section is a little confusing because of the color arrangement and the contrast needs to be better on the top banner and left sidebar.
- The only way that I know to get back anywhere is to go all the way down to the bottom left of the page on Fun & Games, Teachers Learning Tools, and Build Your Own Maritime Story where it takes us back to the homepage of Kids’ Coast. I would make “Home” more visible.

User #2: It is hard to say without having links.

User #3:
- I like the way the logo has been reworked, and the bright colors.
- I think it is fun for kids to have their own world, stuff that is for them. I would get some kids to design it, actually. Make sure they own it.
- I would choose a different photograph, a great kids’ photograph, which should be blown up
- The font is good, and easier for grown-ups to read as well. But the font on Kids’ Coast is too busy, takes up too much space, and is more florid than the font on the main site, which is some kind of sans serif font. I would not change the font on the rest of the site, and I think this is appropriate for the kids’ site.
- The text and icons on the navigation bar and top banner should be larger.
- The order of the sections should be changed. The Teachers Learning Tools should be last and have teachers’ quotes. I would not necessarily have Teachers’ Coast on the kids’ site.

User #4: I noticed that the font is larger. It really does sound like Kids’ Coast is for young kids. You definitely want fun, games, and activities to reach out to that audience. There are so many sites that have them.

User #5: It depends on how old the kids are going to be.

User #6: Is this one of a series of kids’ versions of the Center’s sites?

USEFULNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

User #1: Teachers on the east coast and in the Water Ways area might use the site more than other people. Water Ways should be advertised to web programs that cater to teachers and linked to teacher web sites (e.g., related to science, economics, music, culture, and way of life), and should be easy to find on a Google search.

User #2: Something in the Teachers Learning Tools could get teachers thinking about things that change (e.g., a lesson plan related to the concerns about change for each of the communities in the Ports of Call section). It would be really nice to see links to sites
where students have been working with people in Maritime communities, which was one of the goals of Water Ways.

User #3: No response.

User #4: Lesson plans and resources look really interesting. I like that kids could post their own stories on the Build Your Own Maritime Story section of the web site.

User #5: What grades do you think are going to use it? The games may be for students in grades 2 to 6, or middle school. The sample lesson plan could actually be for students from grades 2 to 12, because it seems higher level and could be adapted. Students do map skills in second grade. The fourth-grade history is all about the state's history and certainly industry. The Maritime industries are ancient, so you could do pre-colonial history all the way through to the present. Fifth-grade social studies is also related since it is more of a wider range in Virginia. There is a lot you could do with fifth-grade science and third-grade measurement (e.g., you could measure the fish). You would have to shape it a little bit, but you could push it up almost to grade twelve if you did environmental science.

- When students start to study Pocahontas, they start to realize one of the very first industries in the country was fishing.

User #6: The Fun & Games and Build Your Own Maritime Story could be brought out more by being more playful, iconic, and having larger text.

How would students use it?

User #1: I cannot really respond until I see what the Fun & Games are. But, kids love using computers.

User #2: I love the idea of the stories and reflections. In Build Your Own Maritime Story, it would be great if kids can send in their own story. You can post it as a contest (i.e., that a student’s story is going to be on a web site), and divide the contest by age groups. Perhaps in Build Your Own Maritime Story, you could do something with key words in a Glossary (e.g., “sneakbox”). Clicking on words in the Glossary will take kids back to where the words were in the main site. Then they know how they want to use that word in their story. The Glossary acts as a kind of index. They do not have to use the words in the Glossary, but the words can be a kick off.

User #3: No response.

User #4: My students probably would not go to this Kids’ Coast section. It sounds like it is for younger kids the way it is worded.

User #5: If a class does a writing project and sends you their stories and pictures, all of their stories and pictures have to be put up on the site for a week, as a page on Build Your Own Maritime Story. Thousands of classes are going to find out about this because the first time kids’ stories are posted on the Kids’ Coast it will go into Teaching Magazine and Learning with Technology. You have to make sure that you are willing to take it on.

User #6: If you were to approach a teacher and tell them about it. It would depend how Kids’ Coast was advertised for teachers to use it.

USE AT HOME

User #1: I cannot respond.

User #2: Do you know how the Smithsonian site sets up a search of key words? If users type a key word in the Glossary (e.g., “sailing,” “Chesapeake Bay,” “duck decoys,” or “shanties”), kids could learn about certain places.
User #3: No response.
User #4: Things on Water Ways are reminding me of the coast in El Salvador, going to the beach, and my family. It is bringing out a lot of memories. Some of the kids I work with are very young, 14 years old, and they know everything about fishing. If I want to go fishing, I ask them a question. If you go fishing with them, they know exactly where to go and throw their hook, and exactly what to do if it gets stuck. They jump in the water and retrieve it. I could see how my students could link up to some of these stories in Water Ways. Some of the students who originally came from the coast in El Salvador or Mexico could compare the kind of fish and fishing they do to Maritimers in Mid-Atlantic communities.
User #5: If students’ stories are put up on Kids’ Coast they can all go and look at all their stuff and will all think “Smithsonian.” That is going to be with them their whole lives and their mom is going to print it out.
User #6: A link could be added to the “Online Exhibitions” on the main page of the Center, and a new feature promoted on the far left sidebar of the Water Ways site that just says “kids,” as a more direct links to Kids’ Coast.

