FUNDAMENTALS OF NOTE TAKING APPS

Note taking has become a very integral part of a wide majority of the world's daily life, be it for personal use or more professional use. When it comes to academics, note taking (and notes in general) are much more than words written on paper or on some screen on a device. Note taking is an essential virtue in the overall process, be it from the person delivering the lecture or presentation to the audience who are perceiving the information. It gives us the opportunity to highlight and take down key information while simultaneously getting all parties involved to interact more with the material.

Note taking is generally thought of as being done on paper (**NOTE**book or **NOTE**pad) either with a pen or pencil or whatever other writing implement suits the users' needs. However, modern age technology has introduced a new digital age of note taking with computer software such as Microsoft OneNote, Microsoft word, Evernote and smartphones coming pre-installed with equivalent apps that can perform similar functions.

Digital notetaking changes the whole experience of notetaking in multiple senses, one of those being the lack of major limitations when it comes to taking notes digitally as opposed to traditional pen and paper methods. One of said limitations would be the ease in storing and accessing notes. Saving files on your computer is simpler and more efficient than it would be to do with hard copies. You can notice this difference by simply walking into a library and checking an online bookstore. You will notice how easy it is to navigate through an online bookstore than it would be to do so in a physical setting. This is just one of the advantages of digital note taking in a wide pool of such.

NOTE TAKING APPS AND FEATURES

As mentioned earlier, digital notetaking applications have revolutionized the way we currently take and store notes in many ways as well as coming with a plethora of advantages over conventional pen/paper notetaking. One of these advantages is their relative low-cost of acquiring and use. Although many would agree that a single pen and notepad won't cost an arm and a leg, it will most likely cost more in the long run especially when say for example the user has multiple modules in which they require separate copies for, than it would be to purchase a notetaking application from a webstore (most notetaking apps come free anyways).

As well as their near costless attribute, note taking apps further more ease up the task of storing and sorting the notes themselves than it would to be to do with physical copies. Because of the invention of cloud storage, the storing of notes no longer needed to be done on the actual device these notes were being taken on. They could now be stored on cloud servers and accessed by that user across multiple devices by simply login into their cloud account and retrieving their notes from there.

There are currently a multitude of notetaking applications available on both mobile phone and computer systems that come with a majority, if not all, of the features mentioned above. Some of these apps include:

- Microsoft Word
- Evernote
- Microsoft OneNote
- SimpleNote
- Notepad
- Joplin
- Noteshelf
- Whink
- Notability etc.

As well as these listed above, there are also certain apps designed specifically for mobile phones and other mobile devices such as:

- Notes by Apple
- Samsung Notes
- Google Keep etc.

FEATURES

As said before, most of the apps listed above share the same features, but I will now pick two from the list to highlight their key features that I personally find useful. I will focus *EVERNOTE* for general notetaking and *SAMSUNG NOTES* for more of a mobile experience.

1. **EVERNOTE:** Evernote is a notetaking and task management application. It is developed by the Evernote Corporation, headquartered in Redwood City, California. Some of its key features include:
   - Ease of organisation
   - Ability to embed photos, audio and other web content onto notes
   - A 'Web Clipper' browser extension that lets you save interesting things you find on the web directly to your Evernote account.
   - Ability to create tasks and link Evernote account directly to google calendar for time management
   - 10GB allowance of upload of notes to cloud each month while still being able to view all notes without internet connection.
   - Ability to scan information from business cards straight unto notes such as phone number, company name and many more.
   - Ability to view older versions of notes which edits have already been made to and possibly revert to said version.
   - Password protection of notes.

2. **SAMSUNG NOTES:** Samsung notes is the default notetaking software that comes pre-installed with every Samsung mobile phone and helps when it comes to mobile note taking. Some of its key features include:

- Ability to make sketches and drawings (works best with stylus)
- Ability to make specific kind of notes like tables and checklists.
- Ability to lock notes for increased privacy.
- Set different types of page templates such as plain back, A4 lined and many more.
- Wide variety of page layout and transition settings
- Ability to import images and audio files into notes.
- Great organisation features
- Ability to sync with other note taking applications such as Microsoft OneNote.
- Ability to convert handwritten notes into text either by writing live or scanning already handwritten text.

