User Experience of Dinosaur

# Expected Use of Dinosaur

Dinosaur is designed as an effective tool for creating multimedia production, which range from photo editing, video, sound, and presentation. The user may have been exposed to computers because of his involvement in the entertainment industry, but it is also completely valid that the user may not have much experience with a computer and may want a much easier and less intimidating computing experience. Until support is given for it, Dinosaur will not be suitable for some time for office work, nor is it planned to have support for server use because the market is saturated with much more developed solutions.

Dinosaur, because of its purpose, will target primarily a creative audience. This does not mean that they must be “artists,” but this does mean that they must have a fluid experience with Dinosaur’s programs in order to not interrupt their creative process. Dinosaur will also invariably attract programmers, which means that Dinosaur must provide facilities that ease programming, whether the resulting programs be multimedia based or otherwise. In fact, this is where Dinosaur will gain most of its power because only through rapid growth will Dinosaur survive with the competition.

# Dinosaur Dashboard

When users start Dinosaur, they typically have a reason to do so. They open Dinosaur with a specific goal in mind, and they need to use Dinosaur to finish that goal as fast as they reasonably can. This results in the following requirements:

* **Get Files Fast** – The user should be able to retrieve the file of interest in the shortest amount of time possible.
* **Open Programs Immediately** – Users use programs to achieve their goals. Thus, programs need to be within reach and immediately responsive.
* **Uncluttered View** – Do not show users what they do not grant to see.

These things may be good and all, but it’s all simply theory if it is not implemented correctly in the visual design of the interface. To do this, the interface must be designed using the common forms of communication that humans use to consume information.

## Inspiration From Other Products

Microsoft was on to something when they designed the Metro style that debuted on their Windows Phone. They used the world around them as their inspiration and realized that there was an international language that is readily understood by billions of people, which is found in airport terminals, subway stations, and public building maps. So, in response to this, they designed an interface that utilized that clean consistency to create an easy-to-use interface.

Dinosaur will use that same no-nonsense method of providing that interface, but it will also use some ideas from Apple as well.

When comparing Windows Phone with iPhone 4, I noticed that both have distinct advantages that the other lacks. On the Windows Phone, you see where your call history is, your text messaging, browser, and photo gallery within 2 seconds. However, on the iPhone, the first impression is a sea of glossy tiles that find your way through until you found what you were looking for. They have your phone-related tiles on the bottom that are distinguished from the others, but Windows Phone users will have faster access times because the applications they use most are vertically prioritized and they have a much larger area to press to activate it than iPhone.

However, on the flip side, iPhone’s tiles provide a much more professional appearance as a whole and it has much more appropriate affordances. All of the tiles look like buttons! The unlocker looks like a slide you can physically slide to the left. In fact, everything about the interface looks like there was a little 3D world going on below the glass window called your touchscreen. This kind of realism brings security to people because having something almost physical to work on makes the user feel that they are in control. And that brings happy customers willing to shell out the extra cash (because Apple charges twice more for comparable specifications).

However, in Windows Phone, everything looks like a sign. People don’t normally touch signs unless they like touching signs. When you go further into this idea, everything starts looking more like a glorified banner, or from a functional perspective, a label. It takes the user an additional step of intuition from their part to see that when you touch *these* signs, the phone will actually do something. There’s another problem about this sign look; it’s ambiguous. Eventually, the phone interface will actually have labels that serve solely as labels. But, when the user gets to the point where touching signs and banners does things, they try to press the label and see that nothing happens. Eventually, they figure out that it was just a label and feel confused as to why they were misled. So, the moral of the story here is that the look of the interface has to be clear not only on what it is but also what it *does*.

## Dinosaur’s Solution

The solution that Dinosaur brings to create clear direction of information and appropriate real-world affordances is to make the entire desktop appear like a “shadow box”. Here is an example of a real shadow box:

This is a much more crowded version of what Dinosaur would like to be, but from this image one should notice a few things. As you can see, there is relative depth between the items. This allows prioritization of what’s important to be closer and what is less important to the back. This also gives correct affordances to what is on the screen.

To achieve this effect, the following design details are needed for each item:

* **Drop Shadow** – The shadow should cast directly to the items below, becoming more blurred and spread out as the depth increases.
* **Light Attenuation** – As items are more and more recessed to the back, they should become darker and darker (but only to a certain point).
* **Reflection** – Using the popular reflection effect, every object on the desktop will not only reflect a little bit on the bottom of the screen, but they will also be dimly reflected upon the objects below them. The reason for this effect is that the light source will be at the top towards the user, the same place you would put the light for a real shadow box. Look at a trophy case one day and you will see this effect.
* **3 Dimensional Edges** – In order for button affordances and the like to be correct, the image must convey height, width, and depth. Not only is this important for buttons, it is also important for panels for programs as well. However, this effect simply can’t be simulated using a simple bevel anymore. Because we have been accustomed to bevels being simply an add-on effect applied without much thought for function nor rhyme or reason, bevels no longer portray the effect that we would like them to. Now, we must use unique solutions that create edges that mimic a solid 3D feel.

Also, another requirement for the desktop as a whole is that there must be an indication of a “back” to the “box” that we are constructing our metaphor in. This backboard provides a point of reference to the user for him to perceive the depth of objects in front of him. It should also convince the user that the world he sees is an extension to the real world he sees around him. The word “extension” here does not mean “simulation of this world in a different time and space.” Rather, the simulation should use the same proportions and perspective as what the user expects in a real world shadow box to the point where the glass separating the user from the computer world completely disappears. From this level of immersion is where the creative process can flow freely.