CONVERSATION CLOUD

Team 2
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OBJECTIVE

Our main objectives are to perform background research on the various ways in which human beings process and store conversations, try and extrapolate the findings in designing an application that does the same and finally build a prototype of the application that helps in recording/remembering conversations. We also strive to conform to user-experience best practices and depict conversations by means of beautiful visualizations.

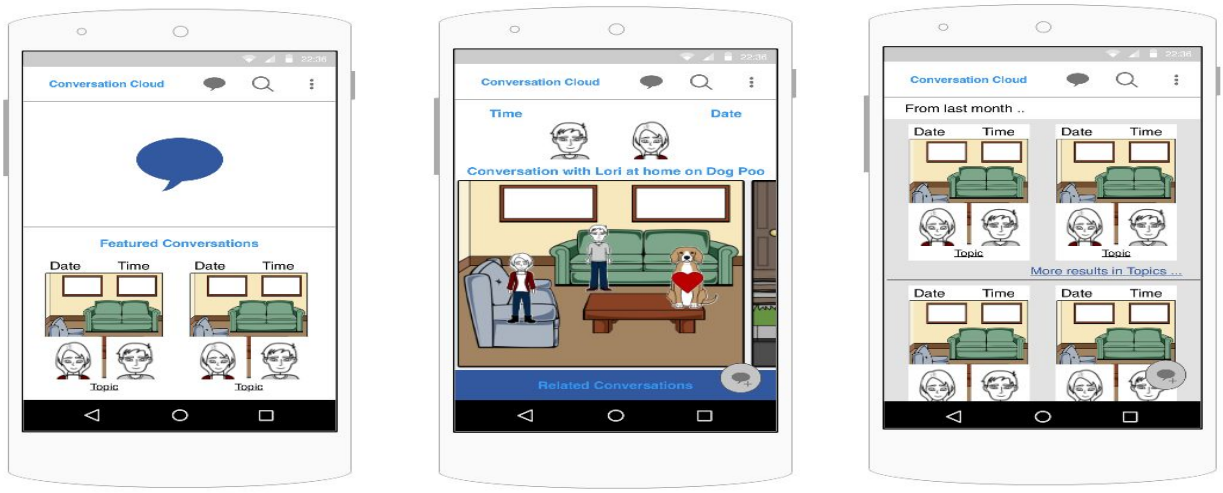
INITIAL RESEARCH AND DESIGN

We started out by trying to understand the problem as perfectly as possible as well as try and comprehend the nuances, complexities and requirements of the application. The next step involved meeting with the client and coming to a consensus on the principal focus of the application as well as the expected deliverables and functionality. This was followed by the sketching phase in which a three page long conversation was chosen and each team member came up with sketches that could depict the conversation as accurately and as completely as possible. We considered various methods of portraying conversations, namely, storyboards, videos, images with sounds, etc. We also performed literature review related to the way in which conversations were depicted as comics. We discussed these early ideas with the client and received valuable feedback - both on the sketches as well as on the various techniques we could employ to visually represent conversations. This feedback was instrumental in the design stage for our initial prototype.

FIRST PROTOTYPE

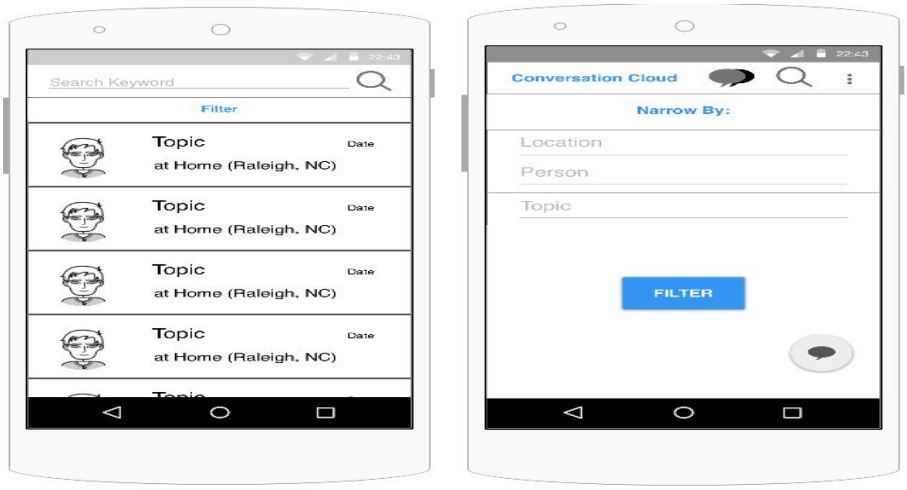
We took all the advice afforded to us by our client as well as ideas from team members into consideration and came up with the initial prototype, shown below. We focused on a home screen, which displayed featured conversations as well as a large and convenient button for recording conversations. Several small buttons were placed at the top of the screen for the purposes of a quick search, browsing through all stored conversation-visualizations, etc. The browse screen was designed in a way that would make browsing through conversations easy and effective. A tile-view was chosen to depict individual conversations and all conversations were sorted on time (conversations from last month, conversations from two months ago, etc). In addition, on performing a search with some query, all conversations that contained that query were displayed, sorted on three parameters, namely, topic, location and persons involved. Finally, an individual conversation was depicted in the form of a storyboard, in which,

each image represented an important part of the conversation, and users could scroll through images to get a sense of how the conversation progressed. A section of the screen was reserved for summary information - topic, location, date, time, persons involved, etc. This information was also presented to the user in the browse as well as search screens, in order to make recognizing a particular conversation easier.



REFINEMENTS AND FINAL PROTOTYPE

On discussing with the client, we made several changes to our initial prototype. In order to support scalability (large number of conversations), a list-view was favored over a tile-view. This made it easier to display more number of conversations on a small screen. At the same time, all implicit information (date, location, persons involved, topic) were still displayed. We added search filters based on location, topic and persons involved, which basically allows users to refine their search results. Another important addition involved accommodating conversations that were not sequential. We used vertical scrolling at diverging points in the conversation in order to support such conversations.



EVALUATION

We had six users evaluate our prototype: we read out the conversation to two users and asked the remaining four users to read the conversation themselves. All users were then shown the first prototype and asked questions regarding the conversation. We found that users remembered the implicit details of the conversation without the application, but the application helped them remember what exactly the conversation was about.

CONSTRAINTS

- The evaluation was conducted on a considerably small number of users.
- The proximity of the initial exposure to the conversation might have affected the results with regards to the effectiveness of the application to trigger the user's memories.
- Only the initial prototype was evaluated, conversations that do not proceed sequentially were not.

RECOMMENDED FUTURE WORK

It would be valuable to have a larger number of user evaluations as well as have users evaluate the application's effectiveness in helping them recollect non-sequential conversations. Another important addition might be the feature that allows users to add short notes to visualizations of individual conversations.

REFERENCES

1) Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud - http://www.jessethompsonart.com/artpage/Pre_C_drawing_Video_files/Understanding%20Comics%20(The%20Invisible%20Art)%20By%20Scott%20McCloud.pdf