



The Institute for Quantitative Social Science

Usability Testing of the IQSS Website
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What is IQSS?

- Social science research center at Harvard University
- Offers research services, software tools, training room space, and more
- Website is main source of IQSS-related info
- Website features:
 - Info on services and products
 - Extensive staff directory
 - Event and training room availability calendars
 - Recent news

Test Objectives

- ✓ To see how new users experience the website
- ✓ To see if users could determine IQSS' purpose and department structure
- ✓ To see if new users could easily locate information on the website
- ✓ To test the website's calendar and training room functions

Participants and Testing Space

- 5 participants
- All Harvard Law Library employees
- Unfamiliar with IQSS website
- Most were career librarians
- Different views of ideal websites

- Testing done in media room of law library
- Participants sat in front of a laptop, with moderator next to them

Research Instruments

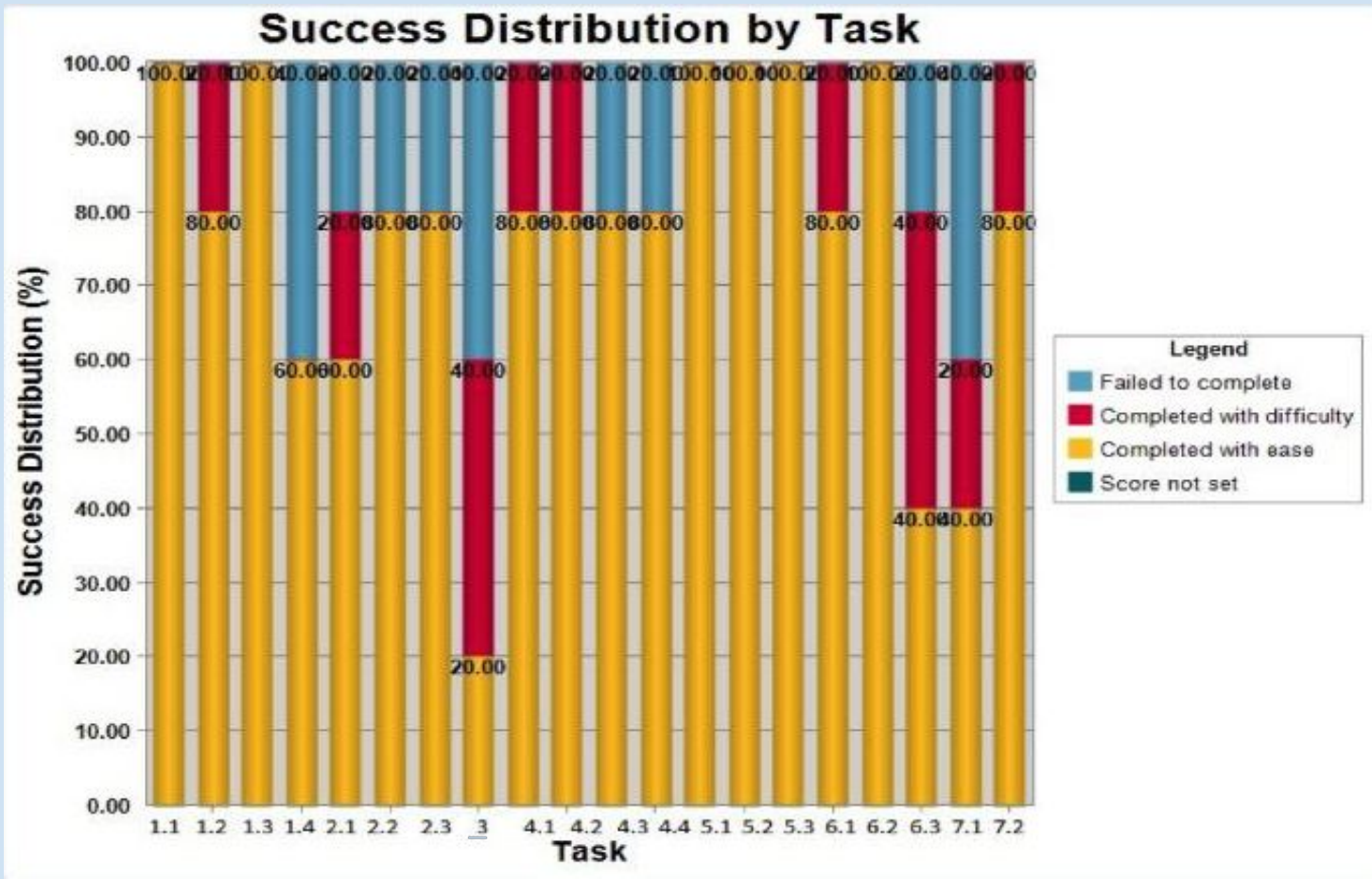
Test Scenario: *You are a Harvard student in an advanced degree program. You are currently working as a research assistant for a professor, assisting her on a social science research project. Your professor asks you to look into the Institute for Quantitative Social Science and prepare a report that explains what IQSS does, and how its resources may be of assistance to your department.*

