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TECHNOW

PROFILE



E. Myers

Name: Eric G. Myers
Title: Director of new media services
Company: Capital University
Time in current position: since November 2001
Where did you begin your tech career? At the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.
How do you stay current on developments in your field? I

am the chair of the BuckCHI group here in Columbus. BuckCHI is a special interest group on Computer-Human Interaction (www.acm.org/chapters/buckchi). We focus on issues like usability, information architecture and user experience. I am also active on a number of e-mail lists and I use the Web frequently to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field. I am an active reader and try to have at least one work-related book going at any given time. I also try to attend regional and national workshops and meetings offered by a variety of organizations.

Can you envision what your role will be in five years? What about 10? As someone interested in usability and user experience, I see my role expanding as companies realize that it isn't enough to have a cool-looking Web site. Users need to be able to actually use the Web. As common sense returns to Internet-based business models, companies are looking for ways to maximize their investment in the Internet. Unfortunately, many of these same companies do not realize that their efforts on the Web may be falling far short of their true potential due to problems with the usability of their Web projects. By looking at how usability affects a company's bottom line, we can easily make the case for a proactive usability strategy as part of any Web project. As the Web matures, these types of issues will continue to become more salient to those who seek a competitive advantage. The sooner an organization begins the process, the more likely it is that they will be around to celebrate their success.

What's the biggest issue facing someone in your position today? I think my greatest challenge is in educating non-technical individuals about the benefits of user-centered design and usability issues in Web development. There are a lot of forces that can create obstacles to this type of approach in almost any organization. A lack of time, budget constraints or political agendas can all serve to undermine the creation of a truly user-friendly Web application. Hopefully education and persistence will prevail in the end.

What are the key tools of your trade? We use Dreamweaver and Photoshop as our primary Web development tools. We use Flash in some instances for creating multimedia content for the Web. Of course, we have to use a variety of other products from time to time including Microsoft Office products, Adobe Acrobat and others.

What are the three Web sites you check every day?

Of course, I am on the Capital University Web site every day, particularly the Information Technology section (www.capital.edu/cc/it/). I also use google.com and dogpile.com frequently for searches. For fun, I check fark.com far too often.