FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS E TECNOLOGIA
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Human-Computer Interaction
Assignment 1: Good and Bad Design

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Good Design

Discord

Discord is an application whose focus is communication between people. It serves as a platform where communities and groups can be created for numerous reasons (i.e. a group of friends or a community around a certain product or person of interest). These groups are called *servers*. Discord was founded on being gaming focused but lately it has received a shift towards a more general use to appeal to everyone instead of just a portion of the population.

Discord being a chat focused application, its interface should make communicating as easy and intuitive to the user as possible. The image below shows the initial discord screen. It shows who is online and, if they have it enabled, what each person is doing and the standard status (if they are available, away or busy). It's simple and it does what it's designed to do.
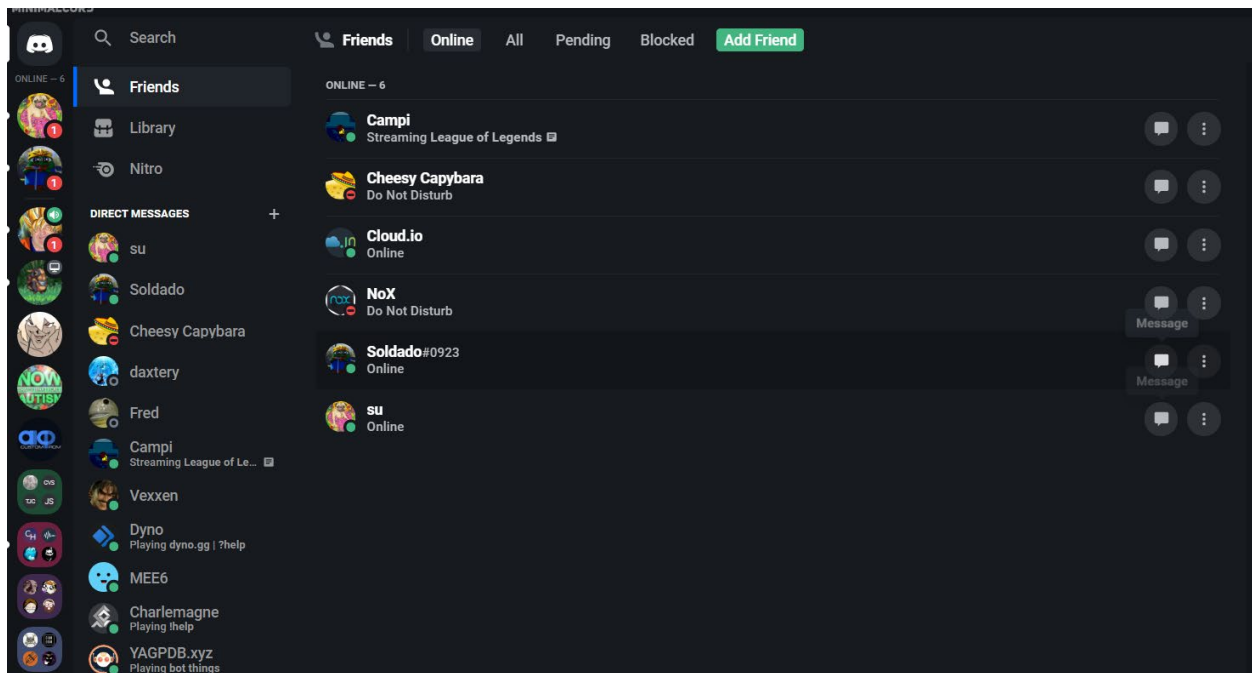

Figure 1- Discord home screen

Of course, as any application, it has it's positives and negatives (some things are a bit more complex than it should) in terms of interface but since it's a chat program I'm going to focus on an aspect that it excels at and it saves a lot of trouble for a lot of people, and that's the sidebar on the left.

The sidebar has seen some tweaks and modifications through the years discord has existed, but they maintained the core of it (assumedly not only because it works, but not to alienate the users with an abrupt change). This sidebar never leaves the left side as it works as the way to navigate through the different chats.

At the top it shows the discord symbol which helps navigate to the home screen and how many friends are online.

Normally, the sidebar does only show the servers but if the user receives a direct message from a friend, his picture will automatically appear at the top of the server listing as it is shown in the blue parenthesis followed by a little number representing how many texts the user has received.

The orange brackets show the different servers the user has joined. This is where discord excels at. The first 2 servers have a little white dot on the right of then symbolizing that, in the group, there are messages that he/she has not read yet. On the top one it shows a red circle with the number 2. This shows the user there are 2 messages in the group that are directed to him/her. It incredibly facilitates the need of having to scroll through all the group messages to see if any message was directed to the user.

