

EvaluAction Consultants
www.EvaluAction.com

February 26, 2000

Anne Scotton
Director General
Corporate Review Branch
Department of Canadian Heritage

Dear Ms. Scotton:

Attached you will find our team submission: ***Evaluation of the Canada Place Web site, www.canadaplace.gc.ca***. We endeavored to provide you with a comprehensive review of a virtual site created to provide the public with cultural information on Canada.

This web site will provide millions of Canadians and others access to each other, as well as, to a diverse collection of information about our wonderful country and its people.

Thank-you for the opportunity to participate in the evaluation of this web site. Our team looks forward to seeing the ideas put into place as we visit www.canadaplace.gc.ca in the future.

Sincerely,

EvaluAction Consultants

Introduction

Building for a better tomorrow begins with action today.

The Canada Place web site www.canadaplace.gc.ca is an initiative of the federal department of Canadian Heritage. Prior to the creation of this site, our population of approximately 30 million¹ Canadians as well as visitors could visit one of seven physical sites situated across Canada where they may avail of information and interactive experiences relating to the vast cultural heritage of this country. With this new site, users of the internet from all over Canada and around the world can avail of information, meet with other Canadians through chat rooms, access Canadian news items and much, much more.

Web sites are an excellent means to reach out to others from Nunavut to Point Peelee, Cape Spear to Vancouver Island. Canadians, including youth, adults, seniors of all multi-cultural groups comprise a vast population over 9.9 million square kilometers². This technological medium provides a valuable link and source of information about our country, each other and our government. In addition, Canadians have expressed, through opinion polls, their desire to easily avail of government services and information this site satisfies this desire.

Goals of the Web Site

¹ **Countries of the World and their Leaders, Yearbook 2000, Vol. 1.
The Gale Group, Detroit. 1999 p. 372**

² **Ibid.**

The objectives of this program are:

- provide information to Canadians
- help Canadians do business with their government
- increase Canadian cultural awareness

Context of the Evaluation and Objectives

It is important to determine whether cyberspace is an effective and efficient means of achieving the objectives of increasing knowledge, pride and accessibility to each other and our government.

Evaluation: the systematic process of collecting and analyzing data in order to determine whether or not and to what degree objectives have been reached or achieved.

The evaluation is divided into three parts:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the web site -is the web site achieving its objectives?
- Evaluation of efficiency of the web site- what are the benefits of resources in relation to meeting the objectives
- Impact - what long term or short term changes did the target population realize?
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Evaluation Objectives

General objectives:

The Web site (www.canadaplace.gc.ca) should be assessed for the following:

- The Canadian content of the information presented on the Web site.
- The accuracy and timeliness of the information presented in the Web site.
- Whether the target populations are being reached (i.e. young Canadians).

Specific Objectives:

The key objectives of the Web site performance assessment should be as follows:

- To identify whether the Web site is effective at increasing cultural awareness.
- To identify whether public knowledge of and attendance at cultural events (i.e. Canada Day celebrations) are increased by promotion on the Web site.
- To identify whether the Web site is effective at increasing public knowledge of projects funded by the federal government, namely the Department of Canadian Heritage.
- To identify whether Canadians feel a greater sense of national pride and unity after visiting the Web site.
- To identify whether Canadians feel the federal government is made more accessible to them through the Web site.
- To identify whether promotion of Canada on the Web site has increased tourism, both nationally and internationally.

How to measure objective effectiveness?

Performance indicators are a useful tool to any program or web site to provide a measure of effectiveness using quantifiable and quantitative data.

Performance Indicators

Here is a list of possible indicators (which are measurable, reliable, dynamic, available and easy to use) that can assess the extent to which the key objectives are being met:

Number of people in that access either a particular page or the Web site as a whole.

- Ease of surfing operationally defined as facility with which an

average computer and \ or user can download pages, as well as get access to other areas and understand the menus.

