USABILITY GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
above the fold / below the fold	: The fold' marks the end of the visible part of the web page. Therefore, 'above the fold' means the area of the web page that is visible without scrolling. 'below the fold' is the area of the web page that requires scrolling to see.
accessibility	: Accessibility is a prerequisite to usability. If a person can not access a web page he certainly can not use it. Accessibility refers to web page information/content being obtainable and functional to the largest possible audience. It is about providing access to information for those who would otherwise lose their opportunity to use the web. In contrast inaccessible means unobtainable, nonfunctional.
accessibility aids	: Assistive technology; tools to help people with disabilities to use computers more effectively.
affordance / perceived affordance	: A situation where an object's sensory characteristics intuitively imply its functionality and use: a button, by being slightly raised above an otherwise flat surface, suggests the idea of pushing it. A lever, by being an appropriate size for grasping, suggests pulling it. A blinking red light and buzzer suggests a problem and demands attention. A chair, by its size, its curvature, its balance, and its position, suggests sitting on it. An affordance is a desirable property of a user interface - software which naturally leads people to take the correct steps to accomplish their goals.
banner blindness	: This is the situation where a website user ignores banner-like information on a website. The banner information may or may not be an ad.
breadcrumbs	: Type of web navigation where current location within the website is indicated by a list of pages above the current page in the hierarchy, up to the main page. Its purpose is to give users a way to keep track of their location and typically appear horizontally across the top of a webpage, usually below any title bars or headers. They provide links back to each previous page that the user navigated through in order to get to the current page.Generally, an arrow is used as hierarchy separator, although other glyphs can be used to represent this: Home page → Library → MOU's Publications. There are three types of web breadcrumbs: *Path* breadcrumbs are dynamic and show the path that the user has taken to arrive at a page. *Location* breadcrumbs are static and show where the page is located in the website hierarchy. *Attribute* breadcrumbs give information that categorizes the current page. The term is a reference to the Hansel and Gretel tale where they leave breadcrumbs as they wander the forest so they can find their way home.
cascading menu	: A menu structure where submenus open from a main menu.
clickability	: Provide sufficient cues to clearly indicate to users that an item is clickable. Users should not be expected to move the cursor around a website ('minesweeping') to determine what is clickable. Using the eyes to quickly survey the options is much faster than 'minesweeping'. Similarly, relying on mouseovers to designate links can confuse newer users, and slow all users as they are uncertain about which items are links. Cues that can be used to indicate the clickability of an item include color, underlining, bullets, and arrows.

TERM	DEFINITION
cognitive load	: The term refers to the load on working memory during instruction, i.e. consider the difference between having to study a subject in one's native language versus trying to study a subject in a foreign language. The cognitive load is much higher in the second instance because the brain must work to translate the language while simultaneously trying to understand the new information. A user interface strives to minimize the cognitive load associated with operating the interface itself so that all of a person's cognitive resources are available for their task.
content contributors	: people who formally or informally provide information/ content for the website or intranet.
deep linking	: Deep links are links that go directly to an inner page of a website rather than the homepage. It enables direct linking to highly appropriate and specific content.
embedded link	: A link that is within the text content of a webpage.
eyetracking	: An eyetracking device observes a person's pupil to determine the direction of their gaze. It can aid in learning the relative intensity of a user's attention to various parts of a web page.
field studies	: going to the user's site to watch them work in their own environment.
information architecture (IA)	: This field studies how to organize information most effectively to help people find and use the information. It also refers to the structure or organization of a website, especially how pages relate to one another. For instance, how should websites be organized? What is the best way to design website navigation? How should pages be labeled and identified? In short, the process of organizing information - including the structure, design, layout and navigation - in a way that is easy for people to find, understand and manage this information.
information foraging	: A theory based on the assumption that, when searching for information, humans use "built-in" foraging mechanisms that evolved to help our animal ancestors find food. Better understanding of human search behaviour can improve the usability of websites or any other user interface layout. "Informavores" constantly make decisions on what kind of information to look for, whether to stay at the current site to try to find additional information or whether they should move on to another site, which path / link to follow to the next information site and when to finally stop the search. Although human cognition is not a result of evolutionary pressure to improve Web use, survival-related traits to respond quickly on partial information and reduce energy expenditures force them to optimise their searching behaviour and, simultaneously, to minimize the thinking required. Information should be designed to help people determine if they've exhausted the supply of information (e.g. by clearly indicating the scope of a website).

