SWE 432 -Web Application Development

### Spring 2023



Dr. Kevin Moran

Week I 4: Interaction Techniques & Visual Design







### •*HW Assignment 3:* Grades out Today

# •*HW Assignment 4* - Due on Friday at Midnight.

 HW Assignment 5 - Out now, Due May 5th.



#### Overview

In this homework, you will conduct a think-aloud usability study to identify usability issues with existing web application(s) and then prototype the design of a new interface that addresses these issues.

#### Step 1: Develop user task

In this step, you will select a user task. You should follow the guidelines for choosing and communicating tasks given in the Week 12 Lecture. Your task may focus on a single web application (e.g., PatriotWeb) or may involve multiple applications. You should choose a task that is challenging for users. Write up a description of your task which you will give to participants. You should aim for a task that will take participants 10-15 minutes.



#### Step 2: Conduct think-aloud usability evaluation

In this step, you will conduct a short think-aloud usability study with two participants. As users work, you should take notes, identifying and describing any critical incidents as they occur. You are free to recruit participants from any source you'd like, including friends, family, and other students in this class.



#### Step 3: Identify usability issues and potential fixes

Based on the results from your two study sessions, in this step you will consolidate similar critical incidents that occurred (if any) and reflect on the underlying usability issue each embodies. For each critical incident that you identified, first reflect on if it is similar to any other critical incident. After identifying groups, reflect on what is the underlying potential cause? What caused the user to experience this critical incident? What change might help address this issue?



#### Step 4: Storyboard a new user experience

Based on what you learned, you will now design a new and improved user experience that supports your user task. Your user experience might take the form of a new version of the web app(s) that the user was using or might consist of an entirely new web app. Your goal in building a storyboard is describe how users will use your web app. Your storyboard should consist of key steps, illustrating how a user will act in these steps to accomplish their task. The sketch does not need to be visually detailed: either a hand-drawn sketch or simple drawing program drawn sketch is fine.

As you are building your storyboard, you should design your user experience so that it follows the principles for designing usable interfaces discussed in lecture. In particular, you should identify at least 5 aspects of your user experience design and explain how each of these follows a 1) heuristic evaluation heuristic or 2) principle for building user interfaces described in the Week 11-14 Lectures. You may only use a single heuristic or principle once.

#### Requirements

- Step 1: Task design
  - Follow guidelines given in Lecture 22 to ensure that the 1) goal is specific, 2) a scenario explains the background of what users will be doing, 3) end criterion for task is communicated, and 4) participants have a max time limit.
- Step 2: Think-aloud usability evaluation
  - Conduct a think-aloud usability evaluation in which 2 participants work for at least 10 minutes each.
  - Identify critical incidents that occurred.
- Step 3: Usability issues
  - Identify at least 3 separate usability issues that participants experienced, describing the symptoms that occurred as well as a possible underlying cause.
- Step 4: New User experience storyboard
  - Build a story board describing how users will work in your new web app.
  - Include at least 7 separate steps in the storyboard.
  - Annotate the storyboard with the action that the user or system takes to advance to the next step
  - Describe how the new design follows at least 5 separate heuristic evaluation heuristics or principles given in lecture, clearly identifying the heuristic or principle and briefly describing (in a few sentences) how the design follows the principle.



#### Overview

In this homework, you will conduct a think-aloud usability study to identify usability issues with existing web application(s) and then prototype the design of a new interface that addresses these issues.

### Class Overview



- **Part 1:** Interaction Techniques
  - How does interaction impact design
- Part 2: Visual Design
  - Design languages and visual implications

### Interaction Design Overview



# Identifying Actions









### Is this a button?



### • Goals

- Show which UI elements can be manipulated
- Show how they can be manipulated
- Help users get started
- Guide data entry
- Suggest default choices
- Support error recovery

### Hinting

- Indicate which UI elements can be interacted with
- Possible visual indicators
  - <u>Static hinting</u> distinctive look & feel
  - Dynamic hinting rollover highlights
  - <u>Response hinting</u> change visual design with click
  - <u>Cursor hinting</u> change cursor display

#### Course Project

#### **Course Project**

#### Project Overview

The major assignments in the course will be in the form of a project, and will distributed over the course of the semester as "Project Checkpoints". You will first design and implement a simple UI in the form of a web app. Throughout the semester, you will perform peer evaluations, identifying usability issues with the UI of apps built by other students in the course. Based on the reported usability issues you receive, you will then iteratively redesign and improve the usability of your web app to address these issues. Full details for each Project Checkpoint can be found in the Project Checkpoint descriptions below; the due dates are summarized in the course schedule.

