

Four classes of design decision

1. What information to include
All error recovery? All high level tasks? All low level (articulatory) procedures? Useful OS tasks related to application?
2. Access mechanisms (indexes)
By task; by command name (for LBE); subparts per item
3. Information delivery method (per item)
"Coordination", LBE, screen pictures, ...
4. What success criteria to adopt
Learning or doing

Practical problems in designing MinMans

1. Maximise learning or getting work done?
(as our criterion of manual success)
2. Tutorial activities or efficient job support
(can we ask users to do extra tasks?)
3. Explanations. Addressing misconceptions.
(May we include this extra material?)
4. Necessary detail for whom?
(Do we need multiple manuals?)
5. Organising by task vs. avoiding repetition
(Task structure vs. minimalism)
6. The unnaturalness of the writing task
(Special training for authors?)
7. Counterexamples to minimalism
(e.g. phone directories)

A mythical evolutionary history of manuals

0. Tell the users nothing
BUT: missing information
1. Brain dump from the designer
BUT: hard to access the information
2. Organised by software function /feature
BUT: access limited to one method,
not useful to users wanting to get a job done.
3. Organised by work domain task
BUT: too narrow a definition of "task"
4. Expand notion of task supported.
 - 4a. Recognising the machine state
 - 4b. Error recovery,
non-standard initial conditions for tasks
 - 4c. Learning (exploration) as a user goal.

What is special about Minimal manuals?

1. The research development approach: a connected series in which ideas were repeatedly sacrificed in the face of what really happened to users.
2. User-centered aim for the documentation
User-centered design development
3. Designed to support action (doing) not learning
4. Designed not to be read but used.
5. Willingness to cut across
organisational and technical boundaries;
software divisions;
"tasks".

Final questions about Minimal Manuals

- A] From what viewpoint is each of these the most important?
- B] What is the one feature of MinMan work from which all the others can be derived?:
- 1) Based on empirical psychological research
 - 2) Each one is tested on users, and refined
 - 3) They are smaller, shorter than other manuals
 - 4) They contain error recovery information
 - 5) They are designed to be used not read