TERM	DEFINITION
information scent (or information residue)	: Cues ("scent") used in an information display that help people locate and navigate to relevant information. As animals rely on scents to indicate the chances of finding prey in current area and guide them to other promising patches, so do humans rely on various cues in the information environment to get similar answers. Human users estimate how much useful information they are likely to get on a given path, and after seeking information compare the actual outcome with their predictions. When the information scent stops getting stronger (i.e., when users no longer expect to find useful additional information), the users move to a different information source. For instance, the label "programmes" provides a hint that the content it labels contains information about calls of proposals or possibly programmes description (and thus, it has ambiguous scent). It does not suggest information about job opportunities, so no one is likely to seek information about those topics under that label.
intranet	: An intranet is a private computer network that uses Internet protocols and network connectivity to securely share any part of an organization's information or operational systems with its employees. Sometimes the term refers only to the organization's internal website, but often it is a more extensive part of the organization's computer infrastructure and private websites are an important component and focal point of internal communication and collaboration.
inverted pyramid	: The inverted pyramid is a type of writing style where conclusions are presented first not last. It begins with a conclusion then moves to the key information followed by background information. Usability studies show that web users want instant gratification. That is why the inverted pyramid style is important.
killer apps # anti-killer apps	: in the jargon of computer programmers and video gamers, the term has been used to refer to any computer program that is so necessary or desirable that it provides the core value of some larger technology, such as a gaming console, software, operating system, or piece of computer hardware. In this sense, a killer app substantially increases sales of the platform that supports it. Simply put, a killer app is an application so compelling that someone will buy the hardware or software components necessary to run it. For example, the Halo series for the Xbox and later the Xbox 360 is considered a "killer app."
liquid design	: A liquid designed web page re-scales to fit different resolutions and different window sizes.
look and feel	: Look and feel is the visual appearance that identifies a web site. It is comprised of a consistent color scheme, layout, typography, design treatments and graphic elements - all of which should work in harmony.
metadata	: This refers to part of web page content which is not displayed to the user but contains vital information about the contents of the web page. The main meta data types are "description" and "keywords". These still play an active role in Search Engine Optimisation, although according to some people, not as much as they used to.
mouseover	: Feedback from a piece of website navigation when the cursor is placed over it. An example is a link which changes colour when the cursor is over it.

TERM	DEFINITION

navigation	: The process of finding things in large or complex information spaces, such as on websites. Its purpose is to a help users find the content they want quickly. Some ways to help people navigate include:
	    * showing miniatures or at least links to nearby or related areas
	    * providing a home page or top-level category
	    * showing navigation bars ("navbars") with categories and subcategories
	    * providing overviews or sitemaps
	    * allowing people to bookmark important locations
	    * providing information about links ("scent") that might indicate their relevance or importance, such as by providing a brief description or indicating how many times a document matches a keyword
	    * providing information about which documents are popular or have been used recently

opening new browser windows	: automatically opening a new browser window instead of replacing the contents of the current window.
organic listings # sponsored listings	: Organic search results refers to those listings in search engine results pages that appear by dint of their relevance to the search terms, as opposed to their being adverts or sponsored listings which for example on google result pages appear on the right side of the webpage.
pop ups	: A form of online advertising on the World Wide Web intended to attract web traffic or capture email addresses. It works when certain web sites open a new web browser window to display advertisements. A variation on the pop-up window is the pop-under advertisement, which opens a new browser window hidden under the active window. Pop-unders do not interrupt the user immediately and are not seen until the covering window is closed, making it more difficult to determine which web site opened them.
query strings	: The part of a URL that contains data to be passed to web applications such as Common Gateway Interface programmes.
readability	: Readability is the degree to which the meaning of text is understandable, based on the complexity of sentences and the difficulty of vocabulary. Indexes for readability usually rank usability by the age or grade level required for someone to be able to readily understand a reading passage.
ROI	: Return On Investment. The ratio of money gained - or lost - relative to the amount invested.
scanning	: Scanning is the process of skimming text and picking out keywords, sentences and paragraphs while skipping over other parts of a web page. People tend to scan web pages rather than read them word by word. Use headlines, bullets, lists and frequent paragraph breaks for items you wish to highlight. These elements will grab a user's attention during a quick scan.
scrolling	: Scrolling is sliding text, images or video across a monitor or display. "Scrolling", as such, does not change the layout of the text or pictures, or but incrementally moves (pans or tilts) the user's view across what is apparently a larger image that is not wholly seen.
search front end	: the interface for invoking a search, such as the open field seen on the homepage.
SEO	: Search Engine Optimisation. The process of optimising a website's position in search engines such as Google.
SERP	: Search Engine Results Page.