#### What to Build?

You are given the freedom to build any type of web application that you would like for the semester project. However, there are some general guidelines that are important to follow:

- The project should be something the group can implement in two weeks. Because much of this project will be focused on evaluating and refining the UI, the premise of the app should be simple. Some successful projects in the past have been as short as 500 lines of code.
- It must be implemented as a web application and be usable by visiting a URL. Projects can be implemented entirely client-side, or with some back-end technologies, but the back-end should be kept to a minimum.
- We will primarily be evaluating your project based on the UI you create, not the elegance or sophistication of your implementation. Thus, we expect that the best projects will be those that involve a significant amount of user facing interactions.

#### Table of contents

Course Project Project Overview What to Build? Project Collaboration Project Checkpoint Schedule and Assignment Instructions



### Help Users Predict Outcome of Actions

- What does this do?
- Should I click it?



### Clarity of Wording (Bad Example)

### • Design for clarity & precision



# Clarity of Wording



- Choose words carefully
- Speak the user's language
- Avoid vague, ambiguous terms
- Be as specific as possible
- Clearly represent domain concepts

### Likely & Useful Defaults



- Default text, if relevant (e.g., date)
- Default cursor position
- Avoid requirements to retype & re-enter data





- Vary the effect of a command based on state of system
- Examples
  - caps lock
  - insert / overtype mode
  - vi / emacs command modes
  - keyboard entry used for controlling game and chatting

# Challenges with Modes



- Modes create inconsistent mapping
  - E.g., control S sometimes saves, sometimes sends email
  - Especially dangerous for frequent interactions that become highly automatic System 1 actions

- Avoid when possible
- Clearly distinguish if necessary
  - Make clear to user which mode they are in and how to change

### Command Interactions



- How can a user invoke a command?
- Common examples
  - Menus
  - Buttons
  - Toolbar
  - Dialog box
  - Keyboard shortcut
  - Gesture

• What are some advantages and disadvantages of each approach?





### Avoid Physical Awkwardness



- Switching between input devices takes time
- Avoid forcing user to constantly switch between input devices (e.g., keyboard & mouse)
  - e.g., Effective tab order between fields
- Avoid awkward keyboard combinations

# Moving the Mouse



- After a user has (1) realized that a region is interactable, (2) decided that it will cause the desired action to be invoked
- How long does it take for a user to move the cursor to click on it?

• What factors might influence this time?

### Fitt's Law





- Time required to move to a target <u>decreases</u> with target <u>size</u> & <u>increases</u> with <u>distance</u> to the target
- Movements typical consist of
  - one large quick movement to target (*ballistic* movement)
  - fine-adjustment movement (*homing* movements)
- Homing movements generally responsible for most of movement time & errors
- Applies to rapid pointing movements, not slow continuous movements



# Design Implications of Fitt's Law

<u>Constraining</u> movement to one dimension dramatically increases speed of actions

• e.g., scroll bars are 1D



### Design implications of Fitt's law

- Making controls *larger* reduces time to invoke actions
- Locating controls closer to user *cursor* reduces time
  - e.g., context menus

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### Design Implications of Fitt's Law













- Mobile devices often have smaller form factor than desktop / laptop OS
- Can design a separate UI
- Or may build a *fluid* UI that rescales for different display sizes



### Where's the Cursor?



### • No cursor on many mobile devices

- Cannot use dynamic hinting to determine which elements can be interacted with
  - May require more use of static hinting
- Fitt's law still applies
  - Fingers are less sensitive, hard to select small buttons, occlude elements

### Alternative Inputs



- Modern mobile devices often have a wide range of sensors which can be used for input
  - Camera
  - Microphone
  - Accelerometer
  - Three-axis gyro
  - GPS
  - Barometer
  - Proximity sensor
  - Ambient light sensor
- Enables new interaction techniques

### Augmented Reality



### • Overlaying generated content on top of view of the real world



### Alternative Inputs + Augmented Reality



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### A Personal Subject for Me...







