



FORMS



CONTENT

# *Designing usable online forms*

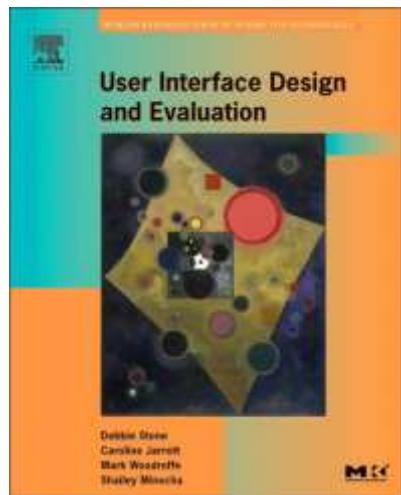
Discussion group led by Caroline Jarrett

BCPW 10

# Caroline Jarrett

twitter @cjforms

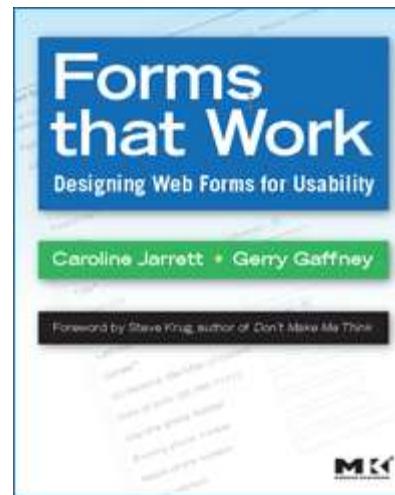
caroline.jarrett@effortmark.co.uk



Stone, Jarrett, Woodroffe  
and Minocha (2005)

User interface  
design and  
evaluation

Morgan Kaufmann



Jarrett and Gaffney (2008)

Forms that work:  
Designing web forms  
for usability

Morgan Kaufmann

Consultancy: [www.effortmark.co.uk](http://www.effortmark.co.uk)

Forms advice: [www.formsthatwork.com](http://www.formsthatwork.com)

Training: [www.usabilitythatworks.com](http://www.usabilitythatworks.com)

Editing tips: [www.editingthatworks.com](http://www.editingthatworks.com)

Designing for people who do not read easily: [www.designtoread.com](http://www.designtoread.com)

# Council forms are often quite complicated

A lot of advice for designing forms is about forms like this...

## TYPICAL WEB FORM

Personal Information	
First Name	<input type="text"/>
Last Name	<input type="text"/>
Contact Information	
Address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
City	<input type="text"/>
County	<input type="button" value="-- Select County --"/>
Post Code	<input type="text"/>
Country	<input type="button" value="United Kingdom"/>

So what happens when we have to work with forms like this?

