Team name & Members

Team Ints (Amir, Helly, Lakshay, Vandan)

Project sponsor

Dr. Tim Maciag (ENSE 871 Lecturer)

Business need/opportunity

The current web page for the Profiles & Project of the RCE (Regional Centers for Expertise) Saskatchewan website needs to be refined for user experience. The current version of the web page lists out the projects, which isn't engaging to users.

We aim to improve it by providing a better version of it, and thus making it engaging and at the same time, increasing the ease-of-use for the users.

Reflections on project planning

Selected north star & carryover customers

The North Star customers are the residents of Saskatchewan, while the carryover customer base is spread internationally. Both would have a primary aim to learn new ideas and get inspired by RCE Sask's projects towards the categories of UN Goals to create a more peaceful, respectful and sustainable world.

Summarized assumptions made and constraints uncovered

In this project, we have assumed that the partner is not willing to change the website's theme, nor is able to pay extra money for their site. Therefore, the best possible solution considering these constraints is provided which can be easily deployed on the current RCE website. Another constraint was that the site is run by volunteers, and hence our design was to be made in a way that it took minimal efforts to update and maintain. This would mean minimal usage of functionalities, plugins, etc. Adding any project to the website should also be simple.

Summarized key findings from affinity diagramming, empathy mapping

For our empathy mapping findings, the site is run by volunteers, hence a low maintenance product had to be designed. The theme had to be kept simple, similar to the existing site. The customer needed a social media outreach(social media links provided) and wanted people to engage with the projects(comments section provided).

In our affinity diagram, we provided cards according to customer needs and features required to cover those needs. However, during the final implementation, we found out that some features cannot be covered considering the constraints of the project so we decided to move those cards to our second release. Our USM was updated accordingly.

Initial & evolution of USM/MVP

At first, we were considering the partner's needs and desires and we developed our USM in an ideal way. However, when implementing our first MVP, while we could cover most of the things that the partner was asking for, we faced some difficulties implementing some of our initial ideas. For example, the projects page includes every information regarding the project, (its SDG goals, contact forms, comments section, social media links, etc) but our basket idea was impossible considering the constraints we had assumed. Therefore, some ideas like having a basket for selecting projects, liking a project, providing images from our audience to the projects (in comments section for example) was moved from our first MVP to our second release when we have more information about the constraints of the project like its costs and theme selection limitations.

Prototyping activities and findings, links to class topics

Explicit (signifiers): Icons used in the design were selected according to visible characteristics of the object. For example, a magnifier icon for search and browse projects, a balloon for comments section, a phone for phone number and a mail for email.

Design Conventions: Top level section of the page includes a search button and a clickable RCE Sask logo which brings the user back to the home page. These are the most important sections of the page and therefore, they are conveniently placed at the top section.

Gestalt

Proximity: We perceive that the objects that are close to each other are similar or related to each other. The idea was used to group project goals and provide information of each project in a box in a row. For example, projects are listed on the page identically, including an image and a description following each other vertically. Social media icons are placed near each other. Contact icons (phone and email) are placed near each other. SDG goals are placed in a carousel near each other.

Similarity: We perceive objects that share the same characteristics (color, shape, size, texture, and orientation) as being part of a set, even when they are not adjacent or closed positions [2]. Projects are similarly repeated. Posts have a similar design. SDG goals are placed inside a carousel so the user will know all of them are SDG goals.

Symmetry: We tend to group objects that are symmetrically equal, which allows us to generate patterns based on that symmetry to easily structure the information [2]. Again, the same design for projects is repeated and the user is faced to them by only scrolling down the page.

Constraints

To consider constraints, the F pattern of Americans seeing and reading the website was considered while designing the pages. Everything is organized in Rows, starting from left and the search button is just located at the most focused locus of attention. In this way, we can verify that the chances of the user not seeing some information (because of the pattern of the reading) is minimized.

Physical Constraints are used in the comments form and search filters. This ensures that the user fills out all the required information in forms and also is guided for getting more accurate search results by using the keywords provided for filtering the search.

Reflections on project results

Summarize how you felt about this project (likes/dislikes)
The project was a very good exercise of all activities related to people centered design. Moreover, it was a real-world problem/project which made us even more interested to do it during class. However, the workload and the project itself seemed overwhelming at first since it required lots of things and deliverables. Moreover, the time frame was very limited as well. However as things progressed, and with the efforts put in, we were able to complete them.

What went well during the project
The project went well overall. Activities were related to topics and required us to work and experience the real-world issues. The prototypes and designs were made taking suggestions from the customer, the members, which were up to the mark. The team members worked well alongside each other, providing support and guidance whenever required, with regularly scheduled meetings.

What went not well during the project
The project went well overall. However, since it required everything from empathy mapping to prototyping to WordPress design and everything was a take-home activity, the activities were done with lots of on certainties and resulted in a shallow coverage of topics. Maybe we could spend more time in class doing activities in groups and the instructor was able to mentor our activities more effectively. (Covid and remote learning was an inevitable issue here.)

How successful was your team and translating prototypes into WordPress reality?
Our team was successful in designing individual projects pages, implementing the filter and search functionalities, and covering nearly every requirement of the partner. However, our team was not successful in implementing the basket idea and grid, detailed view for the project's home page. The primary aim to implement those was ease-of-use and better interaction, but it didn't work out with the constraints that we had while using WordPress.

Did you find that the people-centered design ideas discussed in lectures helped/hindered your design explorations?
Many ideas discussed in lectures were used for developing designs, such as Gestalt, Affordance, and Constraints. Details are discussed in reflections on project planning documents. So, the ideas were helpful. They helped us get to know some concepts that we were totally unfamiliar with, and some that we were familiar with but the lecture content helped us refine them.

What would you do the same/different on future projects?
For future projects, we would surely incorporate constant customer feedback, which would lead to a better refinement in the entire process. Feedback was constantly provided, hence it was very helpful to us, as we had an idea of what to do and what to leave out. However, more in site collaboration between team members and also the customer will be followed to have a better understanding of the requirements of the project and collaborate better on achieving results. USM may also need more cards and some fine tuning.

Summarize opportunities and design ideas for future work

Word press, stories on board, and adobe XD has provided many ideas for future designs. Particularly on our project, some plugins are useful to improve the work such as Woo-commerce, Elementor Pro, and e-commerce themes. They allow us to develop the basket idea and also will allow us to provide projects in grids for a better view. However, those plugins are not freely available. Please consider that the search and filter functionality was not possible using any free themes and woo-commerce free version. Even those teams who provided grids for their project views, could not filter the grid view of projects using the solutions available and their search results were shown in different pages rather than the main home page for projects. However, in our design, the home page of projects is filterable by using the filters we provided, so the home page is identical using/not using any filter. (results of search AND filtering projects are shown in exactly the same home page). In future work and by using the paid plugins, it's possible to have a grid view of the project AND also filtering the grid view of the project at the same time.

WordPress themes and plugins

Name	user rating	Last update	Active Installs	Purpose
Elementor Free	4.5 (6,149 ratings)	5 days ago	5+ Million	Website building platform, to build professional, pixel-perfect websites without writing a single line of code
Search & filter pro	4.5 (192 Ratings)	8 March 2022	N/A	Searching and filtering posts
WP-vivid Backup	5 (545 Ratings)	1 week ago	100,000+	Backing up the whole WP site.