# Supporting Users with Disabilities

- **Perception** visual & auditory impairments
  - Blindness or visual impairments
  - Color blindness
  - Deafness & hearing limitations
- Motion muscle control impairments
  - Difficulties with fine muscle control
  - Weakness & fatigue
- **Cognition** difficulties with mental processes
  - Difficulties remembering
  - Difficulties with conceptualizing, planning, sequencing actions
### Blindness and Visual Impairments

- Users use screenreader to listen to screen elements
- Reads all of the text on the page
  - Through practice, learn to listen to text at 400+ words per minute

- Important to have <u>alt-text</u>
  - Images should have labels that explain them
- Important to have *hierarchy* 
  - Rather than visually skimming page, skims page by listening to section heads to determine which level to navigate to next

## Motion Impairments





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## Universal Design

- How can users with physical disabilities be supported in user interactions?
- Good: <u>assistive design</u> offering equivalent actions for disabled users that cannot take normal actions
- Better: <u>universal design</u> designing interactions so broadest set of users across age, ability, status in life can use normal actions







#### Example - Curb cut



- Initially designed for <u>accessibility</u> support for disabled & wheel chairs
- But potentially benefits <u>all users</u> of public spaces people w/ suitcases, hand carts, roller blades, bikes, ...



## 7 Principles of Universal Design

- Equitable use: The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities
- Flexibility in use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities
- Simple and intuitive: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level
- <u>Perceptible information</u>: The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities
- <u>Tolerance for error</u>: The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions
- *Low physical effort:* The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue
- <u>Size and space for approach and use:</u> Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility



## Big Topic - Further Reading



#### Jeff Bigham's Course at CMU: <a href="http://www.accessibilitycourse.com">http://www.accessibilitycourse.com</a>

Amy Ko's Book Chapter on Accessibility: https://faculty.washington.edu/ajko/books/user-interface-software-andtechnology/#/accessibility#ref-islam10

## SWE 432 - Web Application Development

# Class will start in:

10:00



George Mason University

Instructor: Dr. Kevin Moran

Teaching Assistant: Oyindamola Oluyemo

#### Overview of Visual Design



#### Elements of Visual Design









- Solving <u>communications problems</u> in ways that are both functionally effective and aesthetically pleasing.
- Creating a visual language containing a vocabulary of design elements characterized by
  - Visual variables—shape, size, position, orientation, color, texture, ...
  - Organizational relations between elements—balance, structure, proportion, …
  - Visual syntax—rules for assembling elements w/in design language

## Visual Design as Communication

- Goal: <u>efficiently</u> & <u>accurately</u> transmit information from system to user
- Visual variables & organization encode information



### Goals for Visual Design



#### • Successfully *transmit* information

- Present coherent & consistent design that reduces ambiguity and potential confusion
- Reduce visual <u>search</u> time through layout & organization
- Create desired *emotional* reactions through aesthetic choices

#### General Guidelines for Visual Design



## Elegance & Simplicity



- <u>Elegance</u> derives from Latin eligere, to "select carefully"
- Judicious selection of elements and economy of expression revealing an intimate understanding of problem
- Removing & combining superfluous elements until only the necessary remains



### Benefits of Simplicity



- Approachability rapidly understood affordances, allowing glanceable understanding of possible interactions
- Immediacy greater emotional impact because interactions can be quickly understood



Marc Berthier. Tykho Radio. 1997. Synthetic rubber and other materials, 5  $1/2 \times 5 1/2 \times 15/8''$  (14 x 14 x 4.1 cm). Manufactured by Lexon, France. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the manufacturer.

## Reducing a Design to its Essence



- Make design simple, bold, and direct by removing inessential details & elements
  - Even essential elements may be suggested
- 1. Determine essential qualities & information to be conveyed
- 2. Critically examine each element & ask how design would suffer without it.
- 3. Try removing elements. What happens?

