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Volcano Tutorial Reflection and Redesign  
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## **Maricopa Tutorial**

### **Perception**

The initial look and feel of the Maricopa Tutorial was generally ascetically pleasing and peaked my interest right away. There is a splash page that let me know I was in the right place to start learning HTML. The index.html page had a nice left vertical text box that clearly highlighted the different sections within the introduction. This page starts the navigation trend on the top of the page, which is easy to understand as well as easy to navigate through. The navigation menu on the top of the page and the contact information on the bottom of the page remained consistent throughout the tutorial. One thing I felt that was missing from the bottom of the page was a “back to top” link or button.

The left vertical text box also remained a constant in some of the main tutorial sections, although not in each individual lesson, where it would have been helpful. The light green color was also used elsewhere in the tutorial to highlight a matrix, again providing repetition and consistency in design.

Another constant was the huge amount of vertical scrolling on the index page carried through to the lesson pages where the majority of time was spent. These were text heavy pages without a lot of white space or graphics to break up the monotony. The font is not very large, and for the longer lessons caused eye fatigue. There were text boxes and matrixes within various sections of the tutorial, which did help with the design as well as with the content.

## **Motivation**

I felt that the Maricopa Tutorial did an excellent job arousing interest and stating its purpose with the initial pages (the splash page and the index.html page). I did not feel that the initial pages were offensive in any way. The index.html page is full of links to other resource sites or anchors within the same tutorial. These links loaded on the same browser making it very difficult to figure out where I was within the tutorial or if I had left again. I also felt that the sheer number of resources, though strategically placed, distracted me from the information that I was trying to absorb.

## **Concept Learning**

Most of the time spent on the tutorial was on the individual lessons. The lessons were organized and sequenced appropriately. The tutorial had a nice even flow from one lesson to the other and easy stopping places. There was a link to the next lesson at the end of each of the previous lessons, which made navigating simple. The lessons page (the lesson table of contents) provided links to each individual lesson as well, which came in handy when I wanted to refer back to an earlier lesson or came back from a break. The links also changed colors when visited, which provided a roadmap of where I had been. The information presented in the lessons was grouped or chunked appropriately, although some of the lessons were very long and could have been broken down further.

## **Learning Strategies**

This tutorial was self-paced and easily accomplished without supervision.. The tutorial accommodated for different learning styles by including various layouts for the content. For example, at times the content layout would consist of text and a visual matrix, and there were also compare and contrast features for visual learners. There was plenty of practice within the tutorial, and the option existed to do additional work creating another web page. There were so many interactive lessons, that when an “information only” lesson came along, I had time to catch my breath.

The best part of the tutorial was at the end of each lesson where I could check my volcano web page with the tutorial web page. This kept me on track and I could visually see where I needed to correct my work; I would consider this a good source of feedback and invaluable to the tutorial, as I could easily do a self-assessment on whether or not I had mastered the lesson objective.

### **Instructional Strategies**

The Maricopa tutorial is designed to the appropriate audience, anyone who did not want to learn HTML would not scroll miles of text heavy pages if they didn't want to. The navigation and directions are very clear, but there is not any status information within the lessons indicating the lesson number, or where I was at within that lesson. The links on the lesson page did change color once visited to tell me what I had completed, though it could be deceiving if I had just accidentally jumped to the wrong lesson.

I felt that the Maricopa tutorial did an excellent job with the learning objectives. They were clear and precisely stated and I knew exactly what I would be able to do once I had completed that section.

### **Unique Qualities of the Web**

The Maricopa tutorial offered the ability to download the lessons and run the program from the hard drive, which made for faster loading pages and eliminated the need for connectivity to the Internet. The tutorial loaded quickly when accessed on the Internet, and supported at least two different browsers, Windows Explorer and Netscape Navigator. There were several links in each section and throughout the lessons, and I only came across a couple of links that were inactive.

## **Maricopa Tutorial Redesign**

Overall, the Maricopa tutorial met my expectations for sound instructional design based on the rubric developed in this course. However, I thought the message design could be improved.

I would use more white space and graphics that correlated to the content for more variety from the heavy text. I would also add more color to the lesson pages by incorporating the light green left vertical text box on the lesson pages. By using tables in the individual lessons, it would not only add color, but status information and limit the available length for horizontal text, reducing eye fatigue.

The index.html page was a good start peaking my interest, but I felt the large quantity of links incorporated into the initial content was information overload. I would eliminate some of the links and break out the resource links to another page. Across the board, I would ensure that all links opened up an additional browser window, smaller than the Maricopa tutorial window, to let learners know where they are and how to easily get back to the tutorial.

I felt that the information in the lessons was sequenced adequately, but I would re-group some of the lessons into smaller chunks. Lesson 8, *Linking it with Anchors*, was a good example of breaking the lesson information into sub-tasks. The shorter lessons would also eliminate some of the vertical scrolling. The pace of the material seemed rather fast to me as well, even though the instruction was self-paced. To slow down the pace in the more complex lessons, and reinforce content retention, I would add in some tasks from earlier lessons.

