

Introduction

In fall 2004 and in February and March 2005, the Phase 5 consulting firm conducted usability testing for the Youth.gc.ca site. At the same time, the Canadian Youth Connection team (Canadian Youth Connection Forum) administrators decided to conduct their own survey of CYC members to gain further insight into certain aspects of the Youth.gc.ca site, and to see how the responses of the CYC members compared to those of the Phase 5 study participants. For CYC Activity #19, a survey was developed that concentrated on three areas of the site:

- Visual appearance and navigation;
- Content; and,
- Youth Employment Strategy (YES) information.

This report summaries comments and suggestions made by participants concerning the visual appearance and navigation of the site.

VISUAL APPEARANCE AND NAVIGATION

QUESTION ONE

Participants were directed to go to the version page at www.youth.gc.ca/interim.html and asked the following questions:

- *Is it clear what this page is asking you to do?*
- *Where would you click?*
- *Is it clear? On the basis of clarity, score a value from 1 to 10 (1 – poor and 10 – clear)*

Synopsis of Participant Responses

A) *Is it clear what this page is asking you to do?*

Six participants, out of a total of nineteen (32%), said that it was clear what the interim page was asking them to do.

Another six participants (32%) said that it was not clear what the interim page was asking them to do. All six participants who said that the interim page was unclear had trouble identifying which link to use to enter the main page of the web site. One participant was not sure whether to click on the links on top or those on the bottom. Another commented that because the Youth Employment Strategy banner was the biggest link, he thought it must be the entry link for the page. The Employers link caused confusion because there was no corresponding Students or Youth link. Participants also reported the following problems with this page:

- Too many options
- Confusing sliding bar graphic that does not slide
- Lack of language choice
- Lack of obvious difference between program titles. ie. “Summer Career Placement 2005” and “Summer Work Experience 2005”

Seven of the nineteen participants (37%) found the interim page to be “partially clear,” but felt that it could be improved. Two of these participants felt that those without internet experience might have trouble deciding what link to choose. Another felt that the graphical and textual version links were confusing because they were “almost identical.” One participant wondered how the graphical and textual version links related to the other links at the bottom of the page.

Suggestions for making the interim page more user-friendly included providing some explanation for the Employer, Youth Employment Strategy, Summer Career Placement 2005 and Summer Work Experience 2005 links; altering the text to make the phrase “Please choose your preferred version” more visible; and choosing text and colour schemes for the Youth Employment Strategy and Employer link boxes that is more easily readable.

b) *Where would you click?*

When asked where on the interim page they would click, the participants responded as follows:

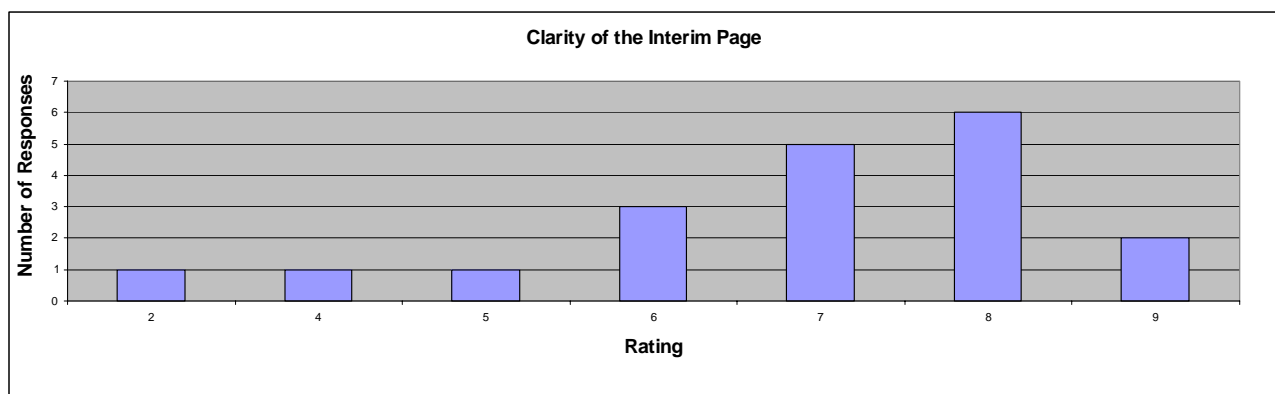
- On textual version: 3 responses (16%);
- On graphical version: 8 responses (42%) s
- On Youth Employment Strategy, Summer Career Placement 2005 or Summer Work Experience 2005: 2 responses (11%)
- On Youth Employment Strategy: 4 responses (21%)

One participant said he would click either the icons at the top or the links near the bottom. Finally, one participant admitted that she had no idea what to click on.

