User Experience Report - The Virtual Open Day

Aditya Vashist - Bruce Miller - Nick De Villiers - Preslav Chonev - The Fifth Team

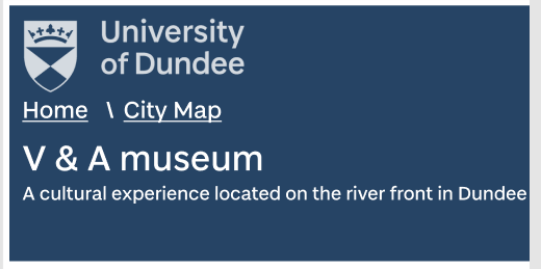
Introduction

Our application is an interactive prototype of a virtual tour designed to give information about the university to prospective students in an intuitive and easy to use mobile application. We made it because prospective students who aren't able to tour the university in person (mostly due to the restrictions imposed to combat COVID-19) need a way to discover the different parts of the university and the key landmarks of the city remotely. In this report we are going to talk about the design process of our prototype and the ways in which we used the principles of atomic design to create an expandable base on which this application could be further developed in the future.

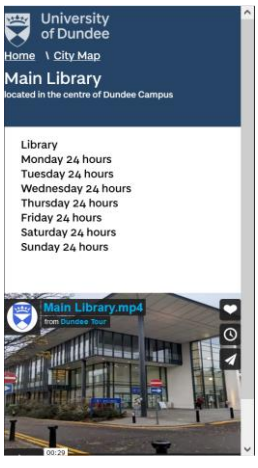
Page template

Header

The header is really the key organism of our page template. The aim of the header is to be functional, informative, and to reinforce the university branding to ensure our application remains recognisable.



The two main molecules inside of this are the large University of Dundee logo and name (each of these being atoms), and the breadcrumb (composed of links). The breadcrumb is a key part of ensuring the ease of use of the application, since it shows the user the steps they took to get to this page so that they can navigate backwards if they need to. The large page title ensures that the user knows exactly what the content of the page pertains to, and the subtitle gives a concise description of the content.



Locations and videos

Video player

The video player is one of the key features of our app - including videos to describe the locations to the user as well as giving a clear visual of that location helps them to understand more about the place itself, rather than just showing them a lot of information.

The player itself was built using the Anima extension for Figma, which allowed us to embed videos uploaded to Vimeo and play them back in our prototype. All of the videos were kept underneath 30 seconds, which is to accommodate the typically short attention span of older teenagers, as well as being accessible for users who may suffer from learning disabilities such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder.

Text subsection

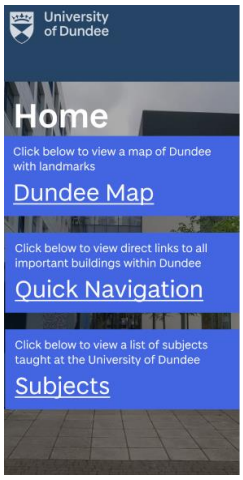
Some supplementary information is provided in the form of a text box above the video. This information contains things such as opening hours and can be tailored to provide information about any location.

Map page

Map

The map is another one of the highlight organisms of our application. It is fully interactive and can be moved around, with various buttons known as hot-points that can bring up information about key landmarks in the university and the city of Dundee.

The information is presented in the form of an overlay, which has a button to take the user to the relevant information page on that landmark, where they can watch one of the aforementioned videos. Each of the buttons and overlays makes use of the primary branding colours of the University, which keeps the prototype within the university branding and styling.



Home page

This is our home page. As you can see we decided as a team that we should use the University colours and fonts throughout the whole of the product/ service. As you can see with the image on the home page, we had decided to use the Baxter font for all of our texts and we used the main blue and white to represent it as a university feature. By using this all throughout our application it makes it in a way familiar and reliable to students that would be using it.

The reason we decided to use the Baxter font was because we wanted to make sure it linked directly to the university style and by having the same font as the university style it gives our end product a modern look to it. Additionally, we wanted to have the same branding as the university in our final product because we want to also make a memorable impression on the students and parents that may visit the university in person or visit virtually.

Also the reason we wanted to stick closely to the university branding is because it can attract the people using the app and can be easily recognizable. Also by having the branding it is able to bring a certain personality to our final product/ service.

Additionally, as you can see we made sure to use the same colour branding as the university's branding too. This is because we wanted to make sure the first impressions are memorable for the future students. Also by using the university branding we were able to see what works and what does not.

As you can see we decided to use the main blue and white throughout the prototype too as we wanted to have an application that was related to the university so by having the colour it matched the university style. Also by using these same colours we wanted to make it so the first impressions of the students would be positive and they would be able to have a good image when deciding their final university and some students may just remember the colors from their visit to the university so by having the blue and white it can help them associate that these two colours refer to the University of Dundee.

Methodology

An initial prototype was developed using hand-drawn sketches and Figma, this was to test the functionality of the program and determine what limits we would find, at this stage we used hotspots and wireframes making use of Figma's prototyping tools and creating both click to navigate and click to open overlay, these were implemented to help develop an understanding of the navigation and flow that the users would experience when using the prototype.

The second stage was to start developing design patterns, as the prototype is designed to be part of the university's online presence we had to centre our patterns around the university fonts, brands and colour schemes. After installing the required fonts onto our machines, Figma's font system automatically detected them, allowing us to use the correct university font in our prototype.

The third stage was to develop the prototype itself using the hotspots and wire frames, as well as this we imported a map of Dundee into the map page of the prototype. Once the user journey had been established we then set about providing the media content presented for each of the locations around Dundee. These were made by taking photos of the various locations highlighted in the application as well as using certain images that had been made publicly available, for the locations that were closed. These images were then imported into video editing software to compile the video aspect of each of the videos. After a narrative was recorded the videos were formatted and uploaded to Vimeo for streaming purposes.

A separate channel was also created within the Vimeo platform so that all of the relevant on screen content related directly to the product. The next stage was to check the functionality of the video pages to do this the 'Anima' extension for Figma was installed, this allowed the video streaming aspect of the product to be tested.

Conclusion

Overall this project went smoothly, although at this stage certain limitations of the software became apparent, which included the inability for Anima to display overlays (Anima caused extreme close-ups of the overlays whose size in pixels had been determined) as well as the ability to link desktop size sketches with mobile size sketches using Anima's responsive tool. (This was also unsuccessful as Anima seemed to have trouble recognising browser dimensions as well as which slides were relevant to which view) the result of this led to the prototype being limited to a mobile app for standard smartphone screens.

However, despite these issues, we believe that we've managed to put together a comprehensive prototype that shows potential for what this application could be. We're particularly proud of the interactive map, since this engages the user in the experience of using this application, as well as the videos, since this provides information to the user in a more engaging format than just reading text on a white background.

Given the opportunity to do this again, based on the troubles we had with Anima, we might look for a different method of including videos in our project. They are a key feature that we wouldn't want to get rid of, so a more stable and/or lightweight implementation of video embedding would have greatly benefited our process. As well as this, developing our videos into fuller video clips with real footage of locations around the university and city.

Finally, we would endeavour to add more locations - since this is very much a prototype, this isn't critical, but we feel that having a lot more locations would make the experience a lot more cohesive, and greatly improve the amount of information available to the users. Further development of the video pages could include adjusting the on screen text to be updateable allowing for location information to be updated depending on current events such as changes to opening hours and information about live events.

Appendices

- Appendix A: University of Dundee Pattern Library
- Appendix B: University of Dundee Fonts
- Appendix C: Link To Video Demonstration