

March 30, 2006  
EdLab Technical Report



## **PocketKnowledge: Design and Implementation of FAQs and Context-Specific Help**

S. Bonfiglio

EdLab, The Gottesman Libraries  
Teachers College, Columbia University  
525 W. 120<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10027

© EdLab, Teachers College, Columbia University 2006

**LIMITED DISTRIBUTION NOTICE:** This report has been issued as a Technical Report for early dissemination of its contents and its distribution outside of EdLab prior to publication should be limited to peer communications and specific requests. For information on republication rights, please contact: [edlab@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:edlab@tc.columbia.edu)

## PURPOSE

Useful FAQs and Context-Specific Help provide PocketKnowledge's diverse users with clear and accessible information about the digital archive's functions and features, facilitating a smooth orientation to PocketKnowledge.

## PROCESS

An implementation team was assigned the task of creating FAQs and Context-Specific Help. They worked together to conduct on-line research on effective and appropriate FAQs and Context-Specific Help and drafted a preliminary FAQ list, as well as several texts to be used as pop-ups.

Team members moved on to design an engaging and interactive EdLab seminar. They created the seminar with three goals in mind: to inform their peers of the PocketKnowledge team's progress; to solicit feedback on their preliminary FAQs and Context-Specific Help; and to facilitate collaboration in editing and creating additional FAQs and Context-Specific Help text. Each group member spearheaded her own piece of the seminar, from designing an attractive PowerPoint presentation, to creating a productive opening activity, to planning a group assignment aimed at editing and producing new text.

The team broke the seminar into parts, choosing to open the event with a light-hearted competition in order to promote participant engagement, as well as to provide a hands-on experience with PocketKnowledge; once participants were given the experience of being actual users, the team reasoned, the content of the presentation would be more meaningful. This opening exercise also enabled the PocketKnowledge team to observe first-time users as they navigated their way through the archive. Participants' reactions to their experiences were channeled into a productive discussion about potential obstacles for future users, and useful methods of prevention thereof.

Participants were then presented with the preliminary FAQ and Context-Specific drafts. They were asked to critique the drafts, as well as to create new text to substitute for any apparent flaws. The seminar closed with group presentations and a discussion of possible next steps.

Following this event, the PocketKnowledge team synthesized the group's feedback and created final drafts of the FAQs and Context-Specific Help. They turned these drafts in to the PocketKnowledge design team who then inserted the text into PocketKnowledge.

## OUTCOMES

Through research and collaboration, the PocketKnowledge team created thoughtful FAQs and Context-Specific Help. As a result of a productive EdLab seminar, the team is poised to provide new users with an orientation to PocketKnowledge that is tailored to meet users' specific interests and needs.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Once PocketKnowledge goes public, it will be useful to conduct research on PocketKnowledge user satisfaction with the site's FAQs and Context-Specific Help. Both texts should be updated to meet the emerging needs of future users.