APP PROPOSAL

My Proposed app will be called **NOTEPANION,** and it will have all the basic and needed functionality of a notetaking application paired up with the added user customization to take the user experience beyond the plane of just typing out text. The added bit of customization will help the user easily distinguish between notes because they will have the opportunity to uniquely design each note in the app and create unique looks for them. The app will also give the user opportunity to create notes other than plain text such as checkbox lists and full pages tables but also letting the user integrate these features into plain text notes as well.

On launch of the application, the user will be greeted with a home page which will feature their 'recent' notes and 'top' notes. On the left of the page will be a side bar with quick functionality to create new notes. There will also be a "hamburger" menu icon which the user can click on to expand the sidebar and view their settings, saved notes, folders, bin, and user profile. It will also feature a Microsoft-esque toolbar for editing notes once a note has been opened.

To summarize, my app will focus on customizing and organizing notes to help the user navigate and store different amounts of notes and will feature the following:

- Ability for users to sort notes into groups and naming groups as they wish and also letting them sort groups into larger groups
- Option to store notes on cloud service to allow them access notes on various devices.
- Allows the user to set a lock of various kinds (PIN/PASSWORD etc.) on notes to restrict access to said notes.
- Allowing users create different types of notes such as checklists, Diaries, Tables and more.
- Allow users to open and edit external text files besides files that already possess a .txt extension such as files with .doc and .pdf extensions.
- Extensive styling options for notes and the way the notes are displayed to the user in the library
- Includes text-to-speech to let user speak into the mic and see the words being converted into text in real time.
- Ability to add images, audio files and even videos to notes.
- Ability to scan text from camera and images, similar to Google lens
- Ability to export/save notes as pdf, images.

USER PROFILES

My app will generally be designed for anyone interested in using a notetaking app, but I will highlight two cases when my application can be used.

1. **<u>STUDENTS:</u>** The average student (college student in this case) will very likely need to take notes every now and then, and depending on the nature of the course in which they are enrolled in, the amount of notes taken can range from little scribbles to hefty pages. For someone who is enrolled in a course which requires a little bit of notetaking, getting a full notepad might seem like a waste, but with the help of my app, there won't be need to purchase individual hardcopies for each module being taken when the actual content being taken down doesn't warrant it. For students on the other end of the scale who take down a huge amount of notes, my app will also be a great fit because the ability to group notes and even group groups will help with organizing notes into modules and modules into subjects and so on. It will also be great for reducing the number of physical copies needed as a single note can hold a very high amount of information as opposed to a standard book with is limited by the number of pages it has.

