Personas

For SOTU-db

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Contents:

Chris: AP US History high school student

Chris is a high school student at a well-funded public high school in Chicago's suburbs. They are taking AP US History in their senior year and are working on a major term paper.

Tech Savvy

Chris is enthusiastic about digital tools and considers themself a "digital native." Checking and posting on Twitter and Facebook are second nature for them, and they can often help family or teachers with tech problems as they arise. Chris owns their own laptop and has a fast internet connection at home. They sometimes use keyboard shortcuts and know a few neat tricks, but are not comfortable tinkering with hardware, network configuration, etc (Chris's generation is used to wizards and "next" buttons rather than config files and control panels).

Interest

Chris is not quite sure what they want to do for a career but takes pride in their ability to craft a well-researched and pleasantly-formatted paper for school. Chris has their choice of topic for AP US history, and is keen to use this opportunity to craft a "college application-ready" paper that really shows off their writing and design abilities. Also, Chris has begun to take an interest in present-day US politics and is interested in finding a resource that is modern and includes the Trump presidency.

Application

Sam: Alternative high school student with skills gaps

Sam is a student at an alternative high school for students who have dropped out of the traditional high school system. They sometimes find discussions in Social Studies class interesting, but are frustrated by the pacing of the classroom and often tunes out of class during lectures or activities. Sam finds themself frustrated by homework assignments and is struggling to maintain a passing grade in the course.

Tech Savvy

Sam is glued to their smartphone and considers social media an essential part of their life. Sam can Tweet and type text messages quite proficiently on their phone, but is much less comfortable on a QWERTY keyboard where they often have to "hunt and peck" and are often discouraged by the red lines that indicate spelling mistakes in their writing. Besides their phone, Sam doesn't own a computer or have one in their home.

Interest

Much of Sam's school population -- a mix of African-American and Hispanic students, many of whom have experienced gun violence or are enrolled in DACA -- is experiencing genuine fear and resentment during the Trump presidency. Sam's teacher, Mr. Wainer, is concerned by the vitriolic tone of conversations in fourth-period Social Studies and is determined that his students base their political opinions on fact and research rather than toxic memes on social media. Fortunately, Mr. Wainer's friend is a developer for SOTU-db, so Wainer has created an assignment for his students that utilizes the website.

Application

Sam's assignment is to pick out three specific passages in Donald Trump's 2017 annual address or 2018 State of the Union address. Sam needs to summarize these passages in more familiar, idiomatic language. Then, for each passage, Sam needs to find an example of another time this topic is mentioned by another president, and write a paragraph comparing/contrasting the two examples, for each topic.

Design Considerations

- **Easy as Facebook.** Sam has significant gaps in his reading and study skills, and if the platform is not simple and engaging they are not likely to ever finish this assignment.
- **Guided Experience.** Sam will likely not be sure where to begin, so suggestions of popular or interesting topics to analyze would be extremely valuable. Perhaps clickable quotes to grab Sam's attention would be useful. It's unlikely even the most striking chart will catch Sam's eye.
- **Readability and Navigability.** Sam's reading level is well below other high school students. For this platform to be accessible to Sam, the language needs to be written at a level they can comprehend.
- **Mobility.** Sam is much more comfortable using his mobile device than a workstation. The project should be accessible and lightweight for use on mobile platforms.

Alex: Undergraduate non-history major student

Alex is an undergraduate at a medium-sized public college in Chicago. They are not a history major but have found themselves in a 100-level survey course of US history as an elective. They are determined to do well in the course but are often distracted by college life and are finding themselves challenged by the responsibility of living away from home.

Tech Savvy

Alex is a casual technology user. They use the basic functions of social media regularly but rarely delve below the core functionality. They are comfortable on an iPhone virtual keyboard or a QWERTY keyboard. Alex doesn't use keyboard shortcuts and can sometimes get confused by things like file locations, extensions, installing software, etc. Alex is not a "power-user" and appreciates "big green button" design.

Interest

Alex is looking for information in the clearest, most accessible format that requires minimal tweaking and "just works." Although this particular topic seems a bit beyond the powers of "answers.com" or Quora, which Alex sometimes uses for quick assignment help, Alex would love to find a tool that tells them they are on the right track and does much of the legwork for them.

Application

Alex has just been assigned a project for "HIST-202: US History since 1865" asking them to find, compare, and cite specific word usage in Presidential addresses from times of war. Alex is feeling a bit overwhelmed by this assignment and is excited to hear that a digital tool might be available that could help make this work easier and more efficient.

Design Considerations

- **Cite, cite, cite**. Alex is a little freaked out by the talk of getting kicked out of school if they forget to cite a source, and didn't have much training with this in high school. A citation tool for every address would be helpful.
- **Surface analysis and visualization decisions.** Alex is trying to get what they need and get done ASAP, and so might not think critically about the operations and visualizations being performed. SOTU-db should nudge Alex to think about how visualizations are made and what they are showing, and encourage interactivity and tweaking.
- **KISS.** Design from a "big green button" paradigm. Tweak interactively, not as a pre-condition for use.

Dara: Professional journalist

Dara is a professional journalist for a "news explainer" website that makes heavy use of charts, infographics, and other visualizations. A big part of Dara's job is finding reliable, consistent data sources in order to provide context and insight to her readers.

Tech Savvy

Dara is a "power user," equally comfortable on smartphone, laptop, or desktop. Different platforms, file extensions, and design paradigms are easy for her to navigate and, though she's not a developer, is fairly comfortable going "under the hood" and changing configuration files, settings, etc. if need be. Dara usually prefers to have many options to tweak and customize rather than the "big green button" approach - since accuracy is essential in her work, she needs to "see the process" rather than just entrusting it to an algorithm or other person.

Interest

Like many journalists, Dara is concerned by the Trump presidency and what it says about our American political system. Dara's job requires her to publish regular "hot takes" about the President's words and tweets, but she is more interested in "explainer journalism" which seeks to explain and contextualize major issues. Because presidential annual addresses are highly symbolic acts of communication and because of the abrupt rhetorical shift between the Obama and Trump administrations, Dara is interested in analyzing the speech of these addresses to search for continuity and change over the past few years. She is also curious if there are similarities between Trump and Nixon in their word choices. As a journalist it is essential that her data is trustworthy and from a reputable institution.

Application

Dara is interested in SOTU-db as a source of text and comparison, but plans to create her own visualizations based on the data she finds. She is writing an article about the word choices of Donald Trump particularly in his first annual address (2017) and 2018 State of the Union address. Dara is also interested in political polarization and would be very interested in a tool to track applause, standing, and sitting in the audience of these addresses. She'll work with her sites design team to create graphics and visualizations that comply with her site's style guidelines.

Design Considerations

- **Accuracy and disclosure.** Dara's career rests on her reliability and accurate citing of trustworthy sources.
- **Customizability.** Dara needs to understand the data she's working with, not just end up with a striking visualization. She needs to be able to look "under the hood," see how the program works, tweak, and adjust assumptions in order to be sure that the analysis she's doing on SOTU-db really backs up and agrees with her writing.

Accessibility Considerations

No specific accessibility concerns are attached to these individual personas because this would limit the actual implementation of universal design and accessibility practices into the project. Accessibility is an ongoing concern and not an endpoint for this project.

- Wherever possible, color, design, control, and interaction schemes should follow best universal design practices.
- Variable file sizes should be available to accommodate both high-resolution displays and low-quality connections.
- Text within images, Flash animations, etc should all be avoided. All text should be machine-readable.