

Applying Research to Practice: Helping Users Find What They Need

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*Have you wondered why **some** documents succeed when others don't? Have you been curious about the research behind the guidelines **that** you use? Are you ready for **some new challenges** and new ways of thinking about organizing documents for your audiences? Come participate in this demonstration/workshop on *applying* research to practice. We'll **concentrate** on issues about how to help users find what they need in documents, interfaces, and just in time training materials*

Come have **fun** while learning and thinking about some practical applications of cognitive psychology, human factors, and research on reading and navigating in documents and interfaces,

We'll briefly review some of the basic research on how people think, how we all interact with products, how we use (and don't use) documents and other parts of products. Then, we'll move quickly to more recent research.

We'll explore research that can help us answer questions like these:

- Why do so few people read manuals or even consult online help?
- What's the difference between goals and tasks? Are we organizing documents on too low a level – giving people help for tasks when they don't know what tasks to do?
- What do we mean by “task-oriented” anyway? Is “Using Polling” a task-oriented heading? Are you sometimes organizing manuals and help by system

functions and making them look like users' tasks?

- Are there users whom we're not helping? What types of innovative documentation or other help could we give users who have complex problems to solve?
- Do overviews help? What kind? How much?
- Why do people buy third-party books? What do those books do for them that company manuals don't do? Should you (could you) be more like those writers?

Ginny Redish is an independent consultant, helping companies with training and assistance in usability and documentation. She teaches workshops in usability testing and doing task analysis. She helps companies build usability into their processes and documentation. She does expert reviews of documentation and user interfaces. Ginny is co-author of *A Practical Guide to Usability Testing* and has written many book chapters on both research and practice in documentation. Ginny is an Associate Fellow of STC and Assistant to the President for Academic and Research Programs.

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