One member made the suggestion that the interim page be linked only to graphical and textual versions of the main page of the Youth.gc.ca website.

c) *Is it clear? On the basis of clarity, score a value from 1 to 10 (1 – poor and 10 – clear)*

Participant ratings for the clarity of the interim page ranged from 2 to 9:



The overall mean clarity score given by participants was 6.8, while the median score was 7. However, ratings were not always consistent with participants’ comments. One participant who found the interim page unclear gave it a clarity rating of 7 nevertheless, the same rating given by another member who found the site to be very clear.

QUESTION TWO

Participants were directed to go to the homepage at <http://www.youth.gc.ca/yohome.jsp?lang=en> and respond to the following questions:

- *What is your initial impression of this page?*
- *Who would you say that the site is intended for? Why? What elements give you this impression?*

Synopsis of Participant Responses

A) *What is your initial impression of this page?*

Ten of the nineteen participants (53%) had a positive initial impression of the Youth.gc.ca homepage. Several mentioned that it looked like an informative and useful website. Others used words such as 'lively,' 'funky,' 'modern,' 'dynamism' and 'stands out' to describe their first impression.

Five participants (26%) reported having a negative reaction to the homepage. The most common complaint had to do with the visual appearance of the page, which was described as boring and 'too formal.' The colour scheme was also criticized. Two participants found that the page was too cluttered and created "information overload." One participant said that the high number of visuals made it difficult to decide "where to go."

Two other participants generally liked the look of the homepage, but also thought that it needed to be simplified.

Three participants did not respond to the question.

B) *Who would you say that the site is intended for? Why? What elements give you this impression?*

Eighteen participants (95%) said that the site seemed to be intended for Youth or 'young people.' Most participants said that their impression of the site as a Youth site resulted from the use of graphics on the homepage, many of which depict young people. Others pointed to the repetition of the word 'Youth' throughout the page, to the slogan "Get the Vibe on Youth Life," and to the youth.gc.ca URL.

One participant said that, at first glance, the site seemed to be intended for an older audience because of the colour scheme.

QUESTION THREE

Based on the categories that you see on the left, does it [the youth.gc.ca homepage] appear to have the kind of information that you would expect to find on a Government of Canada site directed at young Canadians? What categories do you think are missing?

Synopsis of Participant Responses

Fifteen (79%) participants felt that the site responded very well to the informational needs of young Canadians and that it contained all the information that they would expect to find on this kind of government site, and in a few cases, even more.

A few participants felt that although the site was an excellent source of information for young people, certain categories were missing. One participant thought that young entrepreneurs and volunteers merited their own separate category, for which he suggested the title "Entrepreneurs and Leaders." Another wanted information on how to obtain a driver's licence, a topic that is covered on the site for some regions of Canada, but not for others.

Several participants made the argument that all information relevant to Youth could be organized within the presently existing categories. One remarked that adding additional categories would just complicate website navigation.

Other problems reported related to navigation. One participant said that she initially had trouble determining under which heading information on volunteer opportunities could be found. Finally, a few participants thought that the category titles “International” and “Travel” were confusing because many people associate travel with foreign countries. One suggested renaming “International” as “Global Information” or “About the World.”

QUESTION FOUR

Participants were requested to select **IN YOUR COMMUNITY** from the menu bar on the left of the Youth.gc.ca homepage and to answer the following questions:

- *Does this approach in narrowing down your search make sense? – i.e. clicking on the map, and then choosing a community.*
- *If not what improvement can you suggest?*
- *When you first clicked on the map, did you expect to be asked to specify your community?*
- *Is it clear how you would switch to another community, Canada as a whole?*

Synopsis of Participant Responses

A) Does this approach in narrowing down your search make sense? – i.e. clicking on the map, and then choosing a community.

All nineteen participants thought that clicking on the map and choosing a community was a good way to narrow down the search. Two commented that they were used to this approach, as they had seen in used on many other sites.

B) If not what improvement can you suggest?

Several participants had suggestions for improving this navigational tool. Minor suggestions included using different colours for each province and territory on the map, placing the “Select Your Community” drop down menu below the “or select from another province/territory” menu, and changing the way that the smaller communities included within larger centres (ie. Calgary also includes Drumheller, High River, Cochrane) are presented on the webpage.

More importantly, one participant thought that, in addition to community level information, there should be a way to access provincial or territorial level information. “Perhaps a youth isn’t sure of the community, but wants to know about driver’s licences in Manitoba or health care in British Columbia,” she explained.