- Pre-test interview
- 7 tasks, 6 of which had sub-tasks
- Post-test interview

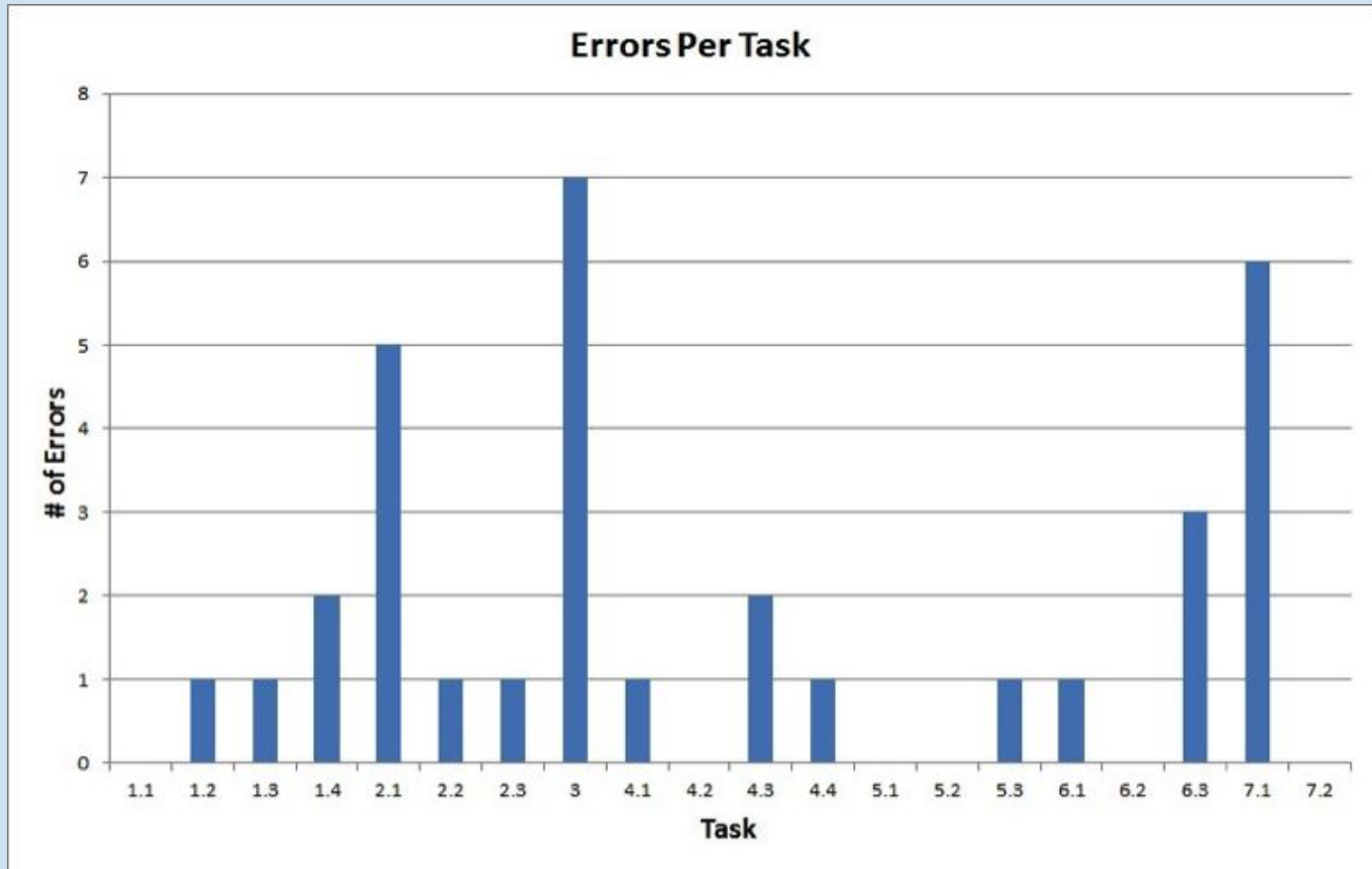
Heuristic Evaluation Procedure

- Compared website against Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics
- Rated issues on 5 point severity scale
 - 0 = No problem
 - 4 = catastrophic problem
- Team members wrote down and rated issues on their own
- Later, compared answers