## Trade-offs in Simplicity





OSX c.2010



OSX c.2011



OSX c.2016

### Guidelines for Visual Design



Reduction in new map: relative distances don't matter

## Regularizing the Elements of a Design

- Reduce information by repeating elements according to a rule, principle or rhythm
- Enable user to scan ahead
- Use irregularity where needed to clarify that something is irregular!
- 1. Use *regular* geometric forms, simplified controls, muted colors where possible
- 2. If multiple similar forms required, make them *identical* as much as possible in size, shape, color, texture, spacing, alignment
- 3. *Limit variation* in typography to a few sizes
- 4. Make sure critical elements intended to stand out are *not* regularized

### Guidelines for Visual Design



Regularization in new map: Straight lines result in station names laid out in a line, rather than bouncing around

### Error - Excessive Skeuomorphism

- Skeuomorphism making visual design resemble reality (like metaphors)
- Excessive skeuomorphism is distracting and wastes potential visual bandwidth that could encode meaningful information
- Trend towards "flat" interfaces



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Allie Johnson's Birthday all-day	4 PM
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Calendars

#### Scale, Contrast, & Proportion



### Scale, Contrast, & Proportion



#### Information consists of differences that make a difference. (Edward Tufte, Envisioning Information)

Individual visual variables of design that encode information

## Terminology





- Scale <u>relative</u> size or magnitude of element in comparison to related elements
- Contrast visually noticeable
   <u>distinctions</u> along a common visual dimension
- Proportion ratio and <u>balance</u> between elements
- Emphasis contrasts can emphasize important elements or areas & add visual interest by creating tension & drama





- <u>Clarity</u> contrasts should be clear and easily differentiated, not slight and subtle
- *Harmony* proportions and ratios should be harmonious
- <u>Activity</u> use contrasts to maintain orientation & context within design
- <u>Restraint</u> contrasts should be conscious, strong, few in number, and never overwhelming

#### Error - Excessive Typographic Contrasts

5 different types sizes in 3 different fonts (!!)

	Slide Show Options         Timing         ● Wait for Click         ● Timer         Seconds : 10    Show Menu Bar	Set Cancel
Sort By	Sound Play Sound Choose Sound File	Start
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#### Layers

- Contrasting color, value, texture can segregate information into separate layers
- Supports <u>overlapping</u> information in displays, allowing selective processing of specific sets of elements
- Allows different layers to be read and interpreted
   <u>separately</u>







- 1. Group items into categories based on intended use
- 2. Determine rank & importance of groups
- 3. Use perceptual variables (size, value, hue, etc.) to establish layering effect
- 4. Maximize differences between groups while minimizing differences within groups
- 5. Use squint test to ensure elements in group retain together but visually separated



## Organization & Structure



### Organization & Structure



#### Organization needs to be <u>designed</u>

- Benefits
  - Unity ties together related elements so that they work together
  - Integrity & readability offers structure that helps user to easily scan & make comparisons
  - Control determines where user will focus **attention** in the design
- Gestalt -> psychology of perception

#### Gestalt Principle - Proximity



Elements associated <u>most</u> strongly w/ nearby elements

parsed as 4 columns based on close vertical spacing then parsed as two sets of two columns based on spacing



#### Gestalt Principle - Similarity

 Elements associated more strongly when share common visual attributes than when they differ

parsed as rows based on fill similarity, despite closer column spacing



#### Gestalt Principle - Continuity



Preference for <u>simplest</u> physical explanation of complex figure

parsed as two lines, rather than 4 separate lines or 4 opposing angles
#### Gestalt Principle - Closure



Preference to interpret figures as complete, even when missing information

Parsed as triangle superimposed on 3 complete circles, even though none of these is actually present





#### Gestalt Principle - Area

 Preference to interpret smaller overlapping elements as figure, larger as ground

Small rectangle parsed as small rectangle on top of larger, rather than hole





#### Gestalt Principle - Symmetry

 Preference to interpret ambiguous form as multiple symmetric elements

Parsed as two overlapping objects rather than 3 separate shapes







- Binding UI elements tightly together while distinguishing them from surrounding controls
- "Showing" not "telling"
- Can be achieved through
  - Bounding boxes (not recommended)
  - Negative space & contrasts
  - Arrangement & alignment



#### Use Fewer Borders





border-bottom: 2px solid #DEE2E5;

margin-bottom: 48px;







Full Stack Developer Idadamwathan

Adam Wathan

border: 1px solid #B7C6CD;





Adam Wathan Full Stack Developer Gadamwathan

border: 0; box-shadow: 0 2px 6px 0 hsla(0, 0%, 0%, 0.2);

#### box shadows

#### negative space



#### different backgrounds





# Order groups based on perceptual prominence corresponding to intended reading sequence

Can help solve "skimming" problems

Structure can help people focus attention on key parts

Key points might get lost though.