The red brackets show that the user can create folders to agglomerate certain servers per his choice of category (i.e. classes). These folders show the same dot and red number to show the user it has new messages.

The bottom and final group are two functionalities of discord. Top plus symbol is for creating a new server and the bottom compass allows the user to search different public servers in case they desire to follow a community they see themselves inserted.
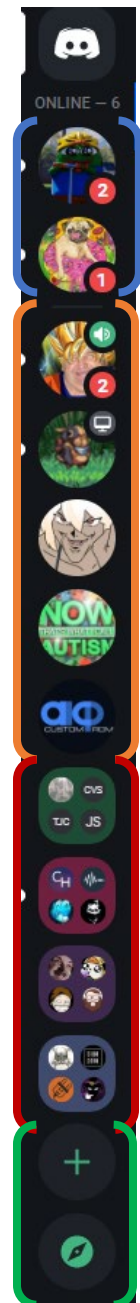

Figure 2 - Discord Sidebar

Bad Design

Land Rover Discovery TD5 Window Control

While driving a car it is not easy (and not recommended) to pay attention to anything other than the road and so everything in a car in terms of its functionalities should be intuitively easy to be done subconsciously such as turning a window up or down.

The Land Rover Discovery TD5 features its window control panel next to the handbrake on a back panel as shown below. This already makes it a bit difficult to click on the buttons as the wrist as to bend down more than it should and depending on the size of the hands of the user, it would be another problem itself.

Figure 3 - Inside of the car

Not only that but what makes users (such as me) commit a mistake repeatedly is which button is associated to which window. As seen in previous image and this next one, the panel is in a downward slope, with the base more forward than the top.

Let's create a case here: the user is the driver and he/she wants to lower his window; by the shape of the panel and analyzing the picture below, one would assume the user would click the button with the blue circle around it as it's in the forward left position. Doing this would make the window behind the user lower instead of his own.
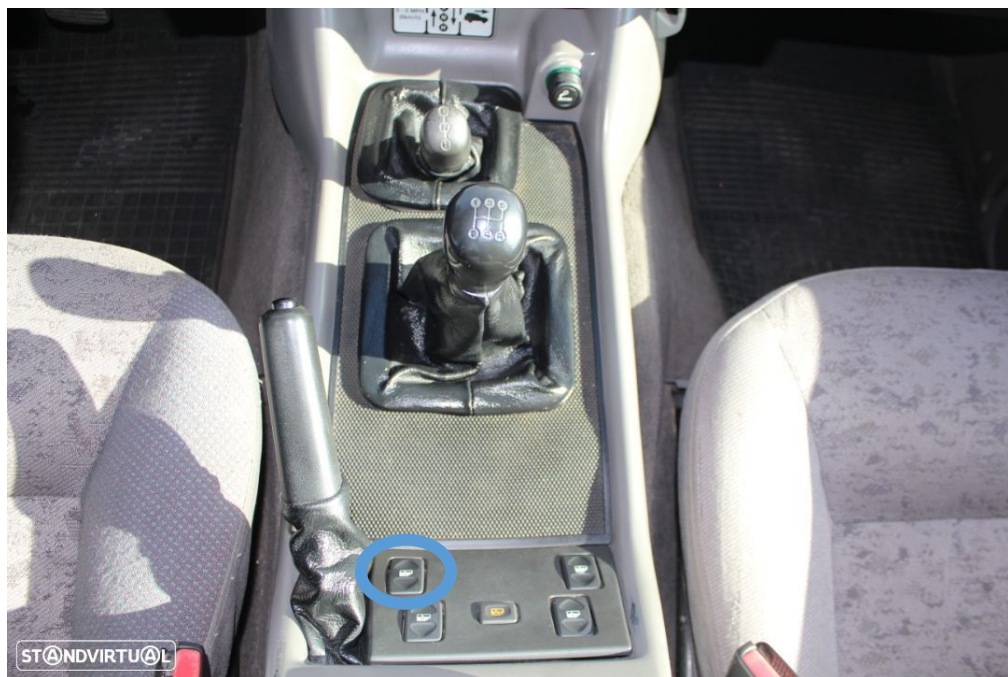
Figure 4 - Control Panel

The blue circled button and the one to the right of it control that back windows, while the other ones control the front windows.

To fix this issue I would simply invert the panel or, what would be an even better solution as it would remove the variable of depending on the size of the user's hand, remove it from this back panel under the arm rest and put in the front panel somewhere.