Brooks Memorial Library Technology Committee Minutes
Weds, June 26, 2019 4:30 pm

**Agenda:** no changes or additions

**Minutes:** approved as written

**Public comment:** none

**Continuing business - progress on survey and inventory:**

Starr heard back from Green River, who won’t be able to help us until next week. Staff working group developed some potential interview questions that we ran by Green River; it’s one of the things we’re waiting to hear about. The working group also had a good discussion of the survey results after John organized and helped us analyze them. One interesting finding: people who find our site difficult to use tend to be using more digital media and databases.

The working group also learned some things about the process of conducting interviews through a Lynda course on usability.

We discussed the process for interviews

- We could do an informal process where we simply set up a table on the floor and invite users to come over and try a task and talk to us about it. Maybe we would also show other libraries’ sites and get people’s impressions—what works best for them?
- How do we make the interview data useful to whoever is going to develop the website? For example, would we simply turn over big sound files of recorded interviews? It leads to questions about the appropriate scale and scope of the interview process for this specific project.
- Maybe we’re making too much of the interview process. Maybe we can glean useful points and write them as bulleted lists to share with our developer. Remember the patron with visual impairment who shared the experience of his audio screen reader. We learned a lot from that.
- What percentage of the budget do we want to put into the usability research? We should ask ourselves and Green River—not leaving it to somebody else to tell us how deep we have to go.
- Can we send out the RFP before the interviews? Green River was going to help us do the interviews and content inventory and then write the RFP, so we’ve been assuming this is the necessary order of tasks.

We discussed separating front-end and back-end issues

- Back end user experience is the staff. Front end interface is more flexible, for the public. Does that mean doing the back end as a separate project / stage? Maybe, but they would have to happen in concert with each other. Maybe Green River would know how to help us write the RFP for that process. The idea is to use components, and make sure they fit together well.
- Response: despite the back-end, front-end distinction, the site is so out of date that we kind of have to do both. It would make no sense to port our current, out-of-date front end on to a new
back end. It’s realistic to expect an improved front end on a really robust back end. We can always keep improving the front end in the future.

We agreed that we need to answer these questions to go forward:

- Will we do interviews, and when, and who will do them?
- What’s the relationship between the interview process and issuing the RFP?

We can send out the RFP without having the answers to the interviews. Maybe we could write “option to do the interviews yourself” for the developer responding to an RFP. But watch out! That’s part of what made our last RFP potentially expensive. The existing RFP would have to be edited before it’s ready to go out, because that “discovery” piece is expensive, and the new RFP should have a general price attached to it.

Why do we keep getting stuck on the interview part? Are we simply lacking capacity as an organization, doing too many things? That’s part of it, but we also discussed cost/benefit of using library staff for specialized projects: the metaphor of an amateur building a closet versus bringing in a skilled carpenter.

Next steps:
- See what Green River says
- Send out RFP (we hope with Green River suggestions for where to send it)
- Make a decision about how to conduct usability interviews, considering cost/value as part of whole budget for the project

**Next meeting:** July 17th 4:30 pm. **This is an exception to our usual fourth-Wednesday meeting schedule** because Starr will be out of town on the 24th.