THE GENDERMAG KIT

To Find Usability Issues through a Gender Lens

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Individual differences in the ways people use software features often cluster by gender — especially when the software is for problem-solving, as when figuring out budgets, or understanding visualizations, or debugging. However, many software features are inadvertently designed around the way males tend to use software.

How using GenderMag helps make software gender-inclusive

The GenderMag method helps software developers and usability professionals identify features that are not gender-inclusive.

- The GenderMag method encapsulates how five facets of gender differences — motivations for use, information processing style, computer self-efficacy, attitude toward risk, and willingness to explore/tinker — affect the ways males and females tend to use software.
- Software developers and usability professionals use the method to find gender-inclusiveness issues. They can then fix these issues one at a time, so as to individually take down barriers that may disproportionately affect one gender.
- Researchers who have used early versions of GenderMag in this way have found that their software becomes more gender-inclusive and better liked by its users overall.

GenderMag consists of a set of GenderMag Personas to bring the facets to life, and a GenderMag Cognitive Walkthrough to embed use of the personas in a process.

The GenderMag Personas

- Personas represent "archetypes" of users of a software system. The focus of the male and female GenderMag personas is bringing to life the above five facets of gender differences.

The GenderMag Cognitive Walkthrough

- The GenderMag CW is a gender-specialized Cognitive Walkthrough (CW). A (regular) CW analyzes how easily users new to the system can accomplish specific tasks with that system. The GenderMag CW adds to the analysis process explicit use of the above five facets of gender differences and the personas.

No background in gender difference research is needed to use GenderMag. It is intended for any software developer or usability professional interested in identifying the features of their software that may not be gender-inclusive.

For more information about the GenderMag Kit:
http://eusesconsortium.org/gender/