**Required Reading Reflections**

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1.Human Computer Interaction - brief intro - John M. Carroll

His article provides a brief history of HCI and explain what HCI is. Simply put, the focus of HCI was and is pursuit of usability. However, the meaning of the word, usability changed over time. At the outset of this field, usability mainly meant quality in terms of productivity - whether it’s easy to use or not. Now, the world also encompasses enjoyment and even aesthetic meaning. Moreover, this field is not a mere branch of computer science. Rather, it expanded into a number of other fields of study such as cognitive science and engineering.

Personally, I feel computers are still not user-friendly and somewhat boring to use even though computers have become much easier to interact with in comparison to those used before 1970s, which only experts could handle. I consider the designs with which users don’t have to experience irrational and unconventional behaviours as a minimum requirement all web developers must meet. I’m convinced that the design for productivity is not enough anymore. Computers should be naturally interactive enough to be integrated into our daily lives, not only desktops and laptops. I don’t like to feel that I’m using “computers” when I use computers. I think this is where HCI comes into play. When it comes to this definition of usability rather than easy-to-use quality, I think Apple is one of the companies which has succeeded at it very well. Apple has paid attention to not only productivity, but also authentic designs. In addition, Apple has kept creating new forms of computers beyond desktop computers - tablets, mobile phones, and now wearable computers. According to the article, the trend of CHI has moved from individually design to collective organization, in other words, social and ubiquitous computing. Apple seems to has a quite good grasp on this trend. As a matter of fact, I took interests in HCI in the first place because Apple products made me realize computers have potential to be more than traditional computers designed only for productive tools.

This article also mentions that HCI is more of abstract like world history rather than physics. HCI is about understanding people’s needs, which varies with time and dependent on current platforms in use. what HCI deals with is a co-evolving dynamic system unlike unchanging laws of physics. Thus, this field has expanded from just a design discipline, and undertaken a role of exploring the methodology for evaluating human interactions with machines. However, this article is somewhat a summary of the field, and thus provide few examples. So, I’d like to explore more about HCI through upcoming lectures and study.

2. Personas - Lene Nielsen

Persona seems to be still an ambiguous term to me. This article states that it doesn’t have a definitive definition even though it has existed since the late 1990s. However, according to the article, it’s descriptions of fictitious person in a simple term. The key role of Persona is to provide designers with characteristics of potential users for new services they try to develop. There are basically four different principles behind this method: goal-directed, role-based, engaging, and fiction-based perspective.

Admittedly, it is useful for developments of services and products since this method allows the engineers and designers to have a clear picture for the potential customers and it gives the development process workflows to some extent. However, I think this method is not reliable enough. As this article mentioned, this method can’t ensure that it produces the same result. Moreover, some of critics stems from the existence of fictitious elements in this method. I think including fictitious elements itself isn’t the problem. Instead, it is those vague methodologies to bring fictitious elements in Persona such as meetings and even brainstorming. In addition, I suspect some of the perspectives can be inefficient. For example, the fiction-based perspective might introduce an inconsistent design to their services since the personas are not data-driven; rather, it’s mainly based on designer’s experiences and intuitions assuming they completely understand their users. It can have even an adverse effect if you are not careful. For example, a company called Palm confidently launched a device named Palm Phone, which was small enough to fit in your one hand based on the assumption that smartphones these days were becoming so large that they are uncomfortable to carry, but as opposed to the company’s hope It ended as a big failure [1].

Of all four perspective, the role-based perspective seems to be the most reasonable in that it also provides quantitative data, which makes understanding the hypothesized customers easier for designers, and it enables the designers to run a variety of existing quantitative measurements. Also, the engaging perspective can be valid approach to avoid a stereotype although it seems to take designers’ times since designers actively involve themselves in the lives of the personas.

Reference:

Palm Phone – somethings should not be resurrected : <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardwindsoreurope/2018/11/07/palm-phone-some-things-should-not-be-resurrected/#53079a336ed7>

3. Scenarios: The Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction -

The word, scenario was used several times already in the previous articles, and I was not clear about it. But after I read this article, I think I finally understood the meaning and the use of scenario in the IT development. Simply put, Scenarios are stories that include personas to provide user’s points of views toward IT systems or their struggles and opinions on them. Persona is responsible for the static aspects of the character, but scenarios are responsible for the persona’s social interactions and his aspects in a continuous environment. Since there are different styles of making scenarios it seemed ambiguous first. However, it has a certain flow and structure shared in most of scenarios. One of the scenario rules is that a first person’s narrator should be avoided unless you are a good writer, so I’ll avoid this type of voice.

As a question toward the use of scenario, the first thing that came into my mind about scenario was making scenario itself helps IT developers come up with design and functionalities rather than farming this process out to other persons. It seems redundant to me if the developers of the product and the persons who make the scenarios are not the same persons since you device some functionalities to make up scenarios, so why can’t you just tell the functionalities you thought of in the process of making scenario to developers as they are instead of weaving them into a story? So I’m still not perfectly convinced about the importance and role of scenario if scenarios are made up by other people, not developers themselves.

4. RATIONALE: THE ARGUMENT BEHIND THE ARTIFACT - Allan MacLean, Richard M. Young and Thomas P. Moran

Rationale gives alternative options for designs and reasons for why what’s good and what’s bad, so rationale provides criteria that the developers can refer to when they design interfaces of products. I think the representation of design rationale is of importance because it will change how rationale helps designers. For example, if the representation is quite restrictive and formalized, designers don’t have many spaces to provide their ideas and perspective in. On the other hand, if it’s more abstract, designers can be more flexible in design. This article explores a semi-formal way based on the aim of the rationale as being aid for designers. I agree that the representation of design rationale is written in semi-formal notation (, which uses natural language along with graphs and mathematical expressions etc) if the objective of it is being aids for designers. Nevertheless, I thought if rationale is used as minimum requirement for the design and the representation is stricter written in formal notation, the designer can get clearer vision toward their final artefact. I don’t give much thoughts on how to create such a representation, but I think if rationale just tells the designers what must be done or not, with a simpler representation without lengthy descriptions written in natural languages, designers will be clear on what to do and not to do, and as a result, design process can be much effective.

