Card Sorting Findings Report

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to aid my objective of building an online portfolio. I am building the online portfolio in order to show the work I have done throughout my college career to potential recruiters for internships and jobs. Before conducting the card sort, I created a wireframe sitemap of how I would structure the website. However, in order to better tailor my website, I wish to enact some user-centered design principles. Thus, I conducted card sort sessions with participants acting as potential users for the website. This report details the methods I took when conducting the card sorting sessions, the results I received from each session, an analysis of how I will use the data to further tailor my website, and an appendix which contains pictures of each user's card sort.

Methods

The main method used is an open card sort. In an open card sort participants are asked to organize topics from content within my website into groups that make sense to them.Then each participant suggested names for each group they created in a way that they feel accurately describes the content.

There were three different individuals who participated in this card sort. Each session was a one on one sessions and involved physical index cards which represented the different web pages. These one on one sessions involved participants thinking out loud while they were sorting and placing cards into groups. Allowing them to think out loud helps give a clearer picture of their reactions and thought process. While each participant was working on the the card sort I would write down any particular thoughts or questions they had on a Google Document.

When a participant was finished with the card sort I asked them to come up with a title for each group of cards they made and wrote the response. I also took pictures of each card sorting, using my cellphone, of their final result. I would then ask questions about why they placed certain cards in certain places and wrote down their responses.

Results

User 1

The first user started the card sort by spreading the cards out first before placing them in groups. As expected, the user immediately knew that the cards named "Project #1" and "Project #2" were subpages of the same group. The user asked for clarification for the "Summary of Work Experience and Projects" card and the "List of previous/current job" card. After the user completed the sort there were only two main groups, a Career Section and an About Me section. I asked him why he grouped the cards into two large sections. The user replied saying that the cards in each section were different from the cards in the other sections so having a separation would help show where my information is at depending on what the user is looking for.

User 2

The second user started the card sort but did not really think out loud during the session. As the user started grouping the cards, she asked two questions. The first one was for clarification about the "Personal Life Description" card. After I described the webpage, she placed the card in its own group. The second question was whether if I thought the cards referring to my job experience should be grouped with the cards referring to my projects. I replied that I see them as distinct but they serve the same purpose of showing my technical skills to users of my portfolio. After the user completed the sort the main categories were Personal Life, Technical Skills, Resume, Contact, and Experience. I asked the user why she placed the Technical Skills page in its own group. She replied that if it wouldn't make sense if it was included with the cards under the Experience section since those cards contain my job and project experience which detail the specific technical skills in each.

User 3

The third user started by going through the cards and sorted what he could before seeing all the cards. The user asked for clarification about what the difference was with the "Summary of Work Experience and Projects" card and the "List of previous/current job" card. The user was contemplating whether the "Resume" card should be by itself or in a group with other job-related cards. He ended up putting it as its own standalone group. After completing the card sort, the user had the following sections: About, Projects, Experience, Resume, and Contact. I asked the user why the Technical Skills is placed in the Experience Section rather than the About section. The user replied saying it would make sense for the Technical Skills to be in About, however, technical recruiters would want all relevant information for them as close as possible.

Discussion

Accuracy of the card sorting

Almost all of the users had different card sorts from each other. The third user created a grouping which was very close to my original wireframe. Almost all of them seemed to have the "Personal Life Description" as part of an About section. The other two cards that were part of the About Me page, the "Summary of Work Experience and Projects" and "Technical Skills" were usually grouped with cards that were from my Work Experience Section. Almost all of the users got the Resume section and Contact Sub-Sections correctly. Two of the users also grouped the cards from the Project section with cards from the Job Section because these pages serve the same purpose for a technical recruiter trying to view my experience. It seems that combining these two sections would allow recruiters to see everything they wanted in one section.

