A framework of an effective online help system to support nurses using a nursing information system

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A Framework of an effective online help system to support nurses using a nursing information system

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree Master of Information and Communication technology by Research

From

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

By

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School of Information Systems and Technology

2007
I, Yiyu Qiu, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the award of Master of Information and Communication Technology by research, in the School of Information Systems and Technology, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualification at any other academic institution.

Signature: _______________________

Date: _________________________
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-ii-
Abstract

Research Aim and Questions: This research aims to develop a quality framework of an effective Online Help System (OHS) for a Nursing Information System (NIS). This involves the identification of the criteria for an effective OHS. The research questions are what content, structure, functions and aesthetics this OHS should have. The research will also provide guidelines about how to evaluate the usability of an OHS.

To learn unfamiliar features or functions of a Nursing Information System (NIS), nurses need effective and efficient assistances. An OHS, which aims to bridge the gap between the complexity of a NIS and nurse-users’ need for simplicity, is one effective solution. However, systematic research on the design and evaluation of an OHS is not common. There is a lack of a comprehensive quality framework that could provide guidance on the design and evaluation of an OHS for a NIS. As nurses are important healthcare workers, their acceptance and usage of a NIS is important for the improvement of quality of healthcare data, it is imperative to conduct this research with strong potential to impact on the adoption of NIS by nurses.

Research Methodology: Two phases of investigation were carried out. Guided by a grounded theory approach, we first proposed a quality framework of an effective OHS for a NIS. In order to prove the validity of this framework, an experiment was carried out in which an OHS for an authentic NIS (the Care Planning and Assessment Tool) was developed and evaluated. Various research methods were employed in collecting data, i.e. laboratory-based usability testing, focus group discussion and questionnaire survey.

Results: The proposed framework was consisted of the five criteria (i.e. content, structure, functionality, aesthetics, and usability. The CPAT Online Help was designed according to the results of the needs assessment and the forty-three guidelines that reflect the quality indicators in the framework. The results of the heuristic evaluation of the CPAT Online Help shows that the help system highly reflect on the proposed framework. The results of
the usability testing suggest that the usability of both online help and hard-copy help manual is similar (i.e. no significant group difference was found for the results of both laboratory testing and the answers to the user satisfactory survey between online help and hard-copy help manual). However, in the laboratory experiment, the overall performances of the participants who used the CPAT Online Help were obviously better than those of the participants who used the hardcopy user manual. In addition, the survey responses from the former were more positive than those from the latter.

**Discussion and Conclusion:** The proposed quality framework and their indicators were validated and supported by our research results and findings. Our research suggested that 1) nurse users’ basic computer skills, knowledge about an NIS, knowledge about procedures of nursing documentation should be covered in an OHS; 2) function-oriented and task-oriented structure are the effective structures of an OHS; 3) table of contents, frequently ask questions, search engine and video demonstration are effective functions; 4) visual-effectiveness can facilitate a nurse-user’s problem solving 5) the indicators of the usability of an OHS is the 5Es: effectiveness, efficiency, error-tolerance, engaging and ease of learning.
Publications Arising from the Research


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration i
Acknowledgements ii
Abstract iii
Publications Arising from the Research v
Table of Contents vi
List of Figures xi
List of Tables xiii

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ...........................................................................1

1.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1

1.2 Research Background .............................................................................................. 1

1.3 Research Aims and Questions .................................................................................... 3

1.3.1 What Contents should an Effective Online Help System for a Nursing Information System Cover? ................................................................................................................. 4

1.3.2 What Structures should an Effective Online Help System for a Nursing Information System Apply to Organize the Content? ......................................................................................................................... 4

1.3.3 What Functions should an Effective Online Help System Offer to Nurse-Users? ............... 4

1.3.4 What Aesthetics should be Like to Present the Content of an Online Help System to Nurse-Users? ............................................................................................................................... 5

