CYC Activity 35: The New CYC Forum Interface

Activity 35 was the second in a series of three activities designed to collect feedback about the CYC forum software system. Beginning in December 2005, major changes were made to the Canadian Youth Connection forum administrative software. In December, the out-of-the box software used to run the forum was replaced with a customized forum software featuring a faster and easier member application process. February saw the launch of an on-line survey software system that allows members to log in and complete CYC consultation activities on-line instead of using word-processing software.

Activity 35 focused on the forum interface, the part of the forum through which members communicate with other members (the "chat" area). Members were asked to provide feedback about this interface. Information we collected from this activity will be used to make adjustments to the new system in the coming months.

Question 1: In terms of functionality (ie. things you can do on the forum), how do you think the new forum compares to the old one (Ultimate BB Board)? (If you joined the CYC on December 20, 2005 or later, please skip question 1 and continue to question 2.)

Responses	Number of participants	Percent of participants
The old one was better	23	48,9%
The new one is better	15	31,9%
About the same	8	17,0%
Did not respond to question	1	2,1%

Question 1b: If you think the old forum interface was better, what specific elements do you feel are missing from the new forum?

Responses

The old forum was more user friendly, although the "new posts" button has helped a lot. I was more comfortable navigating through the old forum. Threads were posted with the newest posts first, rather than last, so it was easy to keep track and follow discussions.

I missed being able to set personal preferences. eg: being able to display more posts/topics per page. I also would like to see, on the main page, the last post in each category instead of the last topic. I would also like to be able to 'subscribe' to a category instead of just one topic so I would get an email every time a new activity is up.

Tout ce qui est dans le nouveau forum est mieux que sur l'ancien. Le fait qu'on puisse regarder les derniers messages , nous donnentmoins de temps à perdre et à lire des réponses à nos messages.

Personally the old forum was easier to access, and I was just so used to it. The specific element missing from the new forum are .. I don't know, I just have to get used to it. It's still good but I miss the old forum lol =(

In the old forum we were able to see who posted last in each section on the main page. Also, we were able to see which sections have new posts, whereas the new forum does not. This creates a problem sometimes for me as I often neglect to look at some sections.

La fonction la plus efficace est clairement la fonction "voir les nouveaux messages". Uniquement pour ça, ça valait la peine... Pour le reste, je dirais que je trouve les deux sites semblables.

I did like the old one better at first because I was used to it and it is more like other forum's I'd used, but after the additions to this forum (ie. new posts link! and this way of completing assignments), I like this board better now.

J'aimais pouvoir voir avant d'entrer sur une catégorie de quand datais la derniere réponses aux sujets

For me I liked the layout of the old forum. I feel that this forum can be a little confusing to navigate, and confusing to find out what is new and what isn't new. I liked the layout of the old forum much better for functionality.

I haven't had too much of an in depth look, but I'm not sure if the new interface has a private messaging function. Part of the problem I had was learning the new interface but after becoming familiar with it, I would say they are about par as a user though if there are administrative functionalities that are more advantageous this was definitely a good switch.

Umm, the colours, layout and style. and not to mention our avies.

Although I have specified that the new forum is better, I must say that I do not like the "framed" appearance of the new forum. That is, I do not like how the actual forum is only a portion of the main page. Visually, this makes the forum look crowded. This is something that, if I remember correctly, was not a problem with the old forum. On the other hand, I really like how the assignments no longer require the use of a external application such as Microsoft Word. That is, I like how the assignments and the forum have become integrated into one.

Question 2a: Take a moment to take a look at the main page of the forum. Do you like how the main page of the forum is currently organized?

Responses	Number of Participants	Percent of Participants
Yes	33	70,2%
No	13	27,7%
Did not respond to question	1	2,1%

Question 2b: If you chose "no," how would you change the organization of the page?

Responses

well being a teen i like to see visuals. maybe have like a set up somewhat like that with more color and a few pictures like say a canada flag or pictures about what we as Canadians stand for just to remind us. i know i like color and stuff like that and it makes things more fun. just cause its business dont mean you have to make it boring :D

Les catégories devraient prendre toute la largeur de la page. De plus, il serait bien que les sujets soient à gauche de la page, comme sur les autres forums.