- Visually attractive and interesting for target public: aesthetically balanced with vivid colors, attractive designs and graphics.
- Sites under construction, which can be a deterrent for return or even use.
- Spelling and grammar quality in both languages.
- Mainly Canadian content: historical, accurate and current.
- Multi-cultural and regionally representative content.
- Individual characteristics of people that visit the site.
- Do a phone survey to ask the population whether and how they use this Web site. It is fairly cost-efficient and has a higher response rate than mail-in surveys.
- Higher attendance and reservations at the Canadian cultural events and sites that have been advertised.
- Sample the population to see whether knowledge and sense of unity increase with use of the Web site.

Suggestions

We will use triangulation to collect data: we will use both quantitative and qualitative data in order to see if all the methods get us the same results. Qualitative data are necessarily more subjective, harder to run statistical analysis on and cannot lead to cause and effect relationships between variables. They do, however, remove some of the experimenter bias in finding out important details that cannot be captured by quantitative data. It is very rich data, in depth and detailed.

Quantitative data, on the other hand, is easier to obtain in large numbers and large populations. However, in this particular case, the survey method, which

will be the method of choice, cannot allow cause and effect and representativeness cannot be insured. For example, persons who answer a survey may be different than the ones who do not.

Other methods that we will use will allow us to have built-in feedback on the site such as keeping track of number of hits by site and giving visitors the opportunity to answer a survey that will give constructive that will assess their current satisfaction with the site.

The following is a list of possible and efficient ways to collect the data on indicators:

- Keep counters on the first page of the site and the first pages of each sub-division. This will tell us which ones are most often used.
- Time it takes for the average computer to download the pages. This is because the target audience for this site is not innovators but the majority of users who do not have top of the line computers.
- Have a few people with different levels of experience with the Internet (from novice to expert) surf the pages and be asked their opinion afterwards regarding the ease of use and the visual attractiveness of the site. Asking them specific questions to determine how long it takes to find the information.
- Calculate number of spelling and grammatical errors on each page. Also, calculate the number of sites still under construction.
- Measure the percentage of Canadian content. For example, how much of E-News is of Canadian news.
- Ask Historians (University Professors) and Political Analysts, etc whether the information on the site is accurate and useful.
- Seeing the dates at which each site is updated will tell about the currency status.
- Calculate the proportion of written material that represents each

province and each ethnic minority to see if it is proportional to the numbers in the population.

- Calculate the number of hits on the French and English versions of the site to see if the sites are being visited in appropriate proportion.
- Put a very short survey that people can answer on the web site. It will measure demographic variables such as gender, age and geographic location. Other variables assessed will include ease of use, ease of accessibility, whether they found what they were looking for and an open-ended question asking them for comments on the site.
- Do a tracking exit survey. A way to find actual users that come back over and over and create a database by asking them to give us their contact address to inform them of updates. These people can also be sent surveys. I.e. Federal Parks has such a database and they send information to their clients every year.
- Key informant interviews such as school teachers to tell us about the reaction of their students, how useful they find the site for research purposes and if they see an increase in Canadian pride after use of this site.
- Ask the population through a phone survey if they feel the government is more accessible through their use of this Web site.
- To see whether the internet increases number of reservation and attendance, a person can be sent on various sites and ask the persons attending where they heard about the activity they are attending
- Number of reservations made from the Internet can be tabulated.
- Key informant interviews could include a survey of tour guides,

tourism office employees and travel agents to comment how good the site is and the type of feedback they get from it.

Summary

Generally, Canadians have a strong sense of pride in their country and their culture as well as a high level of expectation from their government. Canada Place is a federal government initiative designed to move into the twenty-first century, via the World Wide Web, and provide national information as a means of reinforcing this pride.

Based upon the above the site is somewhat effective however it could be improved upon by incorporating performance indicators for the following areas.

The following table indicates the strengths and weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
Quick upload	Fragmented layout
Home page is representative of content	Feedback mechanism is not always available
Font is clear	Little or no graphics
Organization is somewhat logical	No icons
Back buttons provided	No search engine for the site
Easy access to links	Geographic representation weak
Relevant information for stakeholders	No indication of last update

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Chat rooms are good	
News site is accessible and content is current	
Appropriate links	Too many pages under construction

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