1.3.5 How is the Usability of an Effective Online Help for a Nursing Information System Measured? 5

1.4 Research Methodology and Research Design ............................................................. 5

1.4.1 Phase 1: Development of Hypothesis Framework ...................................................... 6

1.4.2 Phase 2: Validation of the Theoretical Framework ..................................................... 7

1.5 Ethical Considerations ............................................................................................... 7
1.6 Thesis Overview ........................................................................................................................................ 8

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................................. 9

2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 9

2.2 A Contemporary Need for Nursing Information Systems ....................................................................... 9

2.3 A Need for Training and Supporting Nurses to Use Nursing Information Systems .............................. 11

2.4 The Barriers for Nurses to Learn to Use Nursing Information Systems .................................................. 13

  2.4.1 Nurses’ Computer and Information Literacy ................................................................. 13

  2.4.2 Gender ......................................................................................................................................... 15

  2.4.3 Lack of Time and Heavy Workload ..................................................................................... 15

  2.4.4 Nurses’ Attitudes towards IT ............................................................................................... 16

2.5 Various Training and Support Mechanisms to Help Nurses Learn to Use Nursing Information Systems .............. 17

2.6 Online Help Systems .................................................................................................................................... 18

  2.6.1 Evolving Definitions of Online Help Systems ........................................................................ 19

  2.6.2 Online versus Paper-based Help ........................................................................................... 20

  2.6.3 Types of Assistance and Facilities Provided by Online Help ................................................ 22

  2.6.4 The History of Research on Online Help ............................................................................. 26

  2.6.5 Online Help for e-Health Applications .................................................................................. 27

  2.6.6 Is Online Help always Helpful? ............................................................................................... 28

  2.6.7 Users’ Interaction with Online Help System ............................................................................. 30

  2.6.8 The Possible Problems a User May Encounter in Interacting with an Online Help System .......... 31

2.7 Summary ..................................................................................................................................................... 33

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................... 35
3.1 Introduction

3.2 A Brief Review of the Research Aim and Questions

3.3 The Qualitative Research Methods in this Study

3.4 Grounded Theory Approach in Phase 1 Investigation

3.4.1 Grounded Theory Approach

3.4.2 Detailed Description of the Grounded Theory Approach Used in Phase 1 Research

3.5 Experimental Approach in Phase 2 Research

3.5.1 Justification of an Experimental Approach to Validating the Proposed Framework

3.5.2 A Brief Description of the CPAT software

3.5.3 Design of the Experiment

3.6 Ethical Issues and Confidentiality

3.7 The Timeline of the Study

3.8 Summary

CHAPTER 4 FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

4.2 The Previous Research on Effective Online Help Systems

4.3 A Framework of Effective Online Help Systems

4.3.1 Content

4.3.2 Structure

4.3.3 Functionality

4.3.4 Aesthetics

4.3.5 Usability: the 5Es

4.4 Summary
CHAPTER 5 RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT ..................................................81

5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 81

5.2 Results of Needs Assessment ............................................................................................. 81

      5.2.1 Results from the Cognitive Usability Testing Experiment with the Novice CPAT Users...... 81

      5.2.2 Results of Focus Group Discussion ............................................................................. 84

5.2.3 Conclusion of the Results of the Needs Assessment .......................................................... 87

5.3 Design and Implementation ................................................................................................. 88

      5.3.1 Content .......................................................................................................................... 89

      5.3.2 Structure ........................................................................................................................ 95

      5.3.3 Functions ....................................................................................................................... 104

      5.3.4 Aesthetics ...................................................................................................................... 108

5.4 Evaluation .......................................................................................................................... 113

      5.4.1 Results of the Heuristics Evaluation ............................................................................. 114

      5.4.2 Results of Usability Testing of the Effectiveness of the CPAT OHS in Comparison with the
Hardcopy User Manual ............................................................................................................. 120

      5.4.3 Conclusion of the Evaluation ....................................................................................... 140

5.5 Summary ............................................................................................................................. 141

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION ........................................... 142