THINGS TO ADD TO THE EDUCATION SECTION

User #1: I assume that Build Your Own Maritime Story will have an example of a Maritime story to help the kids, and maybe link back to hearing a person’s story that was generated out of the Folklife Festival itself. That helps kids understand what it means to build your own Maritime story.
User #2: How would students and teachers learn simple boat terms (e.g., starboard, bow, and stern)? Would they be in a crossword puzzle or a section that would have simple boating terms? The hard copy planned for Kids’ Coast has helpful information for kids who are doing a Chesapeake Bay study, and great questions and photographs with captions.
User #3:
- Pictures of kids, including kids in stories, and photographs can be up on Kids’ Coast so it is a way for kids to actually see each other. Kids definitely have a perspective on this whole thing.
- Encourage kids in terms of building their own story. It could be kids who have parents who are involved in Maritime activities or it could be kids going out to talk to other kids about Maritime activities. To go and interview would be cool, even as a school assignment. Getting them involved on whatever level is really good, and letting them feel that it is something they have ownership of.
- There is lots of stuff on NPR and obviously PBS that have children’s programs where they are employing kids to do stuff. Is there a way to link those kinds of activities up, networking? I was really interested in the exhibit we did last year in Greenbelt. One of the things we talked about was to have kids come in and look at photographs and respond to them, and have them make up stories as a way of having them interpret what they see (i.e., the kind of activity where you expose them to something and then let them bounce off of that). I also thought about giving them a camera and having them take pictures. I need to find out about really easy-to-use digital cameras (e.g., point-and-shoot digital cameras).
User #4: I look for “Teachers Resources” when I go to almost any site, where I can click and get everything I want (e.g., books I can order, downloads, and photographs).
User #5: Web sites such as National Science Education Standards
(http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/nses/html/) or marcopolo, Internet Content for
the Classroom (http://www.marcopolo-education.org/home.aspx) have all the standards.
If you do a search for Maritime communities it will come up with how the Standards
cover it. Teachers love lesson plans.

User #6:
- I would like to see a Photo Gallery or something more immediate up on the homepage.
I could see having photos of kids doing different things at the Festival in the Photo
Gallery to view products that kids have done (e.g., a gallery of fish students designed
from a teacher’s class that stays up for a month.
- The links could definitely be improved, and there should be more of them. For example,
kids should not have to scroll down in Fun and Games to click on Scavenger Hunt,
Game, and Design a Skipjack.
- You could add little bios of kids with their experiences with boats, the water, sailing, or
duck calls. You could have one kid from each state and say, for example, this is so-and-
so duck-caller Maryland. This guy has been sailing since he was two and now he’s nine
and does this and this, and his grandfather was captain of this boat.
- During the Water Ways Festival there were little bulletin boards in Shore Memories
where kids could post: “Where are you from?”; “Have you been sailing?”; or “Have you
ever been fishing and did you catch anything?” Similarly, in Kids’ Coast there could be
some sideboards in Build Your Own Maritime Story that tell kids how to right click on a
picture or slide show and write a caption for it, or take or find their own family picture,
scan it in and write a caption or a whole story about it. Kids could add their own
experience related to the Maritimes to bring them into what is going on and highlight
their experience. It adds to interest - they don’t just read about the Maritimes.
- I could see having a map of different states, which is more interactive. You do not want
everything that is on the main body of the site.

D. OTHER THOUGHTS, SUGGESTIONS, COMMENTS …

VIDEO CLIPS

Users were also invited to look at some of the video clips being
considered for sections of the Water Ways site (e.g., Shore Memories/
Storytelling). They were not yet on or linked to the site. Three video
clips - “Why I Fish,” “Working with Children” and “Fishing as a Job”
were narrated by the same person, Danny. Other video clips were
“Watching Nature Unfurl,” “Educating Public,” and “Best Dog Story.” All
users chose to watch “Best Dog Story” and laughed throughout.
Teachers tended to choose “Educating Public” and “Working with
Children.” Everyone in this user sample liked these clips because, as
one user said, video tells so much more.

Recommendations:
- Consider a separate section for the video clips because the material is so strong
and speaks to the Center’s Mission Statement. In videos, Maritimers talk about
their heritage or their interpretation of what the heritage is. Clips give very
marginalized people a narrative stage, and an opportunity to speak to a larger
audience. They talk about a time when their commercial output was the mainstay
of what people ate and current trends in terms of usage on shore and the way
commercial mechanisms work. Water Ways users can become more aware that people used to sell their fish to the shops, but now the shops won’t buy from them and they have to sell to the middle-man. A quote from one of the video clips, “I love doing this and wouldn’t want to be doing anything else,” is ideal call-out material.

