

Shorter Learning Curve for New Staff Members

The Oak Ridge National Laboratory's (ORNL) Center for Computational Sciences (CCS) is aiming to recruit a number of new employees to prepare for implementation of the National Leadership Computing Facility recently announced by Secretary Spencer Abraham as well as to keep pace with attrition. As part of a successful recruiting and hiring effort, data was collected to determine how to make a new employee's transition to the Lab less stressful. After several meetings and some intense planning and outlining, questions were developed to gather information that would enable us to make the Lab more adaptable for new staff members. A web-based survey was created and sent out to new employees who had been hired during the current year. The concept behind the web usability questionnaire is to devise a way in which future new employees can easily acclimate to the Lab and its environment. This application will allow for an update of a more defined and user-friendly website, specifically for those who are new and trying to adjust to their new environment here at the ORNL facilities. The summer project included the use of Macromedia's software Dream Weaver and Fireworks. These two applications were used to help design the style and look of the New Staff Web Usability Survey. Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) was the code language used to construct the design. Fireworks™ allowed graphics to be formatted in an appealing style, and then exported to the web-based survey. A Structured Query Language (SQL) script was essential in creating the table because the data retrieved from the survey is currently being stored in an Oracle database. The script contained the table's field names as well as the type of data each field would collect. The table within the database has forty-three fields. After the survey was designed and the table was created, a program had to be coded to serve as a liaison between the two. The C program inserts user's responses into the database and returns a specific confirmation page based on the results of the survey. If the Oracle database is malfunctioning, an error message will appear and that user will be asked to take the survey at a later time. Otherwise an appreciation message is displayed that informs the user that the insertion of their survey was successful. Results of this survey will be analyzed and provide the NCTD with the assistance it needs to create more pertinent web sites that are geared toward new employees.

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