

Observations made of Archeology undergraduate students working with TimeWeb on September 26, 2000

Students worked together or separately during class time in a large computer lab. The instructor showed a demonstration of TimeWeb, then gave them a question sheet to work on.

- Sept did an introductory demo to TimeWeb
 - Explained why she created TW : a way to access and explore online archaeology resources
 - Long wait TW to load
 - Sept started demo assuming that everyone could view a screen with TW (about half had it on their own machines)
 - Showed the query window and the region and evidence tabs
 - Demonstrated queries and necessary terminology (“all of these;” “some of these”)
 - Ran a query and had the students do the same one at the same time: query took a very long time to load.
 - While waiting for the query, explained that this was an access problem
 - Explained the ways to view the query
 - Sept said that her favorite view was “map”
 - Explained that the dating system can be hard to understand
 - Lots of students looking at their own screens and not what Sept is showing at the front (mouseovers on sites on the map, how to “stretch time”)
 - Then the students do replicate what Sept was showing, so they were paying attention
 - Lots of time was lost during the demo waiting for the computers to catch up.
 - At 12:00 (45 minutes into class period, 30 minutes remaining), students were told to work in pairs.
- Observed of pair of students working with TW (“A” and “B”)
- Using two computers, not much interaction between them.
- A is on map view, B is looking at a histogram, then the leaf. Not sure if it’s the same data set.
- A & B look at the list view (on their own machines); both are looking at dates.
- B “Can you get yours to list by date?” A says no, she clicks on button to sort by date. Date column is highlighted, but it’s not sorting by date.
- A calls B over to look at her list, clicks along the list.
- A then looks at B’s machine. B is clicking through web pages, trying to decide which ones to write on the task sheet.
- A is looking at the leaf view; B is writing on the sheet. A turns to look at what B is writing.

- B goes to some web pages.
- A goes to the query page: selects South Africa and artifacts. She scrolls through the list. The date button works.
- B is still looking at web pages.
- A begins a new query, no, it's the same query, then uses the web pages.
- B is still using the web pages, goes from artifacts to human remains.
- B's computer shuts down TW; she restarts it.
- A loses her query, TW shuts down; she restarts it.
- B's query in East Africa retrieve 727 sites. She views leaf then the web pages, some of the web pages don't exit.
- A consults B's sheet, using the list view
- B is veiling the web pages. Goes back to leaf, back to query, enters East African and human remains.
- A queries South Africa and gets 2529 sites.
- A consults B pointing to B's screen.
- A explains, using web pages, where it shows evidence.
- A looks off B's machine at the web page list.
- Class ends and they log off the machines.

- Sept started by showing the class the course website and introducing TimeWeb
 - She had some questions for the students to focus on posted on the class website
 - Sept then introduced TimeWeb as a database dealing with archaeology and artifacts
 - Sept then elaborated on the questions they should be focusing on – pulling out specific goals to focus on for the class session
- Sept then had them connect to TW
 - While TW was launching, she explained TW a bit more – she explained why she created TW – that is, it is a way to access and explore online archaeology resources
 - She stated that TW allows you to search through the database and find information related to questions you might have
 - They had to wait quite a while for TW to load on everyone’s screens
 - While she was waiting, Sept decided to demonstrate how TW works – she did this assuming that everyone could view a computer which had properly loaded the program (about half the students had the program up while the other half were still waiting)
 - She showed them the query window and the region and evidence tabs
 - She demonstrated how to do a query and discussed the awkward terminology (i.e. “All of these” and “Some of these”)
 - She then ran a query and had the students do the same one at the same time...this led to the query taking quite a long time
 - While she was waiting for the query to run, she was explaining that the problem they were experiencing was an access problem
 - Once the query ran, she explained the different ways to view the query
 - She also explained that the dating system can sometimes be hard to understand
 - After part way through Sept’s explanation of the different views, I noticed that many of the students had already started playing with TW and doing their own thing – though they appeared to be on task and focusing on the questions
 - At 12:00 (45 minutes into class period, 30 minutes remaining), Sept set them loose to work in their pairs to answer the questions
- Observation of pair of students working with TW (K& A – and sometimes B –K and A both had Sept before and had used TW before) – K and A are sharing a computer

- When I began observing the pair (which was after Sept finished her intro), they already had part of their question sheet completed – they appear to have been working during her explanation
- Sept asked the students to keep track of things that didn't work within TW
- B was sitting next to them and was observing them and asked them for help
- The pair had already done a query and were looking at the webpages of a specific query
- B leaned over again and asked the pair what they did in class last week – he apparently missed both days
- A started telling him about a movie they watched about chimps
- B appears to have joined the group, at least temporarily
- The three of them working together started on another question and did another query
 - They queried human remains and Ethiopia (they wanted a specific region but couldn't remember which one, so they went back to the map view and the webpages of the sites to figure out they wanted Ethiopia)
- B went back to his own computer to do a query, but still looks over – the 3 appear to still be working as a group, but on the two computers.
- They were exploring classifications and eventually came to a dead page
- Sept came around and they asked her a question about species at specific sites
- Sept gave a suggestion for a new query they may want to try in order to proceed
- They went back to a place Sept suggested they look for more info about artifacts at the site they were interested in
- K started to do a new query – Human Remains and S. Africa
 - She looked at the results in graph view
 - Then in list view
 - She expanded the description window so she could view the whole descriptions of sites
 - She then looked at the webpages for some specific sites
- K suggested that she do just human remains on her computer and that B do just S. Africa on his computer and they could cross-reference the information that way
- B ran his query and K suggested to look at it in the tree view
- The three were discussing the question and thinking through the results they were finding – they're doing some apparent theorizing on what was happening with a specific species
- B states that he still doesn't know how to cross-reference

- They asked me if I knew anything about anthropology or archaeology and I said “NO”...they then asked Melanie, who referred them to Sept
- The three started talking about graduating and what degrees they would have – off task
- A quickly brought the discussion back to the information they already have and was trying to figure out how to proceed on the next question
- K states again that they need to know what a “member”
 - Another classmate leans over and says he thinks it is just the layers of a site
- K again tried to arrange her query by date and it worked this time—they appeared excited by this
- B was making clear what they needed to do next (perhaps thinking aloud to himself and the others)
- They went back to the webpages about the sites and were reading details about the sites
- Sept interrupted class and was introducing another source of information on their class website...there are links to articles that she wants them to read
- K says “When they give you access to this much information, they’re just waiting for you to get confused.”
- Class was dismissed.