Another thought it would be a good idea to include some kind of search tool to help people living in rural areas determine under which larger centre their community can be found.

C) When you first clicked on the map, did you expect to be asked to specify your community?

Ten participants (53%) said that they did not expect to be asked to specify their community. One participant thought that “the map might zoom in” to a closer view of the province before asking him to choose a community. Another participant expected to access a menu with province specific information before being asked to select a more specific region. “Since I live in a rural area,” she said, “the local information is pretty scarce, and I often receive messages of “no information here.””

Six participants (32%) said they expected to be asked to specify their community. Two others (11%) did not respond to the question.

D) *Is it clear how you would switch to another community, Canada as a whole?*

When asked if it was clear how to change communities, or change to Canada as a whole, two participants (11%) said that it was not clear how to do this. Another three (16%) said that it took them some time to figure out, because it was not logical to them that in order to change the community, users must click the link for the community they had previously chosen.

Twelve participants (63%) said that it was clear how to change communities or change to Canada as a whole. However, from the explanations they provided, it was clear that at least four of these participants did not really understand how to do this using the link provided for this purpose. One of these participants said that he would click on "I'd rather not choose a location at this time." Another said he would simply use the 'back' button. Two others said they would change the community or province name in the drop down menus provided, but offered no solution for changing between communities once the selection had been made and the page accessed by clicking on "Go."

An additional eight participants said they understood how to change between communities, but as they did not explain how, it was impossible to know how many participants truly understand how to do this.

To simplify changing between communities, three participants suggested implementing a "Change My Community" link in the right or bottom margin of the page.

CONTENT

QUESTION FIVE

For question five, participants were given the following instructions:

From the list of questions below, select three that are of most interest to you and conduct a search on the site without using the Search feature. If something is confusing or you don't know where to go, then state the reasons why. Similarly, if something is clear and easy to follow, say so.

<a> Find information on how to apply for a passport.

* Find the name of your local Member of Parliament.*

<c> You are going to be visiting Nova Scotia in April and want to find out what events are going on.

<d> Information on where to donate blood in your community.

<e> You have decided to do a school term in Australia. Find information that will help you for university programs in Australia.

<f> Find contact information for the Career Resource Centre in your community.

<g> Find a publication called "Are You in Danger (Health and safety in the workplace)."

- *Overall, was it difficult to find the information? If so, why?*
- *Was it apparent where to start your search? If not, why not?*
- *Did you notice anything confusing or unclear as you completed the exercise? Please explain.*
- *Were there any terms that were hard to understand?*
- *Did you ever hesitate in choosing a path? What finally determined the direction you took?*

Synopsis of Participant Responses

Seven participants failed to follow instructions; six of these used the search engine to find what they were looking for. Their responses have not been included in this summary. However, this does show that some users prefer to use search engines to access information directly, rather than navigating through the site.

A few participants who completed the exercise correctly did not indicate what information they searched for, so no specific information could be obtained from their responses.

QUESTIONS	COMMENTS
<a> Find information on how to apply for a passport.	Only one participant had trouble locating the passport information. One person commented that he hesitated between “Travel” and “International” at the start of the search.
 Find the name of your local Member of Parliament.	All six participants who reported choosing this option had trouble deciding where to start the search. Five said they located the information under “About Canada” only after they had tried several other links. A sixth went to “About Canada” and then “got lost.” Two said they had expected to find the information under “In Your Community.” “I would have never guessed it was under the “About Canada” category, one participant said.
<c> You are going to be visiting Nova Scotia in April and want to find out what events are going on.	No problems reported. Two ways to find the information were suggested: by clicking on Events Calendar and selecting the appropriate province and month, or by clicking on Travel>Canadian Travel Guides, choosing Nova Scotia from the drop down menu, and looking for events in the links provided.
<d> Information on where to donate blood in your community.	No comments were made.
<e> You have decided to do a school term in Australia. Find Information that will help you apply for university programs in Australia.	Four participants said they found this information quickly and easily by clicking on Educations>Studying Abroad. One participant was unable to locate the information.
<f> Find contact information for the Career Resource Centre in your community.	Three participants said that they found the information quickly by choosing Jobs>Career Information.
<g> Find a publication called “Are You in Danger (Health and safety in the workplace).”	Three participants said they did not know whether to look under “Jobs” or “Health and Wellness” in the left side menu, and were ultimately unable to locate the document without using the search engine. A fourth participant had the same problem, until she

	noticed the “Publications” tab in the top right corner of the homepage. She observed that «Il faut juste ne pas se restreindre à regarder dans un seul des menus qui nous est donné.»
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Generally speaking, participants found that the site was sorted into well chosen categories and sub-categories and that, in most cases, information was easy to find.