The thing I’m not content with about the article is that designers still can’t have a convincing reason for their design decision. Assuming that designers decided to go for Appearing Scroll Bar for their design, criteria presented in a way the article suggested don’t give a decisive reason because by choosing Permanent Scroll Bar, designers also can say “we got more advantages compared to appearing scroll bar according to Figure4”. Admittedly the presentation presented on the article might organize idea a little, but I felt it didn’t have effects as much as it’s worth doing.

5. Accessibility: Usability for all – Mads Soegaard

We’re all disabled in a way. I didn’t think like that before I read this article, but now I agree with it. Difficulties don’t have to be inherent, rather it could be temporary like the driving situation in the article. In my case, I sometimes have troubles because of the language and the cultural difference from my home country. And also, Newcastle university module system is totally different from my home institute, so I didn’t know what I was supposed to do in practices first. I just followed other students from the lecture room and sat on one of desks in a seminar room, but I had no idea what to do while all other students seem to do something without being told nothing. I could be considered to be disabled at the time according to this article, and I don’t think this university didn’t provide proper instructions I could follow for that (it’s not IT system though.)

Luckily this time, they have some standards we can follow as web designers such as ARIA. If there is a standard, we can judge whether it is correct or not based on it. Among the tips for accessibility, I found a couple of them really interesting. For instance, websites should not have instructions using colours. It didn’t occur to me before, but if I think about it, it’s true that I’ve never seen instructions based on colours. However, when it comes to popups, auto-play videos, there are lots of websites which work in unwanted fashions.

6. Effective Video Examples of Paper prototyping -

1. Paper Prototype Animation

I chose this one since the workflow was the easiest to understand with this prototype of all. This prototype demonstrates what happens if users do something wrong, so it tells how the websites behave according to users’ inputs. And it also shows the order of the process by using a mouse pointer and writing down letters in the papers step by step. Instructions with voices is also helpful to understand what’s going on.

1. Paper Gmail Art

Admittedly, it doesn’t seem to be a prototype for usability, and it would be super inefficient if it were since no one can afford to make this effort for every prototype. However, this prototype does have an effect as promoting potential users to use Gmail. It makes Gmail look good and trustworthy, and also this prototype lets people think using Gmail is cool or this kind of way. this prototype works as more of adverts rather than usability test. Even as a prototype for usability, I think it works quite well. It explains functionalities of Gmail in a simple way and response for users’ actions. It also shows how it looks like in mobile devices at the end a little bit.

The 4 questions to ask in a cognitive walkthrough – David Travis

This article is about **walkthrough**, which is a way to evaluate the design of interface. With this method, designers can get people’s first impression to their design. The method is quite simple and totally straightforward. First, the designers create **the happy path**, which is just a list of instructions so that the evaluator can follow them and navigate through the interface. I really liked this method. Since it doesn’t take much time, and what to be done is totally clear. When we evaluated websites in the practical, we first didn’t know what to do as an evaluator since there are no guideline whatsoever.

The 4 questions are also pretty simple. I am now halfway on my prototype for coursework2, but fortunately, I always asked myself the first question in the article so far. When I’d like to use icon, I double check if this icon is self-explanatory or not. And this method seems suited for getting concise feedbacks from users. So, after I finish my prototype, I will try to do this by myself, and also if I had a chance, I’ll ask others do this for my prototype.

As I repeated this before, this method appears to be so simple that it doesn’t even take more than 30 minutes; however, there are lots of products like the laptop and the car park machine on the article, which are totally confusing. For another example from my accommodation, my kitchen has 4 stoves and arranged in two on top and the others on bottom. However, the switches for them are arranged in a line, which has already caused me to turn on a wrong switch more than 3 times. There was one time I thought I turn it off, but mistakenly turn on another one too, and left it for about 15 minutes until other flatmate took notice of it. I don’t know why such irrational designs are all over the place. If the company had spent only 30 minutes doing this walkthrough method, they must have easily noticed the design were confusing. Also, I’d like to say the doors in the USB building are annoying. For instance, one of the doors on the practical room on the 3rd floor has door levers. To rational persons, those levers suggest we should pull it toward us, but it doesn’t work that way from inside. I had a few awkward moments because of it.

Interaction Deign Gone Wild: Striving for Wild Theory - Yvonne Rogers

The author first mentioned that the theories created in the lab can’t be applied precisely to human interactions with computers in the real world. After admitting the fact that theorizing interaction designs definitively is not possible, she proposes ways to have theories in an applied field like HCI. She provides us with three possible approaches: importing existing theories related to human behaviours into HCI, analysing potentials of research framing and the sort of stuff that has been proposed in HCI, and creating a new theory based on findings for in-the-wild studies. All the suggested theories here are written briefly, so it was really hard to fully understand how each works in HCI precisely. As to Developing Wild Theory, which the author has just started to work on.

However, some of possible ideas were interesting. For instance, McCarthy and Wright’s Technology as Experience idea sheds a light on HCI from a new perspective in that it tries to take internal monologue into account too. I’ve never considered that when we evaluate those websites from practical 8 and peer evaluation. Although it’s quite interesting idea, I wondered how we managed to do it. In one way, we can just take a record of what we think about while we interact with the design. However, I think the pressure that we have to utter what we’ll think affects what we’ll think itself heavily because just thinking and saying them out loud are totally different.