

MapStory User Research

Testing for Organization Pages

May 15, 2017 by Glynnis Ritchie

What is User Research?

User research focuses on understanding user behaviors, needs, and motivations through observation techniques, task analysis, and other feedback methodologies. It is the process of understanding the impact of design on an audience. **The main goal is to inform the design process from the perspective of the end user.**

My goal is to help the team see MapStory with fresh eyes and empathize with users. It's easy to forget what a new user's experience is like.

Research can help confirm or refute the team's assumptions with real data about what's important to users.



Methodology

- 1 hour call with 4 different users (more on them later).
- I asked each user to describe what kind of content they would find useful on an Organization Page—the home for their organization on MapStory.
- Then, I showed them the wireframes and asked them to describe how each section content—what it was, how it got there, its purpose, how they could update it, etc.
- I avoided asking leading questions.
- I recorded each call, took notes, and assembled key findings.

Users I Tested With

- 3 out of 4 users were already familiar with MapStory
- 2 out of 4 users had not used MapStory in its current iteration
- Users' professional backgrounds include:
 - Local government groups creating and publishing GIS data
 - Large research organizations with many subgroups and funders
 - Offices within the federal government
 - Organizations with a range of 5-100 members

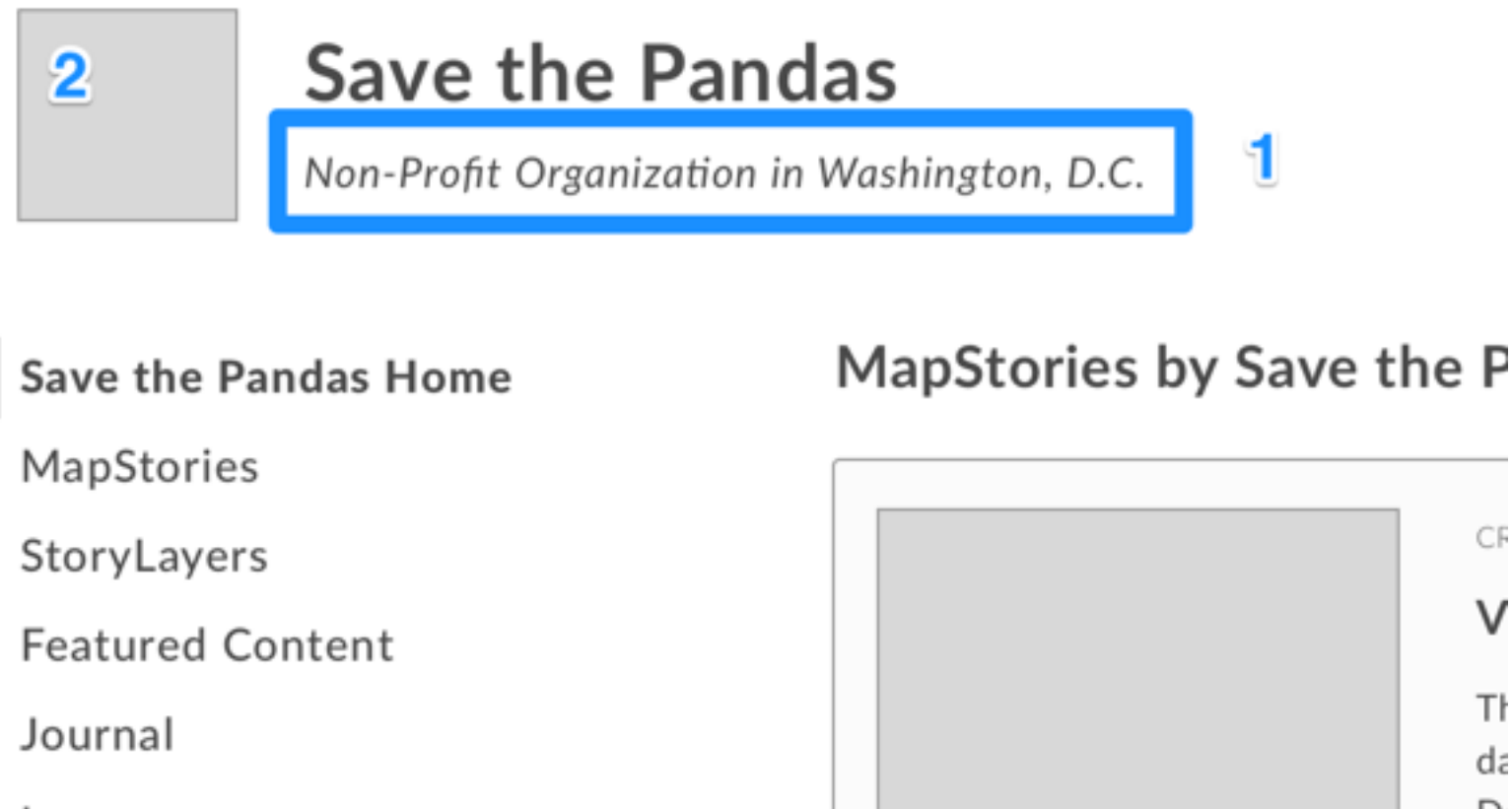
Example Questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your organization's mission or high level goals, and how mapping comes into play?
2. What are some things that your organization hopes to accomplish by using online mapping tools like MapStory?
3. If your organization had a page on MapStory that was visible to the public, what are some things that you would expect to be displayed there?
4. Of the things that you listed, can you put them in order of importance?
5. What are some key things you would like visitors to be able to do on your MapStory organization page? What are the takeaways you would like visitors to have?
8. Can you describe each of these sections and what you think they are for?
9. How do you think each of these sections gets populated with content?
10. If you wanted to add something new to each of these sections, what do you think you would do?
11. Is there any information not displayed in this section that you think would be important to add?
12. Is there any information in this section that you think is not important or that we should remove?