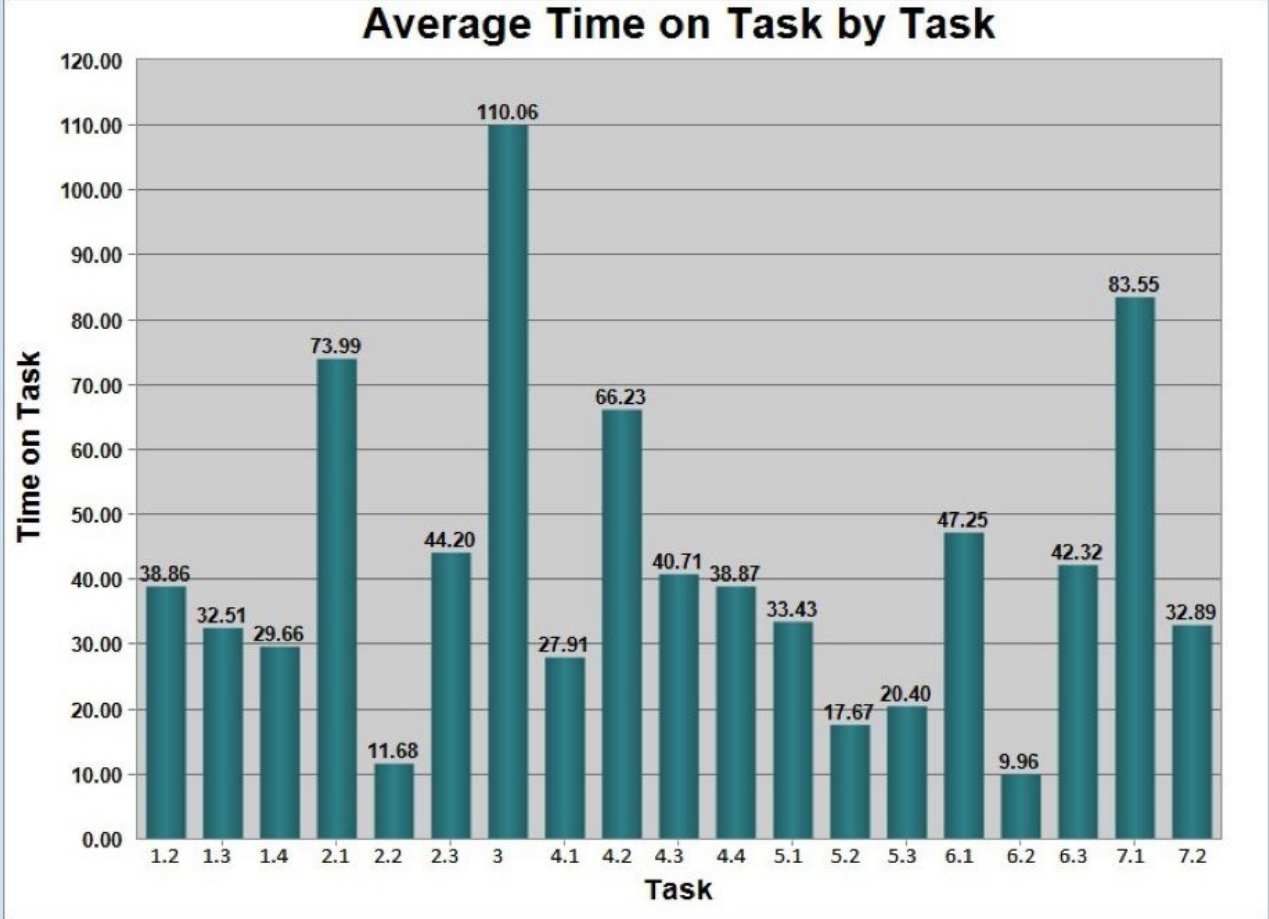
Results: Quantitative



Results: Quantitative



Results: Quantitative



Results: Qualitative

- Most participants seemed satisfied with the website
- Identified IQSS as a research organization
- Varied descriptions of IQSS website and participants' ideal websites
- Participants identified various areas that need improvement:
 - Website terminology
 - Page organization

Participants' Quotes

- “ This is a calendar page, not news and events.”
- “It is hard to decide where to click”
- “That might be leading me outside.”
- “Is it available anywhere on this website?”
- “Most websites will have under ‘people’ or ‘about us,’ they’ll have something that says ‘work here’ or ‘employment’ so it’s easy to find.”
- “It’s not super obvious, to me at least.”
- “Scholar support means people who are already here and have Harvard IDs, not visiting scholars”

Heuristic Evaluation Results

- Some links in sub-pages take users to similar-looking pages with different navigation bars
- Certain terminology may be unfamiliar
 - “Message from the Director”
 - “Teams & Programs”
 - “Roadmaps” and “Metrics”

Current IQSS Homepage

HARVARD UNIVERSITY HARVARD.EDU

IQSS
The Institute for Quantitative Social Science

CONTACT US OPPORTUNITIES

Search

The IQSS Story

About IQSS ▾ Teams & Programs ▾ People News & Events

Understanding and solving society's greatest challenges
through better, faster, bigger, and more collaborative social
science. [Learn more](#)

Helping social scientists leverage advances in data science, computing technology, quantitative methodology, and behavioral research, through activities in . . .

Data Science & Products
IQSS develops powerful, production-ready software tools to propel your research. [Learn more](#)

Research Technology
The go-to resource for infrastructure and support tailored to your research. [Learn more](#)

Administrative Support
A one-stop shop of exceptional administrative services to facilitate your research. [Learn more](#)

Scientific Programs
IQSS provides dedicated hosting and support for innovative scientific programs. [Learn more](#)