TERM	DEFINITION
spider / search engine spider	: This is a program or automated process which crawls over webpages - hence the spider reference - and is used to collect information by search engine providers such as Google, Yahoo etc. The spider will crawl from link to link that it finds on each page thus building up its knowledge of a webpage and the layout of a website.
tab / tab menu	: Navigation items which allow links to be presented as a set of items and will often be presented to appear like tabs within a folder as in the real world.
tagline	: A phrase, usually below a web page's logo, which quickly introduces the website to the user. This may be a slogan, motto, catchphrase, byword etc.
thumbnail image	: A small copy of a larger image.
trade-offs / tradeoffs	: A situation that involves losing one quality or aspect of something in return for gaining another quality or aspect. It implies a decision to be made with full comprehension of both the upside and downside of a particular choice.In computer science trade-offs are viewed as a tool of the trade. A program can often run faster if it uses more memory (a space-time tradeoff). It can be developed faster if it doesn't run as fast. It can be optimized for space or speed, but at the cost of longer and more complex development cycles.
type ahead search	: A search which shows results as each character of the search term is entered. A good example is Google Suggest.
UCD	: User-centred design. Design based around the needs and aims of users.
usability / web usability	: Computing the degree to which a software application or a website is easy to use with no specific training. Usability is the art and science of designing systems or web sites that are easy to learn, easy to remember how to use, efficient to use, error tolerant and engaging. Usability and accessibility are often confused: Usability means that a website is intuitive and easy to use. Accessibility means a website is as barrier-free as possible. Accessibility and usability are closely related, as they both improve satisfaction, effectiveness, and efficiency of the generic user population. But while accessibility is aimed at making the website open to a much wider user population, usability is aimed at making the target population of the website happier, more efficient, more effective. In short, web usability refers to the ease-of-use and user-friendliness of a website, from the user's point of view. Other factors also include effectiveness, efficiency and 'learnability' of the website.
usability lab	: A facility specifically for user testing. It can be portable or fixed and may vary widely in how it is equipped. It is usually a quiet room with computer equipment and a place for an observer to sit, along with a special observation area (possibly behind a one-way mirror), and equipment for videotaping. Computers in a usability lab are also often set up with logging software to capture user keystrokes and mouse movements and with scan converters, used to videotape computer screens.
usability metrics	: Typically, usability is measured relative to users' performance on a given set of test tasks. The three most common factors measured in usability testing include: effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction. * Effectiveness: A user's ability to successfully use a Web site to find information and accomplish tasks. * Efficiency: A user's ability to quickly accomplish tasks with ease and without frustration. * Satisfaction: How much a user enjoys using the Web site. Other factors measured include: Ease of learning, Memorability, Error frequency and severity.

TERM	DEFINITION
usability testing	: The process of carrying out experiments to find out specific information about a design. It is part three of the "Usability Evaluation Toolbox". In usability testing, representative users work on typical tasks using the website (or a prototype) and the evaluators use the results to see how the user interface supports the users in doing their tasks.
user experience (UX or UE)	: Term used to describe all aspects of the user's experience when interacting with the product, service, environment, or facility. Across the internet industry, an important language shift is taking place, from the older GUI (graphic user interface) to the newer term User Experience. GUI puts too much emphasis on the graphics, and too little emphasis on the user. It's a kind of last-mile problem: no matter how much time and labor a company invests in the design and development of its Web site or enterprise application, the true value comes when a user understands and engages with the experience they see before their eyes. The real action isn't taking place on the screen -- it's taking place in the mind of the users.
user interface (UI)	: The parts of a computer system that a person uses to communicate with the computer. This includes the way the computer conveys messages to the person (output devices), the way the person talks to the computer (input devices), and the steps the person must perform to do their task.
web 2.0	: Changing trends in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to enhance creativity, information sharing, collaboration and functionality of the web. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites (i.e Facebook), video sharing sites (i.e youtube), wikis (i.e wikipedia), blogs. Web 2.0 websites allow users to do more than just retrieve information: They can allow users to run software-applications entirely through a browser. Users can own the data on a Web 2.0 site and exercise control over that data. These sites may have an "Architecture of participation" that encourages users to add value to the application as they use it.This stands in contrast to very old traditional websites, the sort which limited visitors to viewing and whose content only the site's owner could modify.
widget	: Screen-based controls that are used to interact with a Web site and other systems. Widgets include pushbuttons, selection lists, radio buttons, sliders, etc.
within-page links	: Within-page links are used on content pages that contain several (e.g., three or more) screenfuls of information. Within-page links are best arranged as a table of contents for the page. Within-page links allow users to skip through textual information, resulting in a more efficient information-finding process.

References:	http://www.usabilityfirst.com/glossary/
	http://www.usabilitybok.org/glossary
	http://www.usability.gov/pdfs/glossary.pdf
	http://www.sitepoint.com/glossary.php?q=A
	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page