

**Interviews with undergraduate archeology students in
P314 working with TimeWeb
September — November, 2000—by question**

Students were interviewed after various experiences with TimeWeb. Some may have used it three or four times; some had only used it once or twice at the point at which they were interviewed.

1. What are your general impressions of TimeWeb?

Didn't like. Not worthwhile for time invested. Hard to use. (TSE)

Found it "interesting and helpful" "Astonished" at the amount of information he could get access to through searches. He had no technical problems with it. The information gathering is incomplete (many web pages have incomplete information). (RJM)

She was just happy that it worked. She had used TW before in a previous class with Jean (Diet Class) and it had gone crazy when they tried to use it. (EVT)

She kinda liked it. She commented that the first time using TW (earlier this semester) was somewhat confusing, but it was easier this time because she was more familiar with how to use it and where things were--she didn't have to struggle with basic mechanics of the program. (SLH)

Good idea, but it's frustrating in its present shape. It doesn't seem finished. Things should be done to make it less confusing. (KM)

It's great when it works. (BR)

"I hate it." It was clear that this individual was not very computer savvy -- I might go so far as to say she is computer-phobic. She readily admits that she does not like computers and that she does not like TW for that reason. She did, however, comment that she believes TW is probably an incredible tool, but everytime she has used it, it has had significant problems which interfered with her work. (CC)

2. Were you able to understand the assignment? Were you able to complete the assignment to your satisfaction?

Yes, understood. (TSE)

Yes, it was straightforward. Didn't complete to his satisfaction: did 2/3 to 3/4 of it, and handed it in as is. (RJM)

Yes. (EVT)

Yes. (SLH)

Basically. Completed the first parts, but haven't done #3 yet. (KM)

Yes, understood. #3 was easier. (BR)

She pretty much understood the assignment and how TW fit into the assignment. She was not able to complete the assignment, however, due to technical problems with TW. (CC)

3. How did you run queries, search, which views did you use, did you look at the database, maps, etc.

Chose region and artifact, then searched. Found the best date by looking at the list and tree/leaf. Never used the map view. Asked the professor when she had a problem that all the dates came up the same. On other pairs, had problems. (TSE)

Ran a query, then in the table/list view, sorted by date. Used the tree and list views primarily; “goofed around and explored” with the map view. Found the tree view helped to visualize the time differences. Ways of working depended on what the assignment asked for: when it wanted the oldest dates in a particular region, they search on that location, then found the oldest dates, then went to the web pages for more information. But the web pages were usually incomplete. He used the “zooming in and out” quite a bit and liked the “stretching time.” He used the web pages a lot, but was disappointed at amount of information in them. (RJM)

She likes the map view but doesn’t care for the forest view. Though she admits that it is good for getting an overview of what you have, but it doesn’t tell much on its own. She also adds that she likes leaf view more than the tree view because it depicts which region the site is in. (EVT)

She commented that they first tried too much at once, but once they realized that they had to narrow down the search, it went much smoother. (SLH)

Bounced around a lot: the list is nice—also like the leaf view and map. (KM)

Used tree and leaf views. (BR)

She mainly used the map view..she commented that she used to use the list view more frequently, but then Jeanne pointed out to her that the map view made it easier to find dates and other info. So, she has mainly used the map view since then. (CC)

4. Did you find TimeWeb to be useful in helping you answer the questions?

Visualizing dates, but it was overwhelming. (TSE)

He thought some views were good for visualization and comparing and the whole thing was good for fact-finding. (RJM)

Yes. ...she added that breakdowns of categories are clear which made it easy to do the assignment. She liked the visual aspect of TW. She stated that it is boring to just read about the sites (as in a book). She says that it would also be hard to imagine/visualize a timeline without having this tool. She also likes that it organizes the data so they don’t have to -- it allows them to think. (EVT)

The map view was helpful, but she really likes the leaf and tree views. She likes that they are more viisual and states that the list is sometimes confusing. (SLH)

It gave a lot of information. You could add comments. It showed you what was there. (KM)

Figuring out how to find and then look at the information was the biggest challenge. You had to look in three or four different places to find the other information. It's also a hassle when you want just to find one thing and you get a whole list to look at. (BR)

She commented that she liked the graphic end of the program and that the moving time line was a cool and helpful feature, but she would still prefer to use a book. She says she can find anything quickly and easily in a book, but that she is not nearly as proficient on a computer. She claims she would be more efficient with a book. (CC)

5. Did TimeWeb do what you thought it would? That is, when you clicked on something, did you go where you thought you should? Did the queries make sense?