Top Findings

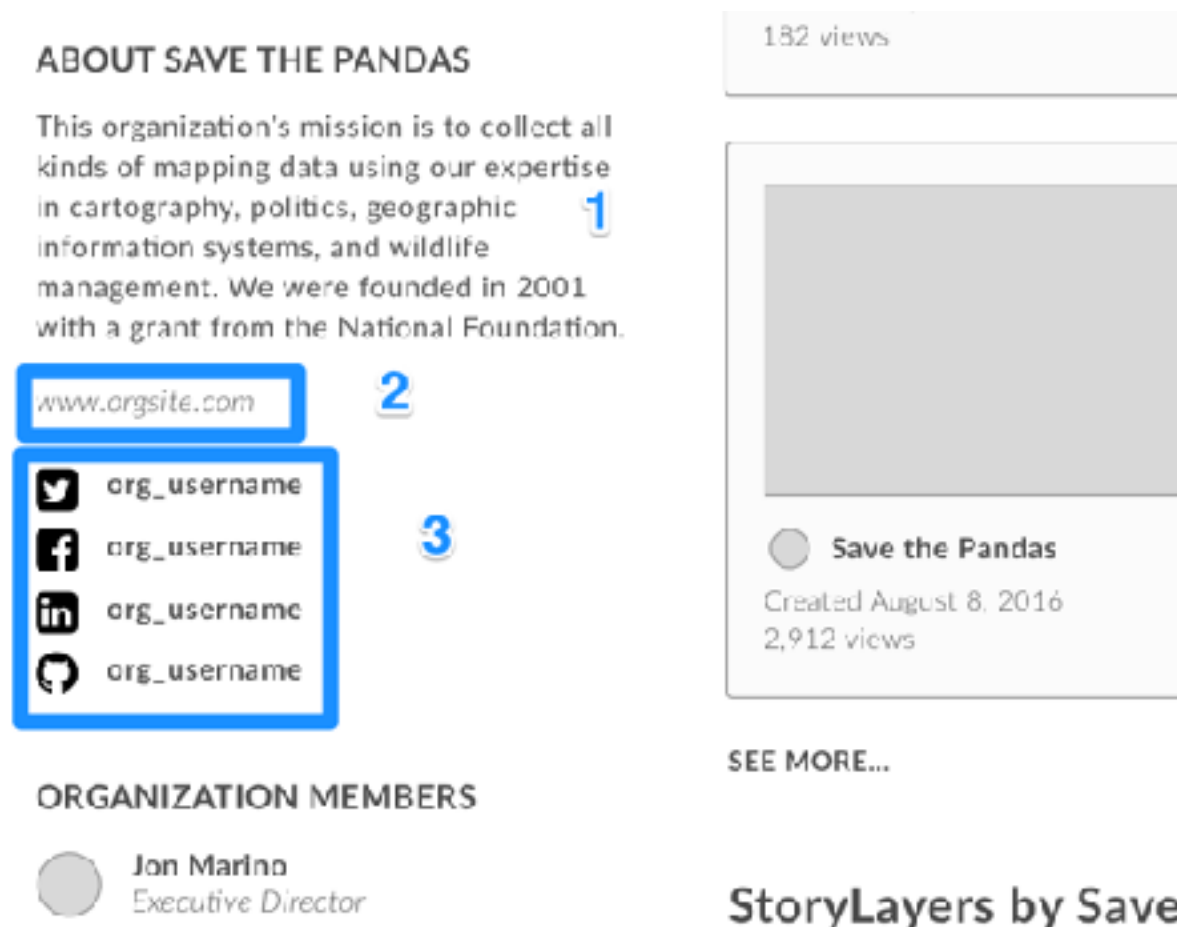
- Users expected MapStories and StoryLayers to be authored by individual or multiple authors, not the Organization itself.
- All users assumed that “Featured MapStories & StoryLayers” section would feature their own organization’s content, and function like pinned tweets. They also wanted this to be the first content on the page.
- All users indicated that the icon section was not important or useful for their organization.
- When asked if they’d like to see anything additional in the header, all users seemed fine with just an avatar. Some would like to see additional information about mission or sector in the header.
- “About This Organization” section needs to allow for multiple URLs and include Instagram in the social media section.
- Organization Members could be improved by allowing users to request to join. Most users we tested with assumed this section would only include members who have MapStory accounts.
- Activity feed is interesting to users, but not a priority.
- Showing “last updated” date rather than “created date” in all contexts is more useful.

