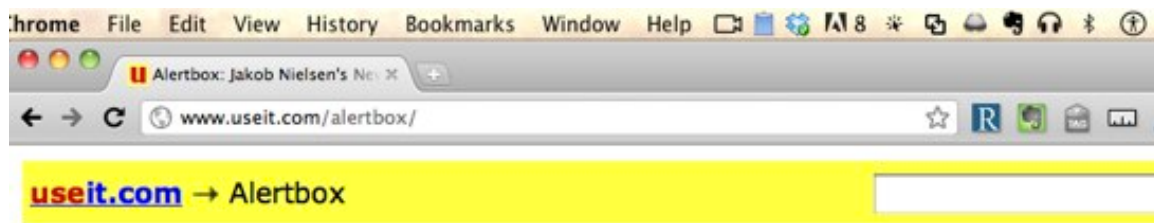# Tech Ease 4 All

Guidelines for Link Titles

Link titles provide additional information about a link when you hover over that link with your mouse.

However, not everyone who visits your website can benefit from link titles. For this reason, you should only use link titles for supplementary information about a link. Information that is critical for understanding the link should be included in the page text itself.

Link titles present the following problems:

- They may not be turned on by default in some assistive technology. This is the case with the JAWS screen reader for Windows.
- The tooltip for the link title may not appear on the screen long enough for slow readers or for those with cognitive disabilities. In some versions of Internet Explorer, the tooltip may disappear after just a few seconds.
- The text in link title tooltips is not resizable, and this can present a problem for people with low vision.
- The tooltips for link titles only show up when you hover over the link with a mouse. Keyboard users are not able to see the tooltip when they move the focus to a link using the keyboard.

Despite these problems with link titles, web usability expert Jakob Nielsen has advocated the use of link titles as a way to provide what he calls "information scent." Information scent refers to additional information that can help someone decide if he or she should click on a link. This information can include:

- the name of the destination website, if clicking on the link will open a page on a different website.
- the nature of the content the link points to, such as its format (PDF document, QuickTime move, etc.) or size (to let the user know how long he or she can expect to wait to download the content).

- any additional information about the user experience after clicking the link: Is registration required on the destination website? Is it a free or a paid site?

For the benefit of those who use a screen reader, and for keyboard accessibility, you should display important information about a link in the page text rather than as a link title whenever possible.

When you do use link titles, you should follow these guidelines:

- Link titles should be brief (no more than 60 characters).
- To avoid redundancy, link titles should not duplicate the information in the link text.
- Link titles should not present information that is critical to understanding the link.

For additional tutorials, please visit our website at http://etc.usf.edu/techease/4all/