I answered no for the following reasons. Firstly its just plain boring. Secondly the display of the last topic. The page is alright but could be improved.The page is boring and could be improved. As this is a page for youth colour scould be incorporated. To attract younger clientele something a little less professional looking would benefit greatly. Directions to posts could be improved on a few measures. Showing the last topic made could be better replaced with the last topic to have a reply on it. In other forms this way is very popular.Other then that the page is very direct and easy to comprhend even for new members.

Less is more. There is too much clutter and it is quite annoying. There are really only a few sections I go to as the others do not apply to me or entertain. For example, I think the Newbies section should be taken out as new members can integrate well enough that it isn't necessary.

Other sections may include a "Help" Section, or a "General" SEction and the subsections would be "or "Cool Websites" (sites that people have been that are interesting) and "Hobbies". A "Creative Corner" section could be for artwork, wallpaper, cool drawings members have done that people want to show and "Crafts" (special arts and craft techniques people want to share) section. An expanded section would be better for the "Team _____" section. Hopefully, a section devoted for team members only would allow team members to interact more often because I realized that I don't really know my team members and I don't know through which section I could get to know them better. But if you guys have time.....what is the purpose of different teams anyways? Also another recommendation is to create three more sections in this front page. This would add to the right of the forum format you have here. The first column could be called "Last post", another section can be the "threads" and a third column is called the "Posts" section. I join alot of forums and I realized how successful these forums have become because of these sections.

Il faudrait moins de catégories, ou peut-être introduire des sous-catégories. Présentement, la page manque de hiérarchie, et on ne sait pas vraiment où aller intuitivement.Un ménage pourrait être fait (jeunes professionels à l'étranger n'est plus valide, commentaire et suggestions pourrait être ailleurs, les gagnants peuvent être à l'intérieur de la catégorie activité...)

I would have "sub-groups". That is, something like:General forum-General Discussion-Thoughts and Views-Creative Corner-Daily GoodiesCYC Specific-Activities-Winners-Your teamForum Specific-Newbies-Comments & SuggestionsI think that lumping it in groups something like that would make it easier to figure out what is there. Still, the categories are good.

I think I would have less things on the first page, or I would perhaps move things around a little bit. I would do things such as have the activities and the winners below each other. I would put things like the YPI as one of the last things on the page. I just think there are too many things on this page for the first time or occasional user.

I'm not sure what design functionalities are available since it seems like a fairly straightforward system, but I find I get a bit lost in all of the titles. If there was some way of splitting the topics up into smaller organizational groups it might be a little easier to access and find where you are going.

Just a suggestion though. The order may be changed to further enhace the page.

The event of the Young Professionals International seems like something that isn't regularly there. Perhaps emphasize it with a little star or something of the sort may be effective. This is assuming that more information about outside programmes will arise periodically in the future in which the new programme information would appear with a notification/star?

Too cluttered.

The organization is too organized. it doesn't look intersting or fun at all. Like the words are the only part that actually tell you anything about that section, and there should be more to draw in the eye, like colours and different fonts and such.

Although I like the current organization of the main page, I would suggest that the forum rooms could be organized according to use a bit better (perhaps in descending order according to use / importance).Under this idea, the "Newbies" form would still be first (as it should be the first forum that new users enter), followed by "General Discussion" (as it is the most used) and then "Activities".However, aside from the minor element of the ordering of the forums on the main page, I do enjoy the visual layout of the main page and the organization of information (forum name, description of forum, last topic, etc).

Maybe more colourful with red and green.The title should be very eye catching.

I think it would be easier to read if you organized it in order of importance. So things that people would like to know about would be at the top, and things that are least important would be at the bottom.

In my opinion I would put the most important threads on the top and less important on the bottom.

Question 3a: Do you like the colours that have been used for the forum

Responses	Number of Participants	Percent of Participants
Yes	23	48,9%
No	23	48,9%
Did not respond to question	1	2,1%

Question 3b: If you do not like the colours that have been chosen, what colours would you like to see on the forum?