Yes, close enough. (TSE)

Yes. (RJM)

Yes. (EVT)

Yes...she commented that they always knew what they were trying to get and they were usually able to get that information without too much difficulty. She thought the queries made sense for the most part, but that the species names were confusing. They were able to figure things out with a bit more searching, but she didn't feel it was as clear as it could be. She added that maybe having some headings/categories to put the species in (instead of just current big, long list) would be helpful. (SLH)

It was all straight forward stuff. (KM)

Yes, more or less. (BR)

Yes. (CC)

6. What are the major advantages to TimeWeb?

Understand things visually. See the different views. (TSE)

Visualization capabilities. Database search. (RJM)

It's fun and different, so she is more willing to do it. She said it is "a sneaky way to learn." (EVT)

She likes that the program gives the material in an organized fashion. She said TW does some of the boring, tedious work for them which allows them to focus on different issues than just finding and organizing data. (SLH)

All of the information is at your fingertips. You just need to figure out how to get to it. (KM)

Presents things in different formats: list, text, map, graphic. (BR)

She commented that maybe in 2 years from now she would be comfortable enough with computers to see the advantages in the program. She says TW is fine, but she's just not computer literate enough to find it helpful. (CC)

7. What are the major drawbacks to TimeWeb?

Frustrating, complicated, overwhelming. Things were hard to sort. Too involved and complicated in trying to figure out how to use it. Didn't see the application. (TSE)

Slow-loading. Brings up a wealth of information—to the tool's credit, it's amazing that it can search that much. But if there are more than 2000 sites, they can't be examined by dates. And then, there isn't enough information at the specific (web page) level. (RJM)

Agreed with partner that having to be at a computer was a drawback. (EVT)

That you have to be at a computer to do it. She commented that she doesn't have a computer in her room and that sometimes she doesn't want to have to go to a computer lab to do her work. At one point, she also commented that it was difficult to figure things out because there were so many windows open. (SLH)

Confusing to use. (KM)

No multiple queries. Unorganized for serious academic use—the date range should be simple. You have to closely watch what you entered it. (BR)

That it's computer-based. (CC)

8. Did you find it helpful to work in pairs? How did you divide up the tasks/work? Did you work at one computer, or two? Did both people do the same thing, or different things?

Working in pairs was good in that they divided up the work. They worked at two machines, then collaborated. (TSE)

Working in pairs depends on partner. It was usually a good thing this time, though both good and bad. They “distributed responsibilities.” They looked for the same things on different machines, then compared their answers. (RJM)

Agreed with partner that they liked having two computers in case one crashed. She added that she also liked being able to discuss ideas or questions with her partner. (EVT)

Yes...it was helpful to have both computers there. She thinks they could have it individually but that they probably would have tackled the questions differently and come to the answers in different fashions. (SLH)

Yes. We divided questions then shared the answers. (KM)

Yes. We divided questions then compared and then compiled the answers. You got a second opinion on your work. (BR)

She likes working in pairs. She commented that she and the man she worked with always work in pairs, so they are used to working together. They pretty much worked on the same problem together -- they would use both of their computers at the same time, however, and run 2 queries at a time. (CC)

9. Would you use TimeWeb again? What kinds of problems do you think you could solve using this tool?

No, I wouldn't use it again. (TSE)

Yes, he would use it again. (RJM)

N/A (EVT)

N/A (SLH)

No, not if I didn't have to. (KM)

Would use it in class if I had to. (BR)

N/A (CC)