Ensayo: A Distributed, Web-based Virtual Emergency Operations Center for Training and Research

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An Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is a secure location in which upper-level emergency managers gather together to prepare for, manage, and coordinate recovery activities in response to an emergency situation (e.g. hurricane, earthquake, tsunami).

In our research, we are designing and developing a virtual Emergency Operations Center (vEOC) in which emergency managers can collaborate and train. It also serves as a research tool for cognitive scientists to study the decision-making process under emergency conditions.

design methodologies

There are three main design methodologies that we employ in creating this system. The basic software design methodology is the agile development model. This is a set of software engineering methodologies based on iterative design, in which we incorporate feedback from the previous design cycle into the current cycle. Another design methodology we employ is the use of mental models. Mental models are a tool to aid in user-centered design and a way to ensure that all functionality in our system maps to a genuine user need. Finally, we also use content, functionality, aesthetics, and usability design methodologies in our application design.

technologies employed

We have employed a variety of technologies. On the client side, technologies include XHTML, CSS, Dynamic HTML, AJAX, Reverse AJAX, and JavaScript. On the server side, technologies employed are PHP, MySQL, DOJO, and the Jetty server.

research

The research environment includes interfaces which allow the researcher to track user interactions, collaborations, impacts of critical decisions, and various additional measurements.

expert validation

In order to validate the system and obtain an expert subject matter knowledge base, we are working with one of the foremost emergency operations centers in the country – the Miami-Dade EOC.

modified from http://www.deep.med.miami.edu/x439.html

acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Miami-Dade EOC for their generous support of this project. We are especially grateful to Troy Johnson, Soheila Ajabshir, Craig Hall, Jonathan Lord, Frank Reddish, Curtis Sommerhoff and all the personnel at the EOC. We also thank the University of Notre Dame Zahm Research Travel Fund, the National Science Foundation (Award Number CNS-0855164), and the U.S. Department of Education (GAANN Fellowship Award Number P200A090044) for their support of this research as well.

ISCRA-M 2010