Labeling Groups

Almost all of the users labeled the information in the same way I did for my original wireframe. When the participants combined the cards from the Job Section and Project Section they would just name the combined section "Experience." The only outlier is the first user who grouped the information into two large sections. I do not think to have two big sections will help recruiters find the information they want. It is probably better to have 4 or 5 main section like with the original wireframe.
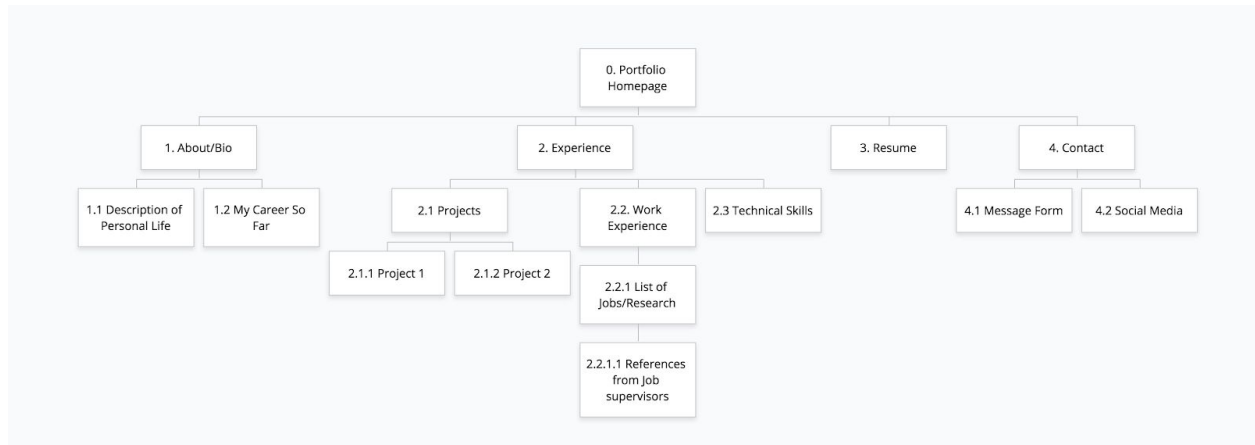
Understanding the titles

Two of the users had trouble differentiating the "Summary of Work Experience and Projects" card and "List of previous/current job" cards. They seem to have similar connotations and thus all users put them together in their Experience section. However the "Summary of Work Experience and Projects" should be in the About section since it is a brief overview of what I have done and where I am at my career. Therefore I believe that renaming said card to "My Career So Far" will help users see that this section is very brief and does not contain any detail about my actual experience. Keeping this card in the About section will help give users more context about myself.
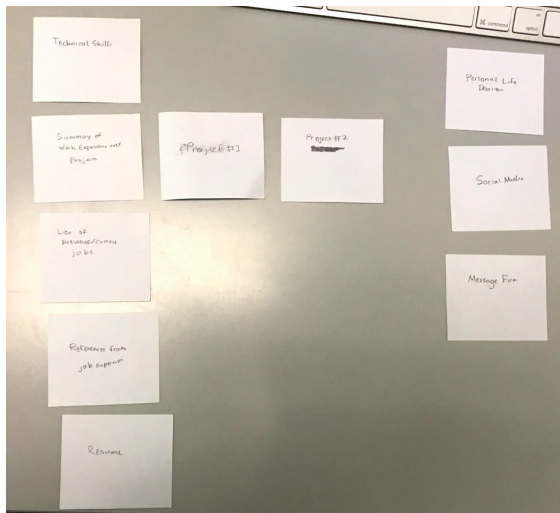
Suggestions

One of the main suggestions was not to keep the "Technical Skills" card in the About Section since technical recruiters would want this information to be grouped with information about my work and project experience. However, I should also keep it separate from them and keep it general since the project and work experience pages will go into detail about specific technical skills used.

Below I constructed a new sitemap based on the findings from these card sorts and the analysis I made from how users categorized the information and what there suggestions were.
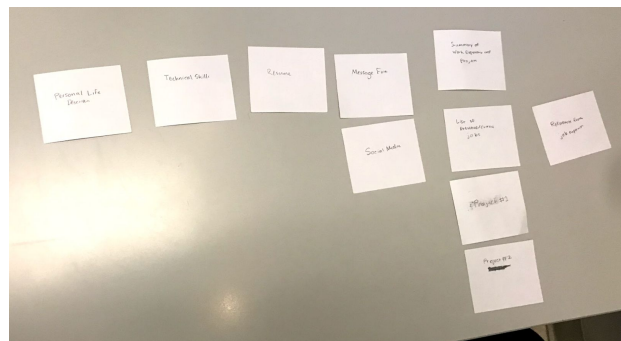

Appendix

User #1 Card Sort

User # 2 Card Sort

User #3 Card Sort