



UsabilityNorth



Case Study Research Excellence



Best Practice Dissemination

“We are Yorkshire-based, but pride ourselves upon successful knowledge transfer and providing a global viewpoint.”

Professor Janet Finlay, Usability North, Leeds Metropolitan University.

Technology for Industry

Usability North is an organisation which combines the latest research and technology with the knowledge and experience of leading experts, to offer a World-class commercial service in the field of website and software usability evaluation.

Based at Leeds Metropolitan University, Usability North offers a variety of usability services, from user testing, eye tracking studies and accessibility design for Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance to user requirement studies, card sorting and research and development projects.

As the organisation offers low cost access to state-of-the-art technology and expert advice, its services are suitable for small to medium sized businesses (SMEs) as well as larger companies.

International Research Excellence

One of the reasons why Usability North is so successful is its excellence in usability and accessibility research. Internationally renowned for their work in usability evaluation, the company's two directors – Professor Janet Finlay and Dr Tony Renshaw – have contributed to leading edge research in this field.

Highly respected for their work, both Janet and Tony are regular speakers at international conferences. As a measure of their growing worldwide reputation, they were recently invited to run workshops at the CHI (Computer Human Interaction) Conference 2006 in Montreal, Canada and the Usability Professional Association Conference 2006, in Colorado, USA.



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Professor Janet Finlay

Role: Human computer interaction (HCI) and usability specialist, Innovation North

Janet is also the Professor of Interactive Systems at Leeds Metropolitan University and boasts 20 years experience of research and consultancy in HCI and usability evaluation. A Fellow of the British Computer Society, Janet was a former Chair of the British HCI Group's Education and Practice Group.

Having contributed to numerous publications in this field, Janet has written two books on the subject entitled: 'Human Computer Interaction' and 'An Introduction to Artificial Intelligence'. One of Janet's key areas of current research is the interface between HCI and the arts.

Dr Tony Renshaw

Role: Eye tracking and usability technology specialist, Innovation North

Tony has spent a significant part of his working life in industry, however over the last three years Tony has concentrated his efforts on research featuring eye tracking technology. His investigations have led to the development of new and improved eye tracking metrics, which in turn, have greatly enhanced the analysis techniques available. This has resulted in more effective interpretations of eye movements and human computer interactions.

Tony's current area of interest is the use of eye tracking with computer games, however he is also working on how Usability North can help with education. Through the MyWeek project, Tony is researching how usability technology can help students with learning difficulties. Meanwhile, he is working with Barugh Green School in Barnsley to research early years reading. By examining and analysing the reading strategies of five to eight year olds, the project aims to determine how this age group adopts knowledge.

Despite their demanding work schedules, both Professor Janet Finlay and Dr Tony Renshaw still lecture to university students and Janet is an external examiner for other university institutions.

Focus on Commercial Applications

Through Usability North, Janet and Tony are able to translate their academic experience and research knowledge into a range of usability services that have a commercial value for their clients, including:

- User testing
- Eye tracking studies
- Accessibility design
- User requirement
- Card sorting
- Research and development

It is the leading edge research, undertaken by Janet and Tony over the years, that has allowed them to develop this commercially focussed range of services, which can help businesses to increase sales, profitability and compliance by assessing and making recommendations for improved usability and accessibility of their websites and software.

Benefits

Usability North offers clients:

- Leading experts in the field of usability evaluation
- Low cost access to state-of-the-art technology and facilities
- Potential to increase customer profitability through improved return on investment (ROI)
- Potential for increased sales through improved products
- Bespoke projects – customer focussed approach designed to achieve the client's objectives
- Legislative compliance
- World-class service



“We are research-led and work in collaboration with partners to increase their profitability through improved Return on Investment (ROI).”

Dr Tony Renshaw, Usability North,
Leeds Metropolitan University.

For further information contact:

Usability North
Innovation North
Leeds Metropolitan University
Headingley Campus
Leeds
LS6 3QS

Tel: +44 (0)113 283 8608
Email: info@usabilitynorth.co.uk
Web: www.usabilitynorth.co.uk