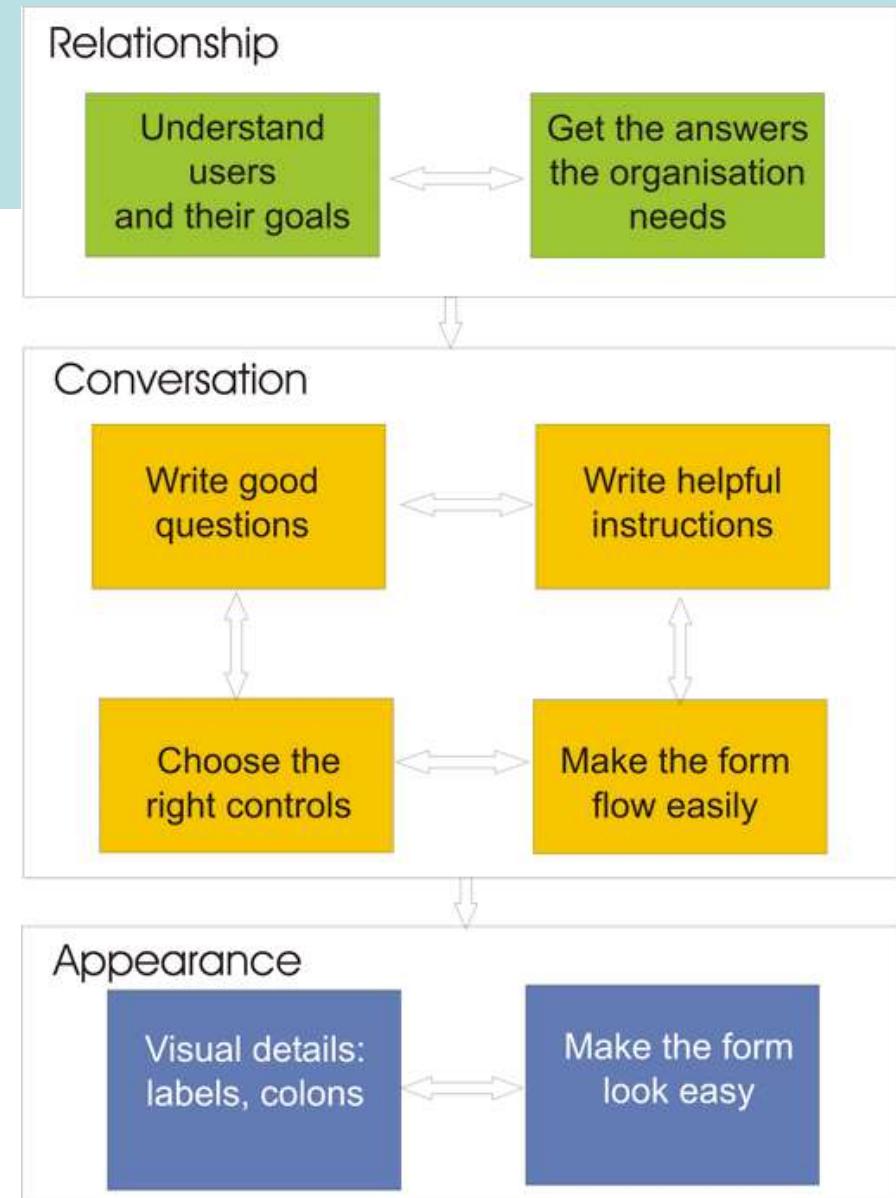
Householder Application for Planning Permission for works or alterations to a dwelling	
Town and Country Planning Act 1990	
Publication of applications comprising an identity section	
Please indicate the address for publication of this application and indicate if you require any further information or publication of this planning application.	
Please indicate the address for publication of this application and indicate if you require any further information or publication of this planning application.	
1. Application Name and Address	
First name	<input type="text"/>
Surname	<input type="text"/>
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Address 2	<input type="text"/>
Address 3	<input type="text"/>
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## Discussion topic #1: Complexity

- How many of your forms are complex?
- What makes them complex?
- Tips for reducing complexity?

# Complexity affects all three layers of the form

- Relationship:
  - More than one user involved
  - Stressful or unclear consequences
  - Must be kept up to date
- Conversation:
  - Questions about difficult concepts
  - Variety of sources for the answers
  - Variable sections depending on earlier answers
- Appearance:
  - Multiple pages
  - Multiple sections within pages



## Discussion topic #2: Designing for complexity

- Given that some complexity is inevitable, what to do?
- Tips for a better process for creating/updating forms?
- Tips for better forms at each level:
  - Relationship?
  - Conversation?
  - Appearance?

## Three tips

- Try a ‘replay study’ where users go back over a complex form with you
- Use a summary menu instead of a progress indicator
- Segment the form by topic;  
and if multiple users are involved, by user

# More resources

- Web sites:
  - Our forms advice web site  
<http://www.formsthatwork.com>
  - Robert Barnett (worked extensively on government and complex forms)  
[http://www.rbainformationdesign.com.au/free\\_papers.html](http://www.rbainformationdesign.com.au/free_papers.html)
  - Jessica Enders (short, research-based articles)  
<http://formulate.com.au/articles/>
  - Luke Wroblewski (interaction and visual design)  
<http://www.lukew.com/ff/index.asp>
- Slides at <http://www.slideshare.net/cjforms>
  - “Design tips for complex forms”
  - “E-forms: saving work or creating stress”
  - These notes