**Kids-to-Afrika Website**

**Evaluation Report**

**Overview**

The Kids-to-Afrika (KTA) website was redesigned as part of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching's Rich Media Projects Initiative. In the first phase of the project, Debra Harley wrote a design document in consultation with CAT staff Elizabeth Rhodes and Bart Everson. In the second phase of the project, Debra and Bart worked together to implement the design specified in that document. This report represents the culmination of the project's third phase, in which the project is tested and evaluated.

**Method**

We conducted a usability test with four participants on July 24, 2004. Participants attempted to complete a number of directed tasks using the KTA website. Their actions were videotaped and later reviewed.

The directed tasks were selected to simulate real-life tasks that website visitors might wish to perform. The list consisted of the following tasks:

1. Checking the website for history/track-record of the organization
2. Understanding what the goals and objectives of KTA are
3. Looking at the pictures of the experiences in Africa
4. Finding out more about what happens in the Student Academies locally
5. Finding out who has been a financial sponsor/donor in the past
6. Checking the calendar for upcoming events

The four participants consisted of two KTA students and two KTA parents. Participant #4 described himself as "computer illiterate."

**Findings**

**Task 0:** Every user faces one task which we did not explicitly identify – they have to be able to find the website! For most of the trials, the KTA homepage was already loaded into the browser before we began, but for Participant #3 it was not. This led to an interesting result: She could not find the KTA website. First she went to kta.org, then she tried kidstoafrika.org; I had to explain that it is spelled kidstoafrika.org.

**Conclusion:** Need to do a better job of publicizing the website URL.
**Task 1:** Checking the website for history/track-record of the organization
Most participants proceeded directly to the "About" page ([http://www.kidstoafrika.org/about](http://www.kidstoafrika.org/about)) with a single click via the navigation bar. Participant #4 viewed a number of pages, including the "For Parents," "Program Description," and "About" pages. However, he did not identify any of these pages as providing the information he was seeking.

**Conclusion:** Probably not a big problem. It might help to add a "History of KTA" heading to the "About" page.

**Task 2:** Understanding what the goals and objectives of KTA are
The students navigated quickly to the "Program Description" page. ([http://www.kidstoafrika.org/programdescription](http://www.kidstoafrika.org/programdescription)) (This task was inadvertently omitted from the parent participants.)

**Conclusion:** Goals and objectives are easily found on the website.

**Task 3:** Looking at the pictures of the experiences in Africa
Three of the participants were successfully able to find photo albums of trips to Africa. However, Participant #4 had some trouble finding an album, though he navigated to the "Travelogue" page immediately. Participant #3 was unable to find a trip album. She chose Benin from the "Travelogue" page and found pictures of tapestries.

**Conclusion:** It would be nice to provide pictures of students in visiting each of the countries listed; however, this may not be possible if pictures were not taken on some trips.

**Task 4:** Finding out more about what happens in the Student Academies locally
Three of the four participants gave up on this task without finding what they were looking for. Some found the "Academy schedule" page, but were greeted only with a "no upcoming events are scheduled" message.

**Conclusion:** An explanation of the goals of the student academies would round out the "Academy schedule" page, even when no events are scheduled. Also, see the notes for Task 6, below.

**Task 5:** Finding out who has been a financial sponsor/donor in the past
Three of the participants found this information easily. Participant #4 came very close (looked on "Sponsors" page twice) but ultimately gave up (never clicked "Past" link).

**Conclusion:** The "Past" link should be made more explicit ("Past Sponsors").

**Task 6:** Checking the calendar for upcoming events
Participants 1 & 2 noted the event listings on the home page. Participants 3 & 4 followed the "Deadlines/Meeting Schedule" link on the "For Parents" page and noted the information was out of date.

**Conclusion:** As with the "Academy schedule," it is important to keep the scheduling information on the site up-to-date. This may best be accomplished by using a database to store event information. Scripts can pull information out of the database so that timely information is displayed on each relevant page. An administrative interface
will allow for the easy input and management of event information even by people without Web authoring experience.

**In Closing**

Most of the changes recommended above are simple, and many have already been implemented. The most challenging recommendation is the creation of a database-driven scheduling system. This will take a bit longer but the benefits seem to indicate that it will be worthwhile. Work on this aspect of the site has already begun.