Responses

Canadian colors colors that represent us or at least something more fun like blue, yellow, pink, purple, green, red

I would have used a more red/white theme, to match most gc.ca websites.

Well... I would like to see some BRIGHTER colors, these are pretty subdued, but they work.

Rouge, bleu, jaune, vert.

I'm not sure, but less brown would be nice. Maybe more blue would help.

Couleurs vives: bleu clair, rouge clair, jaune, vert clair

White background and black text, to keep it simple =)

Blue, white, black.

Simply brighter colours would be better. Preferably green (personal preference).

Orange, red.

I prefer the background to stand out from the rest of the website, so a blue background would be better than white. It will not make the forum look plain.

J'aime les couleurs actuelles. Très tendance.

The colours are ok. It would be awesome if users could choose from a few different schemes. I like grey's and blacks. Others like pinks.. who knows.

I like the earthy tones.

They are very neutral are not directed to a specific clientele

Blue scheme

Baby blue, yellow, orange, bright colors.

n'importe lesqelles tant qu'elle sont attrayante mais pas trop flash

I like the colors

I do like the colors that have been chosen, especially for the forum topics with the alternating blue tones

A brighter/bolder colour for titles that are web links.

Different shades of green, maybe change the colour according to season. 4 different colours (people should care more about the environment)

Colors similar to the red, blue and white on the left hand side

Blue and cream.

Brighter colours like reds, blues, etc

The colours are calm and subtle. They are effective and draw you back to the shades and tones of the blues and the navagation bar

I like them just fine

Not a grey background

green or blue

Red

I like the colours, I wouldn't change them

Blue

Purple and blue but this is ok-just a little boring.

More vibrant colours

Reds, blues, greens, more exciting colours

Include a few more lively, colours to give the site more vitality. "Spring" colours would be good.

Although I do like the colours chosen for the forum, my second choice would be black and shades of blue (to match the menu and seach sidebar).

Red and green.

Really light blue and black or dark blue.

Question 4: Which of the following versions of the forum main page do you prefer? (ie. version 1, which notes the number of topics for each section; or version 2, which notes the number of topics AND number of posts for each section). Version 1 Version 2

Responses	Number of Participants	Percent of Participants
Version 1	28	59,6%
Version 2	18	38,3%
Did not respond to question	1	2,1%

Question 5a: Locate the following links on the forum: "Participate in an Activity," "View or Modify Your Profile," and "Search Forum." Do you think these links are well-positioned on the page and easy to find?

Responses	Number of Participar	Percent of participants
Yes	31	66,0%
No	15	31,9%
Did not respond to the question	1	2,1%

Question 5b: If not, where do you think they should be located?

I think they should be at the top of the page so its in front of you when you log in.

On the sidebar, below the youth.gc.ca navigation area

I would put them in buttons near the top of the screen, or at least be visible on the first page without having to scroll down.

Au même endroit, mais peut-être en deux sous catégories. car présentement on a 8 liens pareils ensemble. Recherche et profil pourraient aller en haut.

At the top (as buttons). I think images are more likely to be spotted compared to the hyperlinked text unless it is bold and bigger

They are in a good position!

At the top of the page.

Dans le haut de la page d'accueil.

Most user profiles have menu on left side or the top.....I often forget where to log off.

It would be great if it they were more visible and on the main page

At the top of the page.

Placing these links at the bottom of the page are not wise, as users may not scroll to the bottom. They should be on the top or as a sidebar.

I think that the "participate in an activity" should be at the top of the interface.

Question 6: Additional comments. Is there anything you would change about the forum interface?

YEAH its color it makes it seem so BLAH i think things need color to make them fun and interesting for teens or people to notice althought the saying is dont judge a book by its cover might as well face it we do that anyways.

Nope, you improved it well and I don't see anything that is missing. Keep up the good work!

Post count visible pour les membres. Qu'on ne soit pas obligé de se rendre sur la page du membre pour savoir combien de fois il a envoyé des messages. De plus j'aimerais voir des couleurs un peu plus riches.