#### But bolding helps! Plus this obnoxious red arrow and text in a totally different font!



#### Use Negative Space



- Directs *attention* to critical regions of display
- 1. Review design, prioritizing groups
- 2. Add extra **space** to ensure spatial separation & emphasis, particularly for important elements

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#### Creating Hierarchy: Color and Weight Instead of Size





#### Lighter not smaller

https://medium.com/refactoring-ui/7-practical-tips-for-cheating-at-design-40c736799886

#### Signal Importance of Action





https://medium.com/refactoring-ui/7-practical-tips-for-cheating-at-design-40c736799886





### Images & Icons



#### • Benefits

- Identification images are easy to recognize
- Expression breadth of artistic expression that can make design more engaging & enjoyable

### Types of Iconic Representation

- Similar visually <u>analogous</u> to action, object, concept
  - Example things that exemplify or are commonly associated
- Symbolic represent concept at higher level of <u>abstraction</u>
- Arbitrary little or no relationship to concept, must be learned through <u>standard</u>



#### Use of Abstraction



- Simplifying highly concrete, realistic representations makes them easier to interpret up to the point at which further abstraction obscures icon's semantics
  - Makes icon more generic, more canonical, less complex











## Principles of Icon Design





- Immediacy can be perceived effortlessly & involuntarily by being <u>bold</u>, clear, balanced
- Generality represents a <u>class</u> of items, rather than an individual element, by removing details that may vary
- Cohesiveness set of icons that function <u>together</u> by sharing visual variables
- Characterization call to mind one or more <u>distinctive</u> features

## Selecting the Right Type of Icon

- If concept is concrete, familiar, tangible, use similar or example icon
- If concept will be used repeatedly, consider using more symbolic or arbitrary icon based on convention
- If concept is abstract process or subtle, use textual label

#### Activity: OS 10.2 Preferences Icons

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Best 3, worst 3 and why? Then: How to make worst 3 better?

#### Activity: OS 10.15 Preferences Icons







### Design Languages

- Many, <u>many</u> choices about visual variables and syntax of composition
  - How do you ensure choices are made consistently across web app?
- Solution: design language
  - Describes how to express ideas and concepts in the interface
  - May be communicated through Human Interface Guideline documentation
  - (Example of consistency and standards)





#### Example: Elements, Google 2004

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#### Example: Syntax, Google 2004



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#### Examples: Google 2016





#### Examples: Google 2016









#### Examples: AirBnb



#### User Marquee

Optional caption



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nulla consectetur quam dui, interdum varius sem viverra eu. Praesent pellentesque ut ex at eleifend. Praesent neque magna, efficitur eget feugiat a, auctor id leo.

Paragraph two

### Examples: AirBnb



#### Editorial Marquee

#### **Editorial Marquee**

Optional Subtitle

Description: America's early beginnings are etched into the earth of Boston, a traditional New England city.

#### Examples: Microsoft



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#### Examples: Microsoft





App 1
Installing
App 2
Pending
App 3
Pending



Delete file permanently?			
If you delete this file, you won't be able to recover it. Do you want to			
delete it?			

Cancel

Delete

#### Example: Header with text blocks layout



http://ranjithakumar.net/resources/webzeitgeist.pdf

#### Position Encodes Meaning and Function



http://ranjithakumar.net/resources/webzeitgeist.pdf



https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/look-back-20-years-website-design#sm.00000ip14jejk1d51u53crk6cwrns





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### Web Design Languages OverTime





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## Common Visual Idioms, Circa 2016

#### • Hero images: large attractive header image



https://envato.com/blog/exploring-hero-image-trend-web-design/

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### Common visual idioms, circa 2016

#### • Rotating image galleries (carousels)



https://envato.com/blog/exploring-hero-image-trend-web-design/

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# Why it Matters

- Users will have idioms they expect to see, particularly if suggested by other related elements
- Branding: Users will see your website and have particular associations based on what it exemplifies





# Goals in Designing a Design Language

- Offer guidance and options on
  - Colors: examples of color palettes
  - Typography: justification, sizes, fonts, different heading levels
  - Organization

- Support different resolutions, devices
- Support universal design
  - Visually impaired, color blind users





### Slides adapted from Dr. Thomas Latoza's SWE 432 course