**Advanced Usability, Spring, 2012 – Potential Projects**

**Project 1: OpenText**

I have a four- or five-year history of providing (pedagogically valuable) usability support for my friends at OpenText (nee Vignette). They understand usability, they know how to manage it, and many students have received valuable training/mentoring and real-world experience by doing projects for these folks. We have a need teed up for this Spring.

The person who chooses/is selected for this project will likely carry out a remote usability test of some web content management software on eight or so OpenText customers that Dr. Tanya Payne, of OpenText, will help find for us. You will likely be expected to present the results to the OpenText team (either live or via phone/Webex) in April.

Kick-off lunch this Wednesday at 11:30 at El Patio with the OpenText stakeholders (and me), on me.

Here’s their web site: <http://www.opentext.com/2/global.htm>

**Project 2: Bonefish and Tarpon Trust**

OK, so I’m a board member of the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust. Here’s their mission statement: “To conserve and enhance global bonefish, tarpon and permit fisheries and their environments through stewardship, research, education and advocacy.”

I have volunteered to help them with their web site. I’ve made one quick pass, and given them just a little feedback. They are interested in improved usability AND doing a better job of involving social media – adding new, fresh content in a way that doesn’t jeopardize BTT’s excellence in scientific research. This engagement might involve a trip to Miami (on me – but on the cheap!) for a meeting on Feb. 10.

<http://www.tarbone.org/>

**Project 3: IX Lab/Wiki**

The iSchool IX Lab, which I direct, needs some revitalization. New web presence. New (or at least better advertised) procedures. I’m vying to get a flat-screen monitor mounted to the outside wall, to inform about the lab schedule AND important upcoming deadlines. The fact that the ACM SIGCHI conference will be in Austin in May will be of interest, here – we may end up doing a tour of our lab. The person who chooses/is selected for this project will rightly be able to add the following line to his/her resume: “Lab Technician (or Manager, or whatever) – IX Lab – Spring, 2012.”

**Project 4: WOWi**

Hi Randolph,  
  
Hope your year is off to a good start.

For my part, madly getting everything in place for the WOWi "digital media exchange" event coming up in FEB (5th - 18th).

You'd mentioned possibly having a student of yours being interested in participating somehow.  Just to refresh your memory, the exchange will be between the [Ponheary Ly Foundation School](http://theplf.org/wp/) in Cambodia (near Angkor Wat) and two local schools: [Connally High](http://cougarproductionsnews.posterous.com/) and the Trinity Episcopal School.  The PLF School has a small computer lab supplied by Dell, and the two local schools both have vibrant digital media creation programs lead by very inspiring teachers: [David Conover](http://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=10878801&locale=en_US&trk=tyah) and [Sarah Venkatesh](http://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=76272449&authType=name&authToken=zNT4&pvs=pp). I recall you saying that your son goes/went to Connally.

There are a number of ways that an iSchool student could help, depending upon their interest and expertise...all while staying right here in Austin.

1. We will be collecting and archiving a lot of content of various types, from which we intend to fashion large public, interactive displays, say in a SEP-OCT 2012 timeframe.  In other words, we face a meta-data, info-architecture challenge.

2. The interface through which the FEB exchange takes place is another area in which there will be a lot of trial and error to find what works. And this will be an ongoing problem-opportunity as the project continues and grows.

Hope there are students who might find either or both of these an interesting challenge.

Here's a [recent blog](http://travelingteacherblog.com/2011/12/digital-voices-of-the-cambodian-youth/comment-page-1/#comment-896) about prepping for the WOWi visit 05 FEB to 18 FEB.

Thanks and best wishes for the New Year!



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**Project 5: Green Ribbon Schools**

A year ago 4empowerment (4e, [www.4empowerment.com](http://www.4empowerment.com)) released a new version of their permission based social networking site, designed for use by education organizations and students. The site allows students to collaborate around meaningful activities, and with teacher approval, publish their results.

 The goal of the 4e team is to provide a social networking engine, supporting meaningful project collaborations and publishing, for use by other organizations, from scouts to student councils, etc.

 In May, 4e released the first phase of the Green Ribbon Schools (GRS) site. Later in Sept. the GRS site was to be “skinned” around the 4e engine to support collaboration and publishing. The GRS site already has over 125 schools signed up. The goal is to be in every Texas school and extend across the US and to other countries.

 Need:

 Develop a system for user feedback to:

 -        Enhance the UI/UX for the 4e site

-        Assure the “skinning” of the GRS site on the 4e engine is a positive user experience

-        Learn from the GRS experience so other programs, like in the future with Cyberways and Waterways (in development per funding) can also be skinned to t he 4e engine

-        Assure the integration of the Intro GRS page ([www.greenribbonschools.org](http://www.greenribbonschools.org/)) with the “operational” area of the site (<http://grs.4empower.com>) is clean and clear to users

-        Address the challenge of providing a system/site with different users: teachers (who are the gatekeepers), middle/high school students, and kids 12 and under.

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**Project 6: Alexander Architectural Archive**

[This too was from last year.]

Dear Dr. Bias,

I am writing to propose a possible usability testing project for a class or students interested in gaining experience. UT¹s Architecture and Planning Library Special Collections has 106 unique issues from the Southern Architect and Building News¹ 1889-1932 run, more than any other institution.

In addition to historical article content, the journals are heavy on advertisements. The mission of the SABN project is to provide access to all SABN issues (that are available) through article-level indexing and scans.

With a donor gift, we developed an indexing manual (aimed at a volunteer work force) and database this summer.

The donor has a background in instructional design and usability and would like us to perform formal usability testing on the tools we have developed, but we do not have the resources. Perhaps this project could be used as a group assignment in one of your usability classes? At this point, we need to evaluate the indexing manual and database from the indexer¹s view; once the database has been more fully populated, we will need to evaluate it from a search functionality perspective.

Please let me know if you might be interested in usability testing for the SABN indexing manual and database. We want to keep up our momentum on this project and hope you can help us out. If this project is not appropriate for your classes, please advise if it might it be a suitable capstone project or an experience for which students seeking resume-building activity might be willing to volunteer. Our goal is that the manual might eventually be applied to other historic architecture journals, and that the information gathered will be included in the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, so the project¹s implications reach beyond UT.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Beth

Beth Dodd

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<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/apl/index.html>

**Project 7: Austin Public Library**

Since 1925 the Austin Public Library has offered books, programs and services to the residents of Austin and the surrounding area.  Currently the library serves over 500,000 cardholders and has over 20,000,000 page views a year for our family of websites.  We are interested in teasing out how well we are serving our web users, specifically how effective our web services are at assisting users in performing certain tasks (like placing a hold on a library book) and gleaning certain types of information (like how to sign up for a library card).