I felt that the learning strategies and instructional strategies were employed successfully throughout the tutorial. I would add a “back to the top” button or link at the bottom of the long pages, to improve navigation and reduce the amount of vertical scrolling. I would also improve the current status information on the navigation menu at the top of the page; it doesn’t always seem to change colors when a page has previously been

visited. I would also add status information to the each lesson, through the use of tables and the repetition of the green left vertical text box.

This tutorial had the ability to be downloaded and run on the hard drive. This worked great until I clicked around on the active links and tried to link to a page on the Internet without connection to an Internet Service Provider (ISP). I would indicate on each lesson that provided links outside of the tutorial, that this lesson has active links to the Internet and World Wide Web and you should connect now if you want to use those links.

Another option is to color code the internal and external links on the downloaded version of the tutorial and provide the use with a color legend.

## **Volcano Tutorial**

### **Perception**

The instant interest prompted from the Volcano Web tutorial splash page is exhausted by overwhelming with the use of color on the index/table of contents page. There is plenty of contrast with the use of bright colors on a black background, as well as ample white space and appropriate graphics throughout the tutorial. Aside from being a bit flashy, this tutorial has consistent characteristics through repetition of color, navigation menus at the top and contact information at the foot of the page. This website is easily recognizable for what it is and flows naturally and intuitively.

### **Motivation**

The Volcano Web tutorial does arouse interest with the splash page. This tutorial also held my interest with the quote on the second page with the quote from Pliny the Elder and by clearly stating the purpose of the page.

### **Concept Learning**

I thought the Volcano Web tutorial did an excellent job of organizing and sequencing the information. The structure of the table of contents is easily navigated and accessible.

The length of material for a true tutorial is too short.

### **Learning Strategies**

This tutorial failed in the learning strategies area of web based instruction evaluation. The tutorial could be completed without supervision, but there were no practice exercises, assessment tools or avenues for feedback. The learner could control the learning by the open and exploratory design of the table of contents, but provides nothing for the learner except information. If this were course on research, I would add a section on how to effectively use the Internet as a research tool and some guidelines on writing a research paper.

### **Instructional Strategies**

The directions are clearly stated and the table of contents is readily available to the learner. This tutorial also has very clear status information at the top and bottom of each page, as well as source, date revised and contact information on each page. Although the message layout is clear and precise, the objectives and audience are not so apparent.

### **Unique Qualities of the Web**

The Volcano Web tutorial takes advantage of the unique qualities that the web offers by links to multiple sites for additional volcano resources.

### **Volcano Tutorial Redesign**

I like the splash page it provokes interest, and I would only improve it by adding an animated gif or short video clip of a volcano erupting. I also like the black background with pale colored text, but I would change the heading colors to reds, oranges or yellows to keep with the fiery theme of erupting volcanoes. I would also choose a different shade of blue for the active links. The information on the index/table of contents page seems to have little or no alignment, which I would align on the left. I would replace the volcano picture with a more aesthetically pleasing image without text and center the picture. The quote from Pliny the Elder would remain, but further away from the picture to reduce the cramped appearance it currently has.

To motivate learners even more, I would add a section of volcanoes around the world, including Europe, East Asia and South America. If more volcanic locations were included, this tutorial would not be limited to learners in the United States. I felt that the organization of the material included in the tutorial was structured and organized well, but I would add more content in the form of research guidelines and how to use the internet as an effective research tool.

Learning and instructional strategies need to be incorporated throughout the tutorial. I would first identify the audience and modify the course design appropriately. There is not one section devoted to practice or feedback, in the Volcano Web tutorial. To incorporate practice and interactivity, I would add short answer and multiple-choice questions with immediate feedback prompts to the section on Volcano Terminology. I would also provide specific guidelines or information in the research project section, perhaps an Internet Scavenger Hunt.

### **Summary**

I felt that both tutorials were fairly well designed when following a web evaluation rubric. Each tutorial incorporated important characteristics of message design and sound instruction. I found that the Maricopa tutorial did an excellent job designing sound instruction, it was clear and easy to follow. However, I felt that for an HTML writing tutorial, I thought the overall look and feel was mediocre and could be enhanced. The Volcano Web tutorial, on the other hand, did a good job with the message design, although a bit flashy, but did a poor job utilizing learning and instructional strategies.

I ultimately feel that web evaluation is largely subjective and personal. I do feel that Maricopa tutorial successfully achieved its goal, I did learn a thing or two about writing HTML, and had a great time in the process. I also recognize that the end result, being the Volcano Web tutorial, was the resultant product of my newly acquired HTML skills. That said, the Volcano Web tutorial would never have been so much fun if it wasn't full of outrageous color, and proved that too much isn't always a good thing.