EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This test was administered to assess the usability of the website of the Carnegie Museum of Art located in Pittsburgh, PA. Four participants took part in this study. They were all former residents of Pittsburgh and had lived there at least two years. For this study, they assumed the persona of a current resident of the city. Participants were required to do ten tasks that a normal visitor might do on a visit to this website. Their answers were recorded on a test report and compared against benchmarked responses both in timing and accuracy to response. Participants were recorded during the test and in the posttest debriefing and their experiences both during the test and during the posttest questionnaire and debriefing were observed and written down.

For each of the ten tasks performed, mean and standard deviations were calculated and compared. In addition, task accuracy percentages were calculated based on the participants completion of the tasks within the benchmarked times, completion of the tasks but outside the benchmarked times, and completion of the tasks only with help and outside the benchmarked times. These percentages helped us pinpoint the most serious areas needing change on this website.

The major findings of this study indicate that the participants had problems in three major areas:

- The search function of this website is not specific enough to give a user the information they need in order to learn something about the museum’s collection.
- The ability to purchase a ticket for the museum online, as it is currently designed, is extremely difficult due to the placement of the link for the e-ticketing site.
- The design of the web pages with regard to the navigation is compromised because of difficulty seeing the color and size of the font used in the local navigation, an inconsistency in formatting within the body of the text, inaccuracy of links in several areas, and a lack of a clear indication of how to access the Home Page.

Of the three major findings listed, the most critical one and the one most likely to bring the greatest assistance to the users of this website is a restructuring of the search feature of this site.

Although this restructuring may require great effort on the part of the Carnegie Museum’s staff, the benefits to the users of this website in increased accessibility to the museum’s collections and programs and increased ease of use to its visitors should enhance the goals of this museum to reach out to the people of Pittsburgh, PA and its surrounding communities.