

Position paper for: Toward usable usability research: Building bridges between research and practice

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My background in the research-practice gap

After spending several years as a designer/developer with limited exposure to usability research (a few courses on cognitive science and usability engineering), I pursued an advanced degree in human-computer interaction, where I was able to delve into the field and practice some research of my own. I've since been working as a user experience designer.

My current work or interest in the field

My main focus as a UX designer has been interaction design and information architecture for web and mobile products, mostly with large clients. From time to time, I get involved with research activities, but it is often very limited in time and scope due to project timelines and budgets. At the same time, I am still very interested in research - consuming and producing - and I do my best to stay up-to-date by following conferences, reading blogs, listservs, and so forth.

Critical issues that I would like to see addressed in the workshop

I'd always be interested to learn ways in which research can become more accessible and usable for practitioners, especially those who don't have a background in human-centered design and may not be as receptive to it. As someone who must wear multiple hats throughout a design process, I'd also love to discuss ways in which usability and design research can be packaged in such a way that it is more easily (see: quickly) consumed.

Similarly, I'd be curious to learn about ways in which others have promoted the value of research within an organization at large.

Issues to avoid

None that I can think of.

My view of the issue (and possibly some preliminary solutions)

The research-practice gap is an issue that I'm confronting more and more as I advance in my career. In a deadline-driven consulting environment, it's often no surprise that research is seldom a top priority. I'm convinced that all design firms require a thorough understanding of research, its value and application, but without a strong base of individuals who can "champion" the research process, I'm not sure how this can be achieved.