Findings: Header



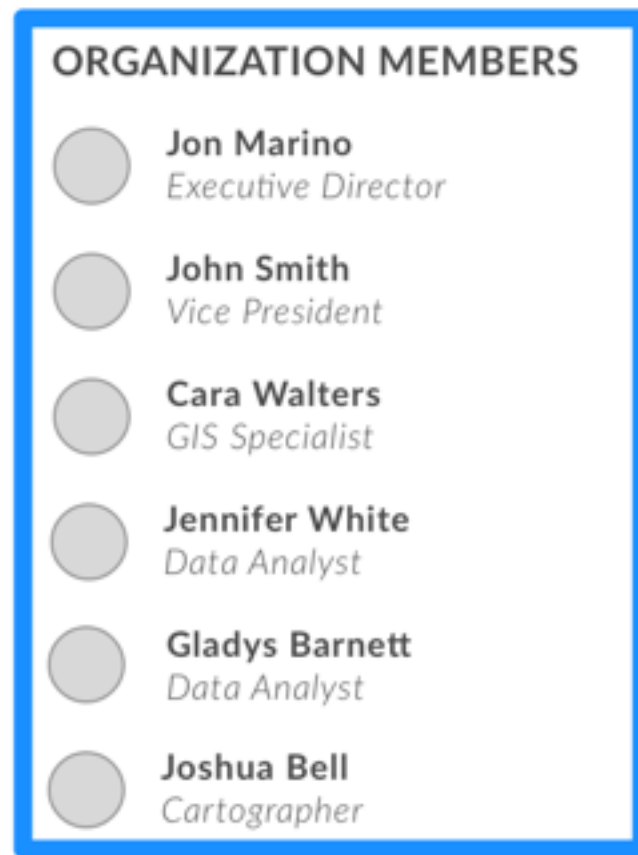
- **2 out of 4 users** thought that adding mission information or a tagline for their Organization to the header would be useful (#1).
- **1 out of 4 users** indicated that adding sector or categorical information to the header might be useful (i.e. “Environment” or “Health”).
- **4 out of 4 users**, when asked what else they might add to this section to make it more useful did not indicate any need or desire for an additional banner image (vs. just the avatar displayed here—#2).

Findings: About This Organization



- **3 out of 4 users** would like to add more than one URL to this section (#2).
- **3 out of 4 users** mentioned that Instagram might need to be added to social media links in this section (#3).
- **1 out of 4 users** would like to see an expanded version of this section that allows for more text and information about the organization (perhaps on a separate page) (#1).

Findings: Organization Members



SEE MORE...

StoryLayers by Save the P



- **4 out of 4 users** mentioned the need for a better way to display many users.
- **3 out of 4 users** work in organizations that may have up to 50 members.
- **1 out of 4 users** indicated that having a “request to join” feature would be useful so that as new team members are hired, the onus isn’t on an administrator to remember to add them.
- **4 out of 4 users** assumed the members list would be populated only with members who have accounts on MapStory.