Wireframe 1: Homepage Layout

New Menu Options

News Link

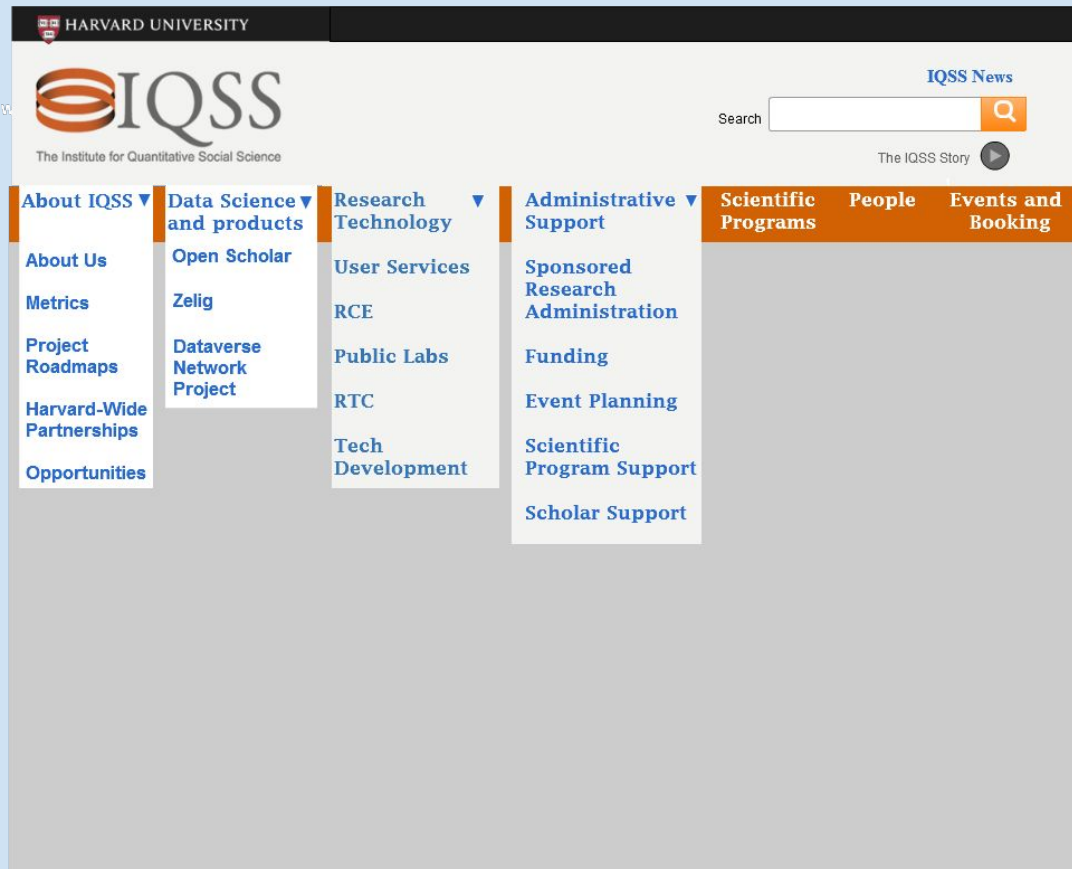
New Icon

Image Carousel?

Repositioned News Widget

The wireframe shows the homepage layout for the Institute for Quantitative Social Science (IQSS) at Harvard University. At the top left is the Harvard University logo. The main header features the IQSS logo and the tagline 'The Institute for Quantitative Social Science'. On the right side of the header, there is a search bar, a link to 'IQSS News', and a play button icon labeled 'The IQSS Story'. Below the header is a navigation menu with items: 'About IQSS', 'Data Science and products', 'Research', 'Administrative Support', 'Scientific Program', 'People', and 'Events and Booking'. The main content area features a large white box titled 'Data Science and Products' with the text 'IQSS develops powerful, production-ready software tools to propel your research.' and a 'Read more...' link. Below this is a news widget with a 'HEADLINES' section and three news items: 'Thanks to RTC Team Member', 'URS Program Launches Academic Year with Facebook Talk', and 'Stephen Ansolabehere named 2015 Don K. Price Award'. The widget also includes sections for 'TWEETS FROM THE IQSS COMMUNITY' and 'UPCOMING EVENTS'. A 'See more' link is at the bottom right of the news widget.

Wireframe 2: Navigation Bar



Page Layout Inconsistencies

Standard Layout