2. **<u>THE AVERAGE USER:</u>** Aside the benefits of my app in an educational aspect, my app will also work great for anyone looking to take a quick note or do something more for personal reasons on a digital interface. For instance, the checklist note function will come in handy for someone looking to make a list of tasks that need to be done and also needs to cross out the ones that have been attended to. It will also come in handy for someone looking to make another personalized list such as a grocery list. The diary function would also be of great interest to people looking for a logbook of some sort or even a personal private diary (can use the lock function for this) as the diary would automatically log each update as a new entry and would separate each by date (i.e., dd/mm/yyyy entry1, dd/mm/yyyy entry2 …). The wide range of customization could also be a point of interest to this kind of user.
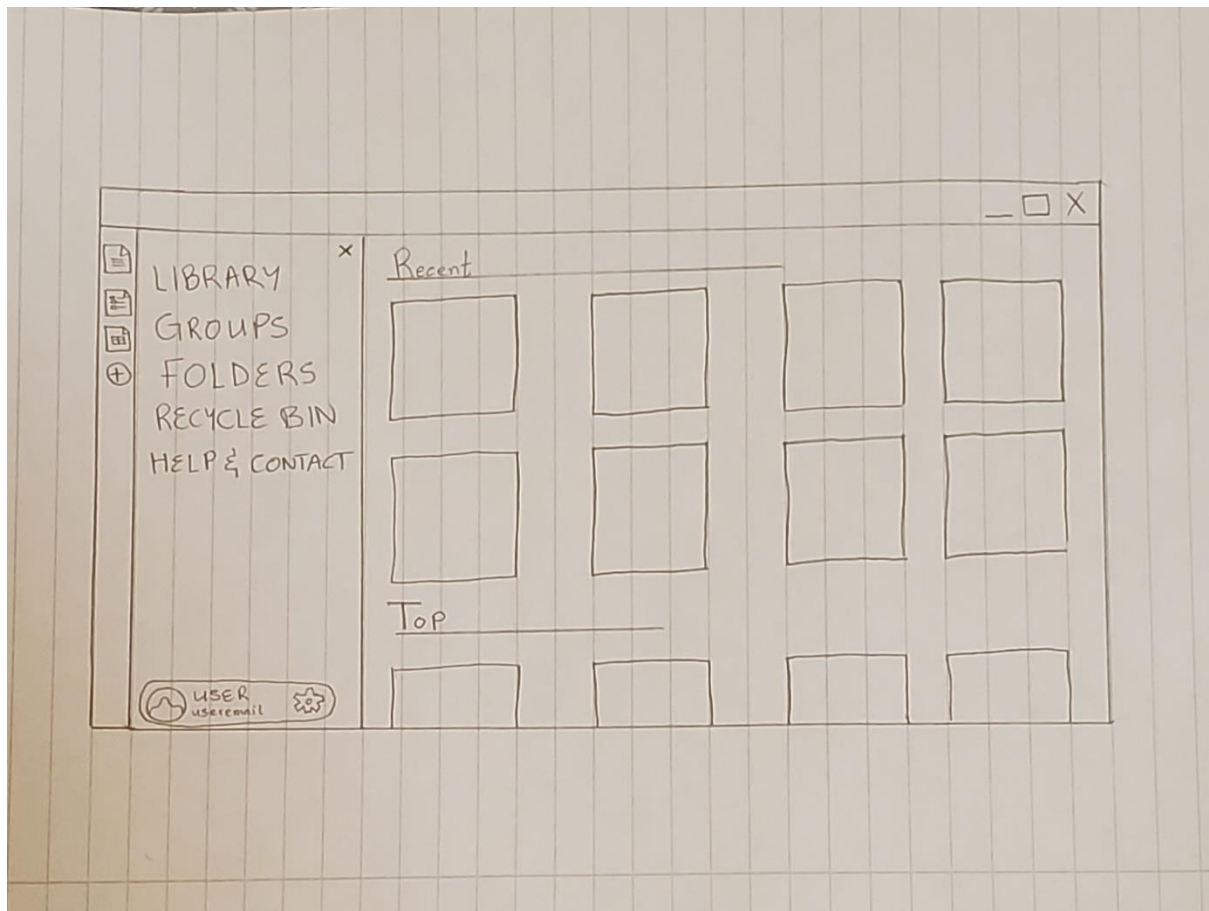
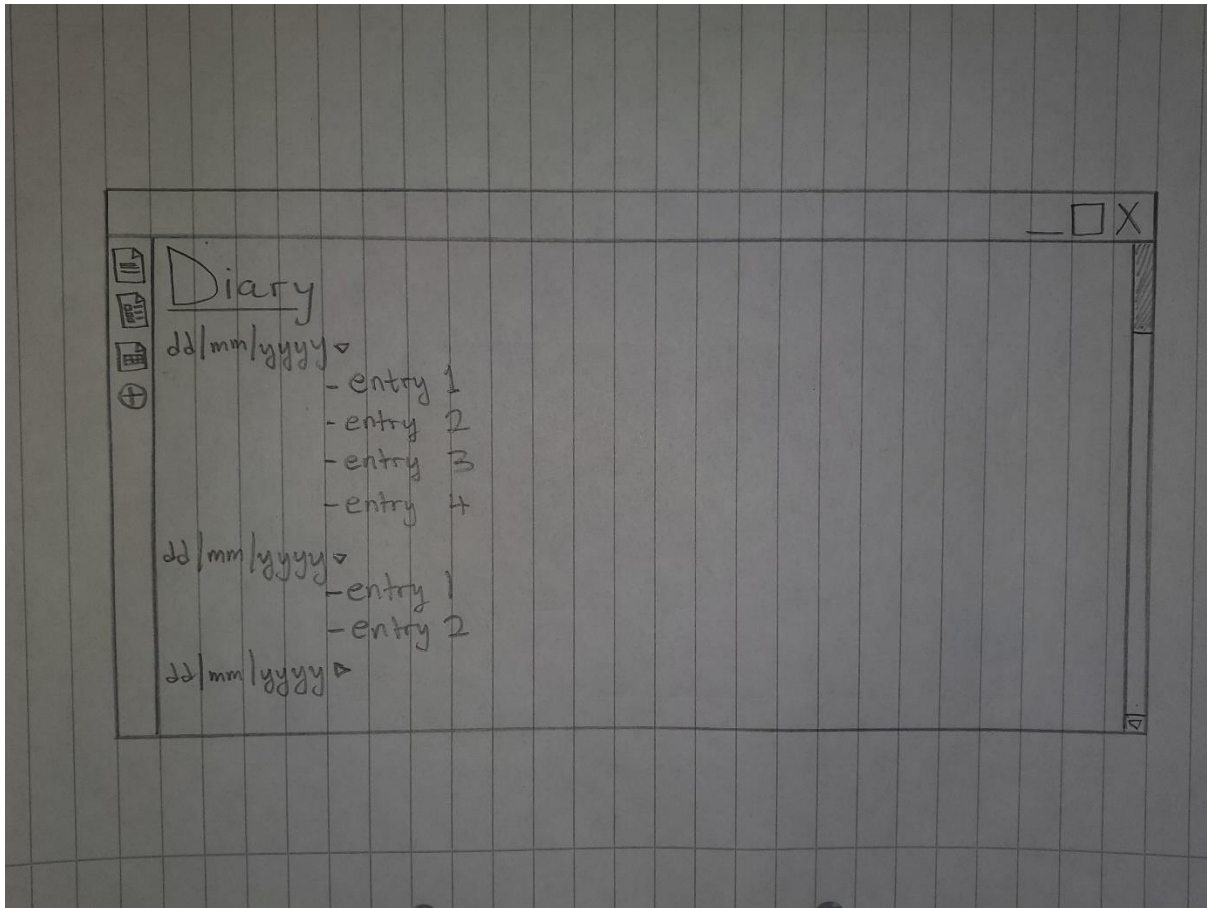*Figure 1- Home screen showing recent and top notes with sidebar expanded*