Findings: MapStories & StoryLayers

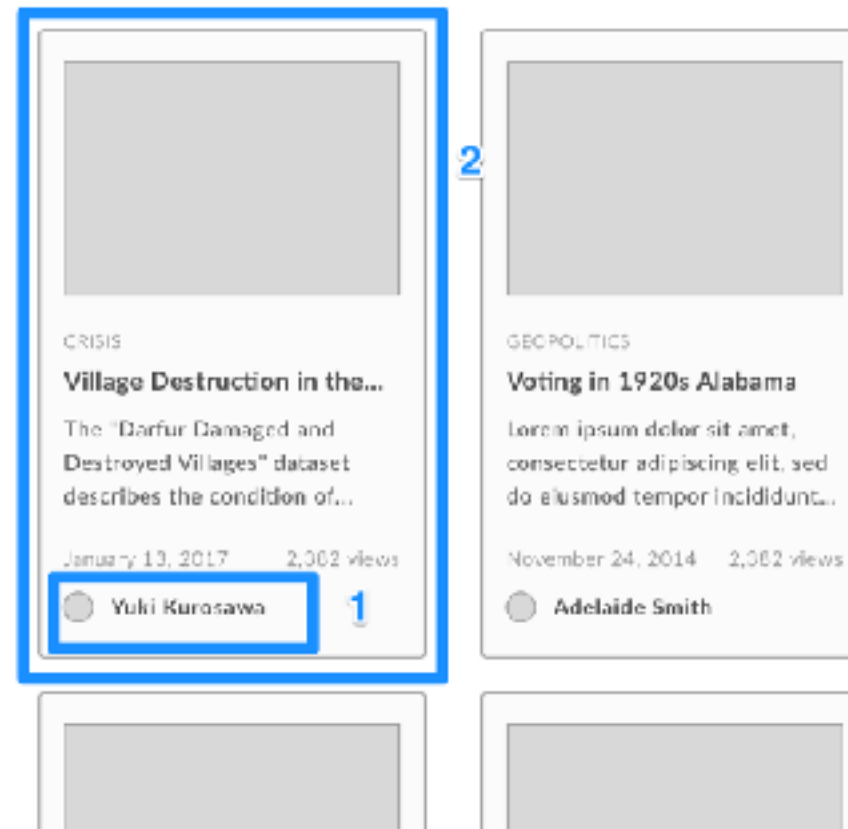
MapStories by Save the Pandas



- **4 out of 4 users** indicated that they did not expect MapStories or StoryLayers to be authored by the organization itself. Instead, they'd like to see an individual's name, or support for multiple authors (#1).
- **1 out of 4 users** indicated that having the option to choose between showing individual authors or the organization as the author might be a nice additional feature (#1).
- **3 out of 4 users** mentioned that showing "last updated" date would be more useful than "created" date for StoryLayers and MapStories, since recent data is more important or useful than when something was initially created (#2). Most assumed "last updated" is how content was ordered, with some assuming ordering was determined by popularity.
- **1 out of 4 users** indicated that multiple categories as well as a classification indicator might need to be added (#3).