I find the 'Participate in an Activity' button very unhelpful. I usually just go to the Activities section. I'm not really sure if all activities are listed when I click the 'Participate in an Activity' link. I would rather see a that link appear only when there is an activity that I still need to do, and make it stand out so I can see it. Also for Question 4, I think showing the last topic created in version 2 is just a waste of space. I will usually check it out if it has a new post.

Mettre le dernier message récent à chaque sujet comme ça ce sera plus facile de voir réponses et les opinions des autres membres les unes à la suite des autres.
No, it just takes some getting used to lol cuz i'm so confused since i've been so out of it.

The interface could be somewhat more exciting. AS mentioned before this page does not attract visually.

Delete some of the sections so people are not so overwhelmed.

It's better to organize into separate columns because it's really small and sometimes people wouldn't read the information below the description of the specific sections. It's not only more organized to put threads, posts, etc in different sections, it's also easier to see and more simple with a number in a box rather than numbers, names and date all jumbled up under a description. People want to know exactly what's going on fast and easy. Also when members open a section to see threads to a forum, it's better to have columns on the side saying the amount of replies and views a specific thread received. This way, members are more motivated to open a thread to see what is going on and if by any chance, they may want to contribute a comment too! ? I don't know if this is a good suggestion but I often think government sites like these for youth should also have a section where it's for educational or work purposes. This means that government websites you would recommend to students that can help solve our problems. For example, I never knew about the 'resume builder' site until I did the activity evaluating it. So links to goverment sites like 'H

Recherche, profil, et déconnexion pouraient probablement être en haut en petit. Ce sont des catégories qui sont normalement en haut à droite je crois. Je tiens à ajouter que l'idée de mettre le dernier message dans la version 2 de la question 4 est une excellente idée. Plus besoin de se promener inutilement à la recherche des nouveaux messages.

 Maybe if you had those sub-groups I described earlier, you could make a sub-group for these links. Just a thought. That's all I can think of. I'm liking the way this board is progressing :)

Maybe more coloured text would help bring attention

Je ne voit rien de plus concernant l'interface qui me dérange vraiment.

I think I would make it a little easier to navigate, as I have lately not been able to use the new forum as much as the older forum I find its harder to find things than the last forum, but at the same time to post and that, its a bit easier. I find that the password retrieval is a lot simpler and a definet improvement over the last system.

Overall, I am really happy with the new layout and hope that it will be able to foster a lot of development for the CYC and new members that may join. I really like how a lot of the important functions mentioned in Question 5 are consolidated all in one area. It took me a second to find them but now that I know they are there it is very convenient. Keep up the good work.

The format is great and very clear!!!

I prefer php forums.

Well, it looks good.

Going further with question 5: The links are hard to notice unless you scroll right down which many poeple may not do. You want to have your links in open view probably near the top for accesability.

No I think it's pretty straight forward, I wouldn't change anything.

Aucune tout es beau.

I am new to the forum. I find it very social. I have not seen everything yet. A link to current oppertunities would be good or summer oppertunities would be nice.

The forum interface, is great, but not very interesting or exciting. Some people need something to draw their eye to an activity or anything in general.

I really like the way the forum and everything else is organized. When I first signed up, I thought I would have a really hard time getting used to everything. In fact it was the opposite. I had never used a forum before. Despite this, everything was clear, understandable, and organized. It made things so much easier on me!!!!

A comment not necessarily about the forum interface, but about the assignment interface.There are instances when a text field (one line) was provided for the user to submit an answer, and other instances when a text box (multi lines) was provided. In my opinion, these should all be multilines. This is because the text field limits the length of the response that you can submit. I can understand that this would be useful if the forum administrators are seeking a short and simple answer to the question, but in many cases, I have found myself trying to compress a good thought or suggestion so that it would fit into the maximum character length permitted.

Bigger and more eye catching with bright colours such as red and green.

The order of the interface is something that I think should be changed.

The stickies should be more visible, I didn't notice them when I visited forum for the first time.

I dont have too much problems with this site, but in reference to the previous question, I think the 3 links would be better placed on the right (where all the white space is).

Moi en persone j'aime bien le nouveau forum et je crois qu'il est bien comme ça et je ne changerais rien.