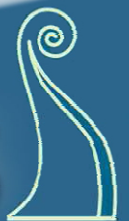


# ***Assessing the quality of library websites***

**Roswitha Poll  
Münster, Germany**

---

IFLA 2005





# What is meant by „Quality“ ?

## Definitions

- Fitness for purpose
- Conformance to requirements
- Quality is meaningful only in relation to the purpose and end use of the product.
- **The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs (ISO 8402)**

*Purpose, Requirements, Needs, Expectations*





# What is meant by „Quality“ ?

## Example

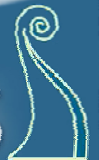
<b>Performance</b>	A library service meets its most basic purpose	Making key information resources available on demand
<b>Features</b>	Secondary characteristics which add to the service but are beyond the essential core	Alerting services
<b>Reliability</b>	Consistency of the service's performance in use	Keeping up the speed of delivery services
<b>Conformance</b>	The service meets the agreed standard	Dublin Core
<b>Durability</b>	Sustainability of the service over a period of time	No broken web links
<b>Currency</b>	Up-to-dateness of information	OPAC



# What is meant by „Quality“ ?

## Example

<b>Serviceability</b>	<b>Level of help available to users</b>	<b>Complaint service</b>
<b>Aesthetics</b>	<b>Visual attractiveness</b>	<b>Physical library, Website</b>
<b>Usability/Accessibility</b>	<b>Ease of access and use</b>	<b>Opening hours, Website structure</b>
<b>Assurance/ Competence/Credibility</b>	<b>Good experience with staff's knowledgability</b>	<b>Correct reference answers</b>
<b>Courtesy/ Responsiveness/ Empathy</b>	<b>Accessibility, flexibility and friendliness of staff</b>	<b>Reference service</b>
<b>Communication</b>	<b>Clear explanation of services and options in language free of jargon</b>	<b>Signposting, Website</b>
<b>Perceived quality</b>	<b>The user's view of the service</b>	<b>Satisfaction surveys</b>





## Quality attributes or criteria

*We might add:*

**Example**

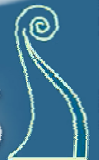
**Speed**

**ILL**

**Variety  
offered**

**Broad collection,  
Reference service in  
walk-in, mail and chat  
form**

**How does  
that apply to  
websites?**



# User expectations

## Users' expectations when accessing a website

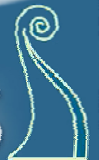
### What they want:

- to find a specific information (e.g. opening times)
- to perform an activity (e.g. a renewal)

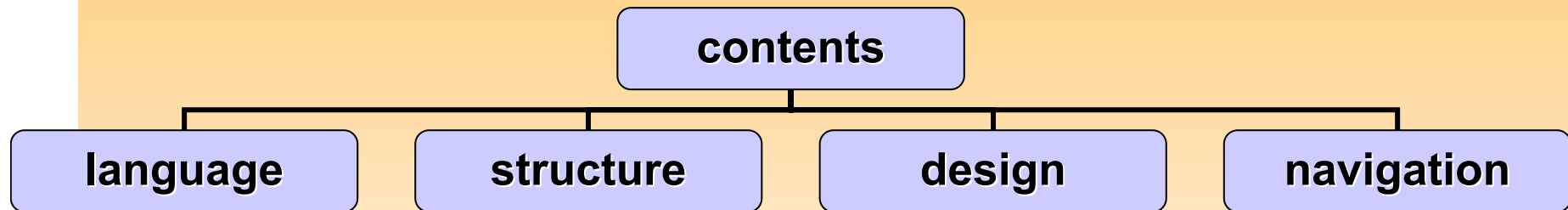
### What they do:

- scan headings till they find something interesting
- scan texts (not reading consecutively)
- print long texts
- users follow the line of

- at once
- quick
- self-explaining



# Website quality



# Contents

## Basics: How to access the library

- **contacts (address, phone, mail...)**
- way to the library
- opening times
- **staff contacts**

## Services: How to use the library's services

- **online catalogue**
- loan service
- document delivery
- electronic publications
- online reference
- links
- forms for critics, proposals





# Contents

## News

- **events, exhibitions**

- new acquisitions

- changes relevant for use (opening times, server down)

- **user training programmes**

### General: Background information on the library („about us“)

- **profile of the library (mission, history, statistics...)**

- organization

- **special collections**

- projects

- **publications**

### Information on the website

- **last update (on every page)**

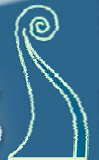
- webmaster

- **help function**

- search function

- **frequently asked questions (FAQ)**

- page in other language



## Language

- „journalistic“: What, where, when, how
- **short** sentences
- **short** texts.
- **details** not
- subdivisions
- clear, **jargon-free**
- specific terms or abbreviations explained when first used
- **consistency of terms used**
- polite, but not too distant: You will find...