Findings: Featured Content

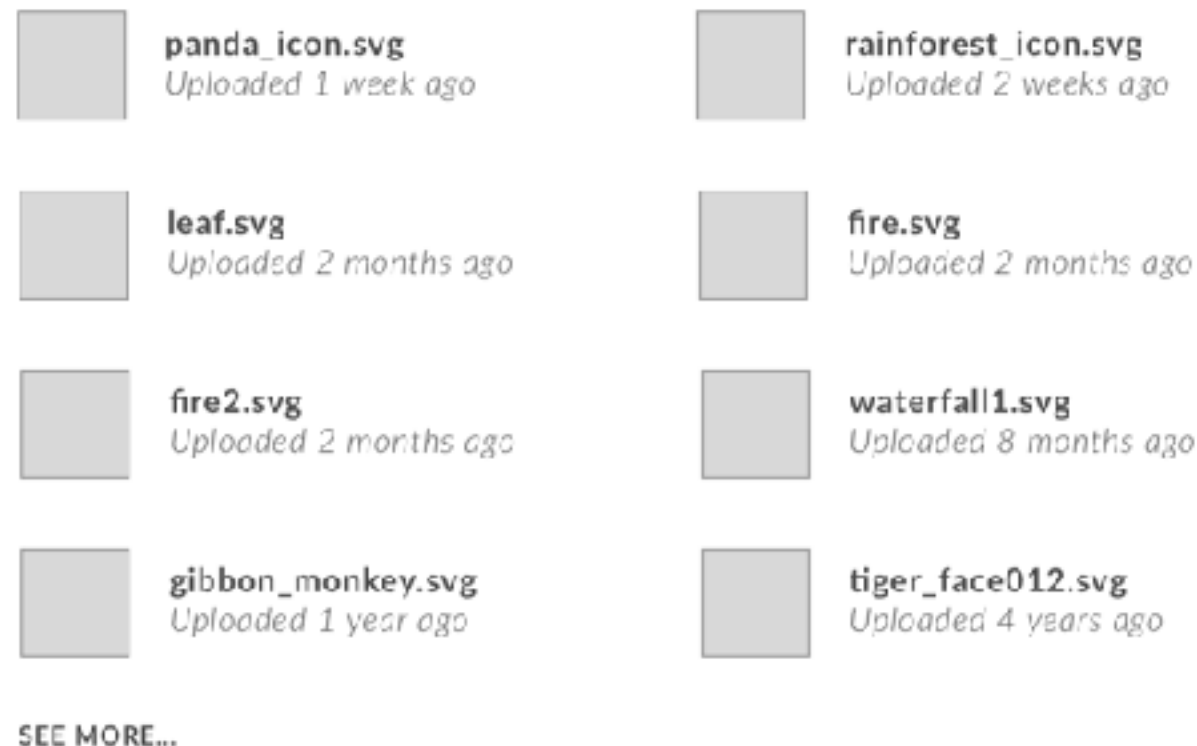
Featured StoryLayers & MapStories



- **4 out of 4 users** assumed that featured content was authored by their Organization, despite differences in display name (#1). They thought this was useful.
- **3 out of 4 users** thought featured content was chosen and “pinned” by the organization.
- **2 out of 4 users** mentioned that showing featured content first on the page would be preferable.
- **2 out of 4 users** mentioned that allowing organizations to indicate why something is featured would be a useful addition.
- **1 out of 4 users** mentioned that the visual difference in how featured content is displayed (vertical vs. horizontal cards) didn’t make sense, and preferred horizontal display since it allowed more room for detail (#2).

Findings: Icons

Icons by Save the Pandas



- **3 out of 4 users** hesitated or didn't understand the purpose of this section initially.
- **4 out of 4 users**, after figuring out or hearing an explanation of this section, didn't think it was important to include, especially if no action can be taken by the user here.
- **2 out of 4 users** thought this section could be made more useful if it allowed organizations to share or organize icon usage within their organization or across members, but agreed that this wasn't a priority or what they initially imagined they'd see on an Organization page.

Other Findings

Activity Feed

Save the Pandas created a MapStory.

May 8, 2017 at 10:23am



CRISIS

Village Destruction in the Darfur Region

The "Darfur Damaged and Destroyed Villages" dataset describes the condition of villages in the Darfur region of Sudan that the U.S. Government has confirmed as either "damaged" or "destroyed" between the time period February 2003 to December 2010. Additionally, villages the are confirmed to have "No Damage" are...

Save the Pandas

Created May 6, 2017

182 views

Save the Pandas created a MapStory.

May 7, 2017 at 9:06am



GEOPOLITICS

How the USA Became "red state vs. blue..."

Our current politics is marked by a "red state blue state" divide, with republican "red" states located mostly in the south and midwest and democratic "blue" states located on the coasts, and the upper midwest. This wasn't always the case, however, America's national politics have constantly shifted over time. An American alive in the 1930s...

Save the Pandas

Created August 8, 2016

2,912 views

Save the Pandas published a journal entry.

May 3, 2017 at 11:34pm

Journal Entry Title

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

- **4 out of 4 users** agreed that the activity feed was useful. They also all agreed that it was not as important as other features for their Organization page.
- **2 out of 4 users** indicated a desire to be able to reorder or search content within each section, given the volume of data they would expect their organization to publish.
- **4 out of 4 users** agreed that analytics or metrics for their organization page would be useful. Many had specific expectations or requests for how this would be handled.
- **1 out of 4 users** indicated a desire for journal entries to allow embedding images or maps, "like any other blog".

Recommended Next Steps

- Revise wireframes to reflect findings from user research
- Design feature for allowing StoryLayers and MapStories to have multiple authors
- Identify and design other screens needed for Organizations (Issue #695 like admin features, screens for nominating content for the organization page etc.)
- Choose payment processor (recommended: Stripe), and outline pricing
- Create feature allowing StoryLayers and MapStories to have multiple authors
- Verify requirements, create additional wireframes and mock-ups, and confirm revisions to the UI and requirements before development
- Once requirements are firm, estimate level of effort and define discrete iterations and releases