6.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 142

6.2 Premises of the Framework Validation: the CPAT Online Help’s Compliance with the Proposed
Framework and the Users’ Satisfaction ..................................................................................... 142

6.3 Content of an Effective Online Help System for a Nursing Information System .................. 143

6.4 Structure of an Effective Online Help System for a Nursing Information System ............... 145

6.5 Functions of an Effective Online Help System for a Nursing Information System ............ 147
6.5.1 Table of Contents Gives a Nurse-User a Straightforward Outline of the Content in an OHS .... 148
6.5.2 FAQ Assists a Nurse-User to Trouble Shooting................................................................. 148
6.5.3 Search Engine Helps a Nurse-User to search for Information........................................... 148
6.5.4 Video Demonstration Enhances a Nurse-User’s Comprehension of Procedural Information.... 149

6.6 Aesthetics of an Effective Online Help System for a Nursing Information System .............. 150

6.7 Measurement of the Usability of an Effective Online Help System for a Nursing Information System .................................................................................................................. 151

6.7.1 Effectiveness ..................................................................................................................... 152
6.7.2 Efficiency ........................................................................................................................ 153
6.7.3 Error-tolerance.................................................................................................................. 154
6.7.4 Engagingness ................................................................................................................... 154
6.7.5 Ease of Learning ............................................................................................................... 155

6.8 Limitations of the Study ...................................................................................................... 156

6.9 Future Research Directions ............................................................................................. 157

Reference: ............................................................................................................................. 158

Appendixes:
Appendix 1 Agenda of Cognitive Usability Testing Experiment for Novice CPAT Users
Appendix 2 Questionnaire of Heuristics Evaluation of the CPAT Online Help
Appendix 3 the CPAT Use Manual
Appendix 4 Task Scenario Sheet for the Participants in Group User Manual
Appendix 5 Task Scenario Sheet for the Participants in Group Online Help
Appendix 6 Post-test Questionnaire of User Satisfaction with the User Manual
Appendix 7 Post-test Questionnaire of User Satisfaction with the Online Help
Appendix 8 Minute Taking of the Focus Group Discussion in Hammond Care Village
Appendix 9 Template file of the CPAT Online Help: the font.css file
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Heavy or light workload: comparison across sectors (Hegney and Plank 2003) ......................16
Figure 2.2 Affymetrix OHS (from http://info.chmcc.org/help/bsts/mpuser/index.html) .........................28
Figure 2.3 A model of a user’s interaction with an online help system .....................................................31
Figure 3.1 Research Phases ....................................................................................................................... 37
Figure 3.2 The system development cycle of the CPAT Online Help System ...........................................42
Figure 4.1 Quality dimensions for the technical information (Hargis et al. 1997) ........................................65
Figure 4.2 The 5Es of usability .................................................................................................................. 66
Figure 4.3 A framework of effective Online Help Systems ........................................................................ 68
Figure 5.2 Illustration of the Clients Screen interface in CPAT Online Help ............................................ 90
Figure 5.3 A list of video demo in the CPAT Online Help ............................................................................90
Figure 5.4 Video demonstration of “Displaying an assessment result” .......................................................91
Figure 5.5 A screenshot of the main functions in the CPAT Online Help ....................................................92
Figure 5.6 Map of html files of CPAT Online Help ....................................................................................98
Figure 5.7 An example of heading ......................................................................................................... 99
Figure 5.9 Hierarchy of main tasks of nurses ............................................................................................. 100
Figure 5.10 The index page in CPAT Online Help ......................................................................................101
Figure 5.11 Main tasks of nursing documentation enabled by the CPAT ...................................................102
Figure 5.12 Message box of Print Topics ................................................................................................ 106
Figure 5.13 Search Engine of the CPAT Online Help ............................................................................. 108
Figure 5.14 Illustration of the Assessment Result .................................................................................... 110
Figure 5.15 An example of placing the related information in one place .................................................. 111
Figure 5.16 Template of CPAT Online Help ............................................................................................ 112
Figure 5.17 Answers given to assessment items in the “Content” category (n=8) ................................. 115
Figure 5.18 Answers given to assessment items in the “Structure” category (n=8) ................................. 116
Figure 5.19 Answers given to assessment items in the “Functionality” category (n=8) ............................ 117
Figure 5.20 Answers given to assessment items in the “Aesthetics” category (n=8) ............................... 120
Figure 5.21 The percentage of respondents who gave various answers to the question “How many hours do you use a computer per week?”