In some cases, participants found that information was not listed where they expected it to be (e.g. *Find the name of your local Member of Parliament*). In other instances, they had difficulty when information they were looking for seemed to fall under more than one category (e.g. *Find information on how to apply for a passport*). The comment was also made that the presence of “too many links” under certain categories such as Education>Study Abroad made navigation difficult.

Participants had no problems understanding the terms used.

Most participants said that while looking for information, they often hesitated before choosing which link to click on. In many cases, they decided which way to go based upon the link descriptions. Most also reported that they found a significant amount of information by ‘trial and error.’

QUESTION SIX

Based on your experience, what changes would you propose, if any, to make it easier to find the information?

Synopsis of Participant Responses

Suggestions to make information easier to find included the following:

- Include subheadings that pop up when the cursor is placed over the category links.
- Limit the number of links under each category to make navigation easier.
- Emphasize the fact that there is a search engine so that users do not lose patience and leave the site before they have found the information they need.
- Include a link to “Publications” in the side left menu as well as in the menu across the top of the page.
- Add a “Menu Index” to the website.
- Add an “Ask Us” link so that visitors can request information if they are unable to find it themselves.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

QUESTION SEVEN

Participants were requested to review each of the sections in the Youth Employment Strategy homepage at <http://youth.gc.ca/yoaux.jsp?&lang=en&flash=1&ta=1&auxpageid=708> and asked the following questions:

- *Is it clear what each section is about?*
- *Is it clear? On the basis of clarity, score a value from 1 to 10 (1 – poor and 10 – clear).*

Synopsis of Participant Responses

A) *Is it clear what each section is about?*

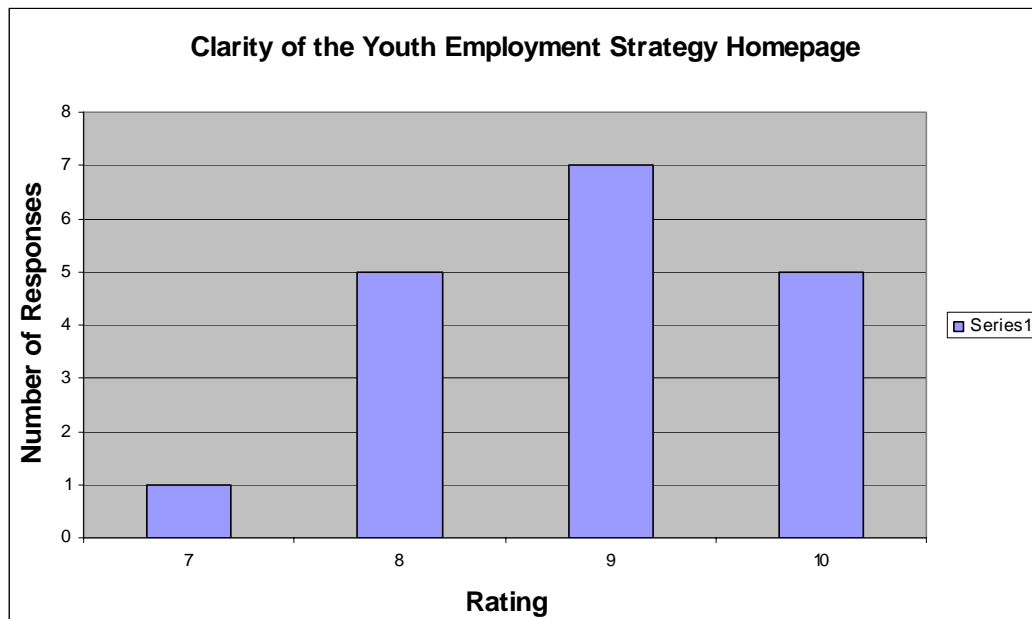
Fifteen participants (79%) thought the sections were well detailed and clear.

From the comments of two others, it was obviously not clear to them that the Skills Link, Summer Work Experience, and the Career Focus program make up the Youth Employment Strategy program. One commented that while the three former programs were well explained, the Youth Employment Strategy program was not.

Two participants did not answer the question.

B) *Is it clear? On the basis of clarity, score a value from 1 to 10 (1 – poor and 10 – clear).*

Participant ratings for the clarity of the Youth Employment Strategy homepage ranged from 7 to 10:



The overall mean clarity score given by participants was 8.5 and the median score was 9. One participant did not give a rating.