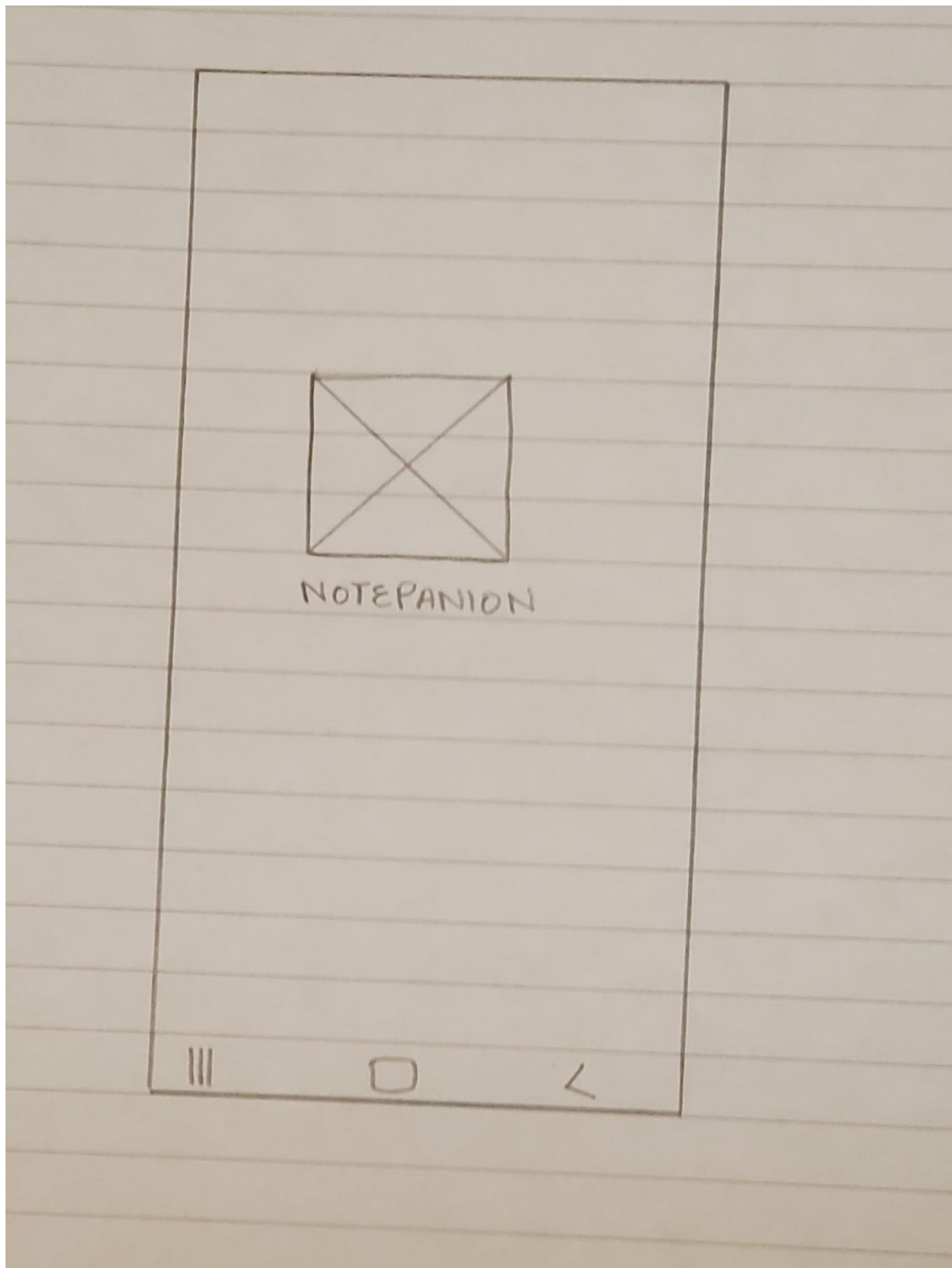*Figure 2- Screen showing diary page with entries for different dates*
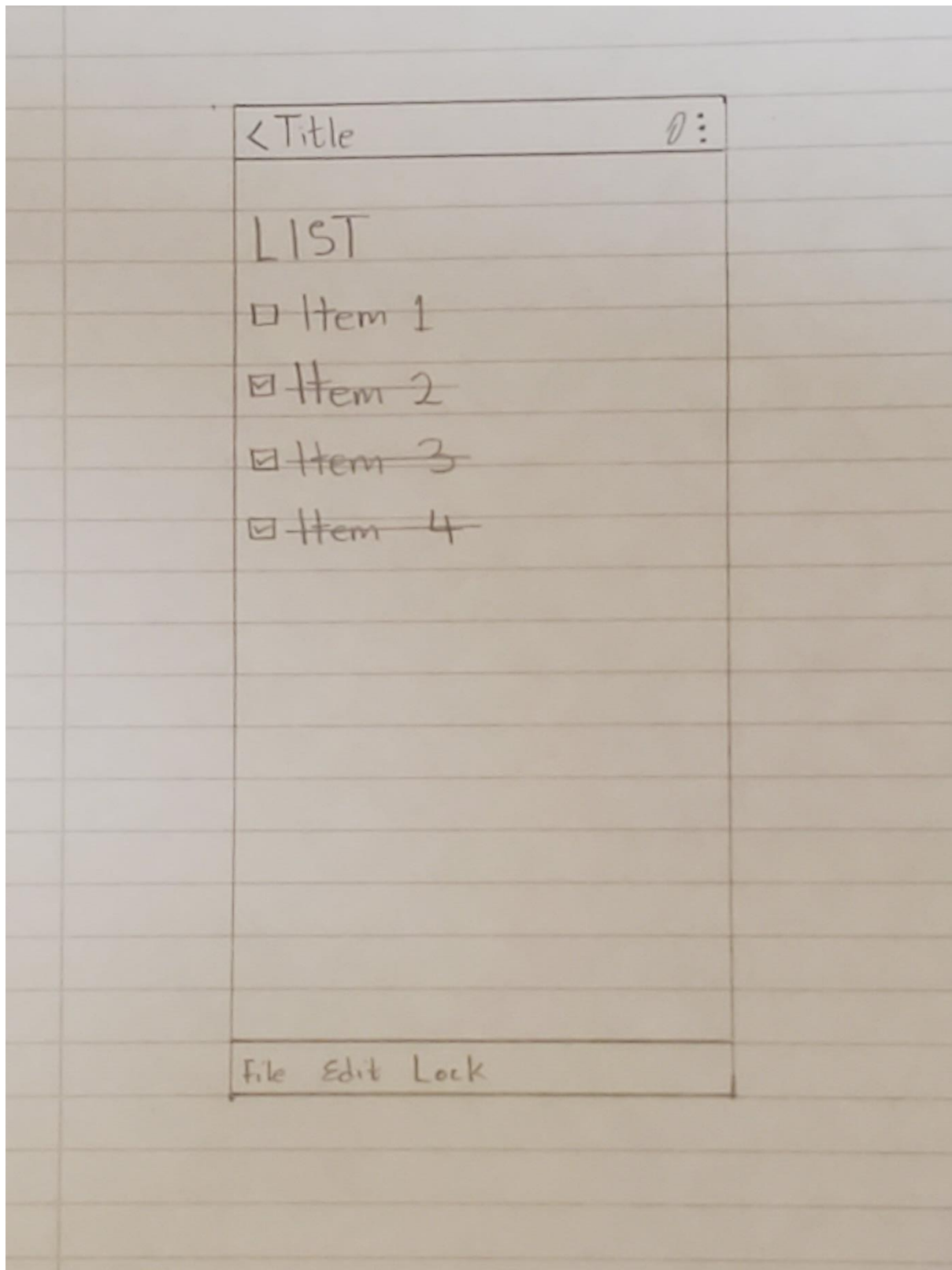
Figure 3- Splash Screen on mobile