Figure 5.22 The percentage of respondents who gave various answers to “age”

Figure 5.23 The percentage of respondents who gave various answers to job role

Figure 5.24 The percentage of the respondents who agreed with the statement “The user manual (or online help) was useful in solving my problem” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.25 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “Using the user manual (or online help) has enabled me to do more tasks than before” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.26 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “I understood the help information provided in the user manual (or online help)” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.27 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “The graphics facilitated my understanding of content in the user manual (or online help)” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.28 The percentage of the respondents who agreed with the statement “Finding information in the user manual (or online help) was easy” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.29 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “I can navigate the user manual (or online help) easily” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.30 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “Using the user manual (or online help) enabled me to do tasks more quickly” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.31 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “I enjoyed using the user manual (or online help)” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.32 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “The user manual (or online help) has attractive presentation” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.33 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “The ‘Note’ in the user manual (or online help) kept me away from trouble” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.34 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “Using the user manual (or online help) was easy” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.35 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “My interaction with the user manual (or online help) was clear and understandable” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.36 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “It was not difficult for me to use the user manual (or online help) with confidence” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.37 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “Overall, you are satisfied with the user manual (or online help)” on a five-point Likert scale

Figure 5.38 The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “I prefer using paper-based user manual rather than the online help” on a five-point Likert scale
List of Tables

Table 2.1 Physical differences between print-based and online text data presence (Selber et al. 1996)........... 21
Table 2.2 Rhetorical differences between print-based and online mechanism (Selber et al. 1996) ........... 21
Table 3.1 The application tools used for the development of the OHS and their tasks they undertake ....... 50
Table 3.2 The measurement matrix for evaluating the usability of CPAT Online Help ......................... 55
Table 3.3 The constructs for the questionnaire and the number of items used to test each of the construct ................................................................. 57
Table 3.3 Research activities in this study along with timeframe ........................................................ 60
Table 4.1 Design guidelines to address the criteria in the content category............................................. 70
Table 4.2 Design guidelines to address the criteria in the structure category......................................... 72
Table 4.3 Design guidelines to address the criteria in the functionality category ................................. 75
Table 4.4 Design guidelines to address the criteria in the aesthetics category ...................................... 77
Table 5.1 A classification of the novice CPAT users’ usage problems, and the knowledge and skill gaps indicated by these problems .......................................................... 83
Table 5.2 Fields for entering demographic information .................................................................. 109
Table 5.3 A list of prices of tools used to implement CPAT Online Help (from http://www.softwaretime.com.au) ................................................................................................. 111
Table 5.4 Examples of layout ................................................................................................... 113
Table 5.5 Mean Rank of answers given by the participants with the assessment items on a five-point Likert scale (1=VeryPoor; 2=Poor; 3=Satisfactory; 4=Good; 5=Excellent) ........................................... 114
Table 5.6 The percentage of respondents in Group UM or Group OH who answered “Yes” to computer literacy assessment items, and the p value to suggest if group significant difference ................................. 124
Table 5.7 Mean rank of answers to the computer skill assessment given by the participants on a Yes/No scale (1=Yes; 2=No) .............................................................................. 126
Table 5.8 The percentage of participants who completed a task by the help of the hardcopy user manual and the percentage of tasks each participant completed accurately ................................................................ 127
Table 5.9 The percentage of participants who completed a task by the help of the CPAT online help and the percentage of tasks each participant completed accurately ............................................. 127
Table 5.10 The percentage of respondents who used the online help and agreed with the statements on a five-point Likert scale ........................................................................... 131