User #1: [Her first choice was “Educating Public.”] The problem is that we don’t know what he is educating the public. That information should be added somewhere. [She chose “Best Dog Story” next] This would be good in Kids’ Coast. [Her third selection was “Why I Fish”] That is Danny again. I like the videos, like the virtual tour.

User #2: [She chose “Best Dog Story” first and listened to the whole story quite intently, laughing. Then she looked at “Why I Fish”] What is surprising is that he has “a real ideal situation.”

User #3: [He first chose “Why I Fish”] Good stuff, these video clips are ideal call-out material. You could take a quote from here - “I love doing this and wouldn’t want to be doing anything else.” [Then he watched “Working with Children”] This is the same person but he is working with the kids. Nice intercut voice-over. [Next he chose the “Best Dog Story” and then “Educating Public”]

- There should be a separate section for the video clips because the material is so strong and speaks to the Center’s Mission Statement, talking about their heritage or their interpretation of what the heritage is. It gives these very marginalized people a narrative stage, and an opportunity to speak to a larger audience. They are operating in an interstitial space between a point of time when their commercial output was the mainstay of what people ate and when they’re being swamped not only by trends in terms of usage on shore but also by the way commercial mechanisms work. People are talking who used to sell their fish to the shops, but now the shops won’t buy from them. They have to sell to the middle-man, who then takes it to the shop. One person was really upset about how his catch was being mixed in with fish that were not as fresh as his were.

User #4: [He first chose the video clip “Why I Fish” and then “Working with Children”] I like these clips because video tells so much more. My friend went to El Salvador to be a fisherman. It is such a great job, but people do not see it that way. [His last choice was “Best Dog Story”] I love the way he talks. This is so cool. I like being able to click on these video clips and it doesn’t take too long to upload.

User #5: [She quickly played the beginning of video clips from the top of the list down. She noticed that the first three clips - “Why do I Fish,” “Educating Public,” “Fishing as a Job” were all with the same person. Then she briefly watched “Watching Nature Unfurl,” and “Best Dog Story”] I have to know what video clips are on the site [to respond to how useful they would be].

User #6: On Kids’ Coast, there could be a video clip of “Meet the Fisherman” but the fisherman is a seven-year-old. He could by accompanied by Danny on the three main site video clips.
FAVORITE WEB SITES

Finally, on the participant questionnaire users were asked about favorite web sites and why these sites impressed them. At the end of the user test, two users found their favorite web sites online and showed what they liked about the sites.

User #2:
- Campfire Stories with George Catlin on the Smithsonian American Art Museum (http://americanart.si.edu/index3.cfm; http://catlinclassroom.si.edu/) has images that are rotating around a fire. When I click on one, the images come across the bottom and I find out who the guy is. In each band are images of someone Catlin painted. When you put your cursor on an image, that person comes to the front and becomes big. When you click on the person, across the top is a bar that gives you audio with a history. When you click on that bar, you can scroll very quickly to the end and it enlarges and goes into detail about that. It is a whole different way of organizing information. It was an award winner. At first it looks really complicated, but it is divided up into levels
- the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) did a site in conjunction with their Chinese home (Yin Yu Tang: A Chinese Home, http://www.pem.org/yinyutang/). It is also an award winner. It is really nice to look at with a black background. When I first looked at this site, I found it to be confusing. The organization is similar to the Catlin site in that it is divided up into levels.

User #6:
- I go to ESPN for up-to-date information (Information about all college and professional sports, http://espn.go.com/), but also to find the history of things and facts.
- I grew up sailing on the water and go to sites of boating manufacturers to look at what model of boats are coming out and different techniques people are doing, what is on the forefront of the market.
- Being a designer, when I go to a web site I realize how it is laid out and designed. IDFuel (http://www.idfuel.com/) is a design web site I go to, a creative energy type thing. It has inspirational stories. It is about culture and design trends, technologies that come out. You can write comments, which is a separate link on it. It gives you one paragraph, you click, and you can read more. The pictures are more in the text, plus there are links or highlighted words in each paragraph.

A brief epilogue …

Overall, the six users who participated in the user testing for Water Ways were thoughtful, reflective, and most generous of their time and expertise. Two users provided feedback on the written participant questionnaire that gave a sense of their valuing of this user-testing process. One person wrote, “[I] Like the way the session was conducted.” Another commented, “A very worthwhile enterprise.” This group collectively offered excellent suggestions for improving what will be an important resource for people interested in learning more online about Water Ways and Mid-Atlantic Maritime Communities.
Appendices

Appendix 1: User Testing Instruments
   Appendix 1a: Participant Questionnaire
   Appendix 1b: User Testing Questions

Appendix 2: User Comments on Each Part of the “Water Ways” Web Site