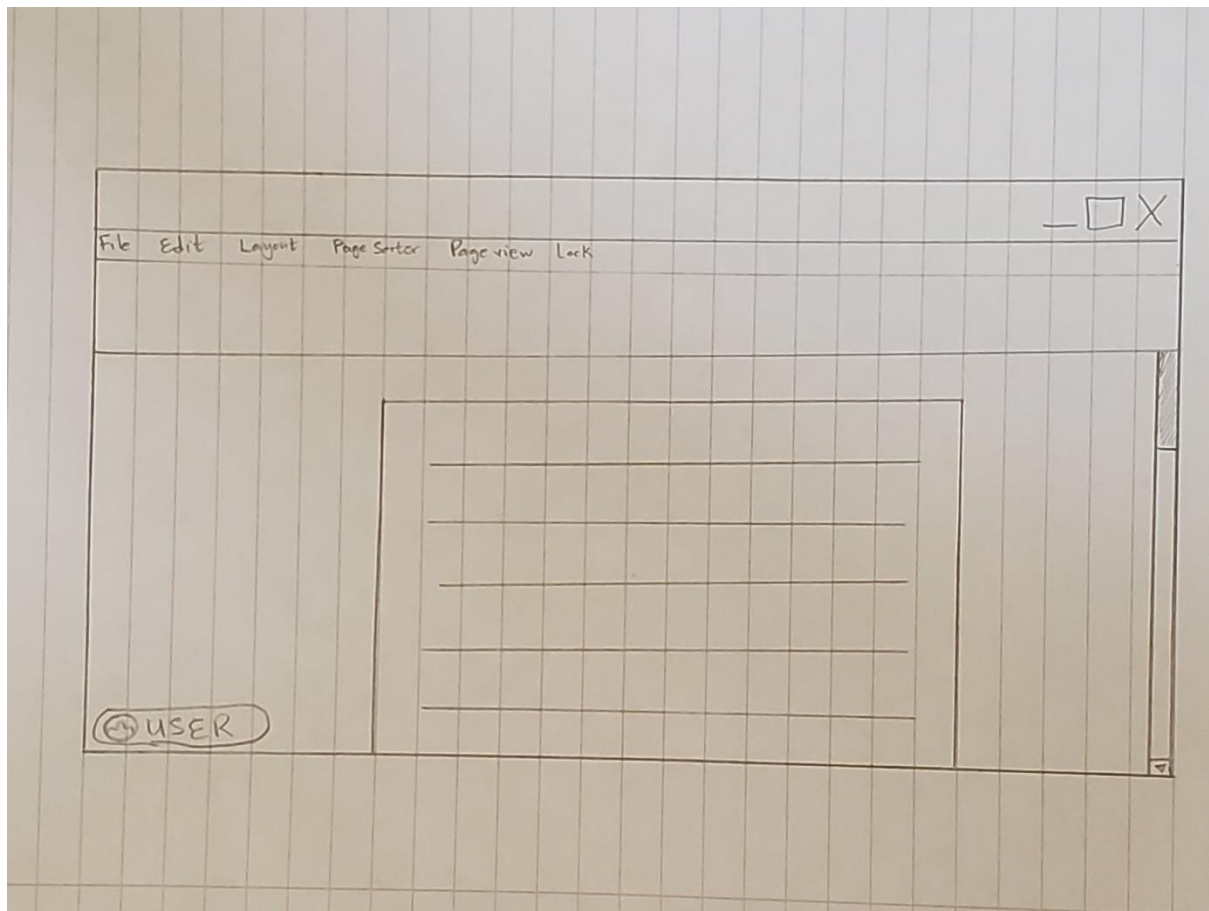*Figure 4- Screen showing list note on mobile*

Figure 5- Screen showing note currently opened and being worked on