**short and  
to the point:  
reading on the  
screen is 25 %  
slower than on  
paper**





## Presenting the contents

### Most important topics / features first

- **contacts, opening times**
- **most-used services (catalogue, reference...)**
- **search function**
- **sitemap, index**
- **news**

**Is that done?**



### Lending service

accessible directly via the homepage	6
accessible with 2 clicks	5
• from „services“	2
• from „use“	2
• from „A – Z“	2
accessible with 3 clicks	4
not to find	1





## Presenting contents

## Possible differentiation of user groups

### all libraries

- first-time visitors
- disabled persons
- external users
- library staff
- other libraries

### public libraries

- children, juveniles
- seniors

### academic libraries

- first-year students
- postgraduates
- faculty
- alumni
- senior students

**In 20  
libraries: 4**



## Searching possibilities

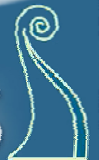
- ◆ site map
- ◆ index (a-z)
- ◆ search function

**But what is searched?**

### ◆ Search can relate to

- ◆ catalogue search
- ◆ portal search
- ◆ library website search
- ◆ institutional website search
- ◆ Internet search

**Must be clearly labelled**





## website structure and design

- **flat hierarchies:** maximum 3 clicks to the required information
- **homogeneous design** for all pages
- **coordinated design** with the rest of the website
- **all pages clearly labelled;** the labels should reflect the website structure
- **links in the text:** must be recognizable and change color after use
- **back button functions** on each page
  - back to top
  - back to homepage

navigation should show:

- where I am
- where I came from
- where I can go now



# Graphics

graphics

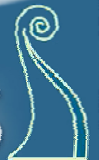
- **functional, not decorative**
- **might communicate information better than text**
- **quick loading necessary**
- **logo graphics can be misleading (click)**

tables,  
charts

- **can be clearer than a long explanation**
- **several small tables are better than one complicated**

animation

- **makes sense if a process is simulated**
- **but: users may suspect advertisements**



*"...designed in a way that can be easily read by all users of the library, be they physically visiting the library or accessing it remotely and regardless of any disability or access preference they may have." (P.Brophy)*

- clear distinction between content and structure
- users should be able to access contents irrespective of hardware or browser
- simple layout of pages
- ALT tags used for images
- links should have a description
- background colors should be contrasting

● **W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1999**





## Design for all: Frames

- **frame-set-based pages: not barrier-free for visually handicapped persons**
- **CSS-stylesheet-based pages:**
  - content parts and navigation can be separated
  - barrier-free if implemented without framesets

checking software for accessibility



# Usability evaluation

*Do users find the site easy, pleasant and efficient to use and navigate?*

## Evaluation without direct user cooperation

- **heuristic evaluation:** audit by a small expert group
- **cognitive walk-through:** Experts construct a "user scenario" and perform tasks of an imaginary user
- **transaction logs:** evaluation of use data as to frequency of use, most-used pages, ways of searching ...

## Evaluation with user cooperation

- **web surveys:** show satisfaction rates, purposes of search, problems...
- **group tests:** moderated groups work on specified task
- **thinking aloud:** a test user's thinking out loud when using the website is recorded on tape
- **observation:** users perform a set of tasks and are observed either by video or by an observing person



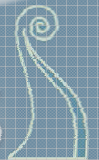
## Quality criteria

### Libraries

- **reliability**
- **conformance**
- **durability**
- **usability**
- **currency**
- **assurance, competence**
  
- **courtesy, responsiveness, empathy**

### Library websites

- **objectivity and accuracy of contents**
- **conformance to standards (W3C)**
- **sustainability of the service (no broken links)**
- **accessability, readability of texts**
- **up-to-dateness of information**
- **reputation**
  - quick updates
  - correct information
  - homogeneous design
  - contact to webmaster
- **complaint services, polite language**





## Quality criteria

### Libraries

- **communication**
- **aesthetics**
- **speed of information delivery**
- **variety of services**

### Library websites

- **short, to the point, jargon-free**
- **attractive design**
- **quick loading, flat hierarchies, self-explaining structure**
- **services for specific user groups, broad systematic link collection**



## Performance indicators

## Possible performance indicators for library websites

Percentage of successful searches	online survey, interview after search, tests, observation
Number of clicks necessary to find a specified information	tests, cognitive walk-through, proxy users
Percentage of important issues accessible via the homepage	cognitive walk-through
Number of pages not visited during a specified time	log analysis
Number of website visits per capita <i>(ISO 11620)</i>	log analysis
Percentage of population reached by website services <i>(ISO 11620)</i>	online surveys
User satisfaction with the website <i>(ISO 11620)</i>	online surveys







***Take heed you do not find  
what you do not seek***

**English Proverb**