The screenshot shows the top portion of the IQSS website. At the top left is the IQSS logo with the tagline "The Institute for Quantitative Social Science". To the right are links for "CONTACT US" and "OPPORTUNITIES", a search bar, and a link for "The IQSS Story". Below this is a dark orange navigation bar with links for "About IQSS", "Teams & Programs", "People", and "News & Events". The breadcrumb trail reads "HOME / ABOUT IQSS / Metrics".

Dataverse Page Layout

The screenshot shows the "Data Science" page on the IQSS website. The "Data Science" title and tagline "Enhancing Data Sharing and Analysis" are circled in red. The navigation bar, which includes "Software", "Research", "People", "Presentations", "Publications", and "Blog", is also circled in red. The breadcrumb trail reads "HOME / SOFTWARE / About Dataverse". The IQSS logo is visible in the top right, and the "The Dataverse Project" logo is in the bottom right.

*also applies to "About Zelig" page

Calendar Glitch

The screenshot shows a calendar grid with a meeting event titled "Introduction to Geographical Information Systems 1-3pm" on Thursday, December 17, from 1pm to 3pm. The event is organized by David Smith. The location is listed as "K018 (map)", which is circled in red. Below the event details are links for "more details»" and "copy to my calendar»". The calendar grid shows other events: "9am GIS Class 9" on Dec 14, "1pm Introductio" on Dec 17, and "Statistical softv" on Dec 19.



Thank you!