QUESTION EIGHT

Participants were asked to go to the “Who Can Participate” page at <http://youth.gc.ca/yoaux.jsp?&lang=en&flash=1&ta=1&auxpageid=710> and answer the following questions:

- *After reading the explanation, do you think you would be eligible for a Youth Employment Strategy program?*
- *What are the programs?*

Synopsis of Participant Responses

A) After reading the explanation, do you think you would be eligible for a Youth Employment Strategy program?

Seventeen participants (89%) thought they would be eligible to take part in a YES program. Two did not answer the question.

B) *What are the programs?*

Eleven participants (58%) said that the programs were Skills Link, Summer Work Experience, and Career Focus.

Two (11%) said that the programs were Skills Link, Summer Work Experience, Career Focus, and Youth Employment Strategy.

Six participants (32%) did not answer the question.

QUESTION NINE

Participants were asked to go to the “How Can I Apply?” page at <http://youth.gc.ca/yoaux.jsp?&lang=en&flash=1&ta=1&auxpageid=710> and answer the following question:

- *Based on this information, what would you do to apply for a position?*

Synopsis of Participant Responses

Most participants suggested at least two ways that they could apply for a YES program position.

The most common suggestions were 1) apply for the YES program at a Human Resource Centre of Canada, and 2) look for YES positions online at Job Bank.

Several participants said they would click on the links provided on the “How Can I Apply?” page to obtain more specific information on available YES positions.

Two said they would contact the government department they would like to work for.

The suggestion was made that a link be added to the website so that interested Youth can apply for a YES program position through the Youth.gc.ca website.

It is obvious from these responses that many participants do not understand what is actually involved in applying for a YES program position. Youth seem to be under the impression that the program is set up in such a way that they can apply for existing YES program positions. This page fails to clear up this misconception.

One participant found this page to be very misleading. An employee of HRSDC, she has more knowledge of the YES program than the average young Canadian. She pointed out that the “How Can I Apply?” page “doesn’t talk about any forms I might need to fill out, or [mention] that acceptance depends on your barriers, available projects and funding, sponsors etc. This really makes it seem like a one-stop process to doing SWE, CF or SL.” She also said that the site failed in providing specific information about the programs: “for example SWE [...] is not a job matching service, nor is there any application process.”

Finally, the participant felt that the webpage failed to inform Youth that they could apply directly to sponsors. Instead it created the impression that application for positions with the YES program is made through the government.

QUESTION TEN

- *Overall, for what you’ve seen, is the Youth Employment Strategy section written for you?*
- *Does it appear to be targeted at Youth?*

Synopsis of Participant Responses

A) *Overall, for what you’ve seen, is the Youth Employment Strategy section written for you?*

Fifteen participants (79%) said that they felt that Youth Employment Strategy section was written for them. One participant (5%) did not, as she found the information to be very confusing.

Two participants (11%) did not answer the question.

B) *Does it appear to be targeted at Youth?*

Twelve participants (63%) said that they thought the Youth Employment Strategy section was targeted at Youth.

Two participants (11%) did not agree. One pointed out that there was nothing about the graphics or style of the section to suggest that it was specifically targeted at young people. The other participant said the section was not written for Youth because “the information is scarce [sic], incomplete, and it is difficult to find [...] what you are looking for.”

Three participants (16%) did not answer the question.

QUESTION ELEVEN

- *How might you improve the content in this section, if at all?*

Seven participants (37%) thought the Youth Employment Strategy section did not need to be improved.

Twelve others (63%) offered various suggestions for improving this section of the site. These suggestions included the following:

- Use subheadings and present information in bullet form for easier scanning
- Avoid repetition of information between sections
- Distinguish more clearly between each of the three YES programs

- Include a section containing statistical information about the program from previous years
- Include a list of all federal departments who are involved with the YES program
- Promote the Youth.gc.ca website more aggressively at Canadian Career Resource Centres
- Provide a link for a YES program application form

CONCLUSION

Participants' responses for Canadian Youth Connection Activity #19 support the findings of the Phase 5 usability survey. Many of the problems and suggestions made by Activity #19 participants concerning the visual appearance and navigation, content, and Youth Employment Strategy (YES) information coincide with those highlighted in the Phase 5 survey. These include the following:

- Improve/simplify version page
- Improve index page - i.e. Add more colour
- Make map navigation page more user friendly and add a "Change Community" link
- Add "Publications" to the category menu
- Improve cross-referencing between sections

These improvements have already been included in the Youth Information Products & Services (YIPS) Action Plan and the team is working to incorporate them into the website. The majority of these changes should be complete by the end of the summer.