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Design Log 2

New Technical Skills

This quarter, working with plain-text and Markdown are new technical skills, but are coming to me fairly easily. In my mind, it's like working in a barebones inconvenient word processor. However, as I learn the ropes, it's becoming equatable/ simpler, since there's no formatting, dialogue boxes, or special options that are 7-confusing-clicks away. For example, I just discovered word-wrapping in this design log. Before, I was manually ending each sentence trying to keep imaginary margins. However, I have effectively lost indentation in doing so; it's a process. Markdown comes up in my mind every now and then, like when I think of bullet points, bolding, headers, but not often I admit. I'm sure there's more to it than what the cheatsheet tells. I understand that Markdown is a type of "formatting" for plain-text. I've mildly heard of Markdown editors that translate it like a Word Processor, but to my understanding it's only for human-reading emphasis, right? It's usage doesn't make the most sense to me to be honest. Aside from that, everything is swell.

Assigned Readings

Jackie's OS

Jackie's OS is statement of "what could've been" based on values Jackie Liu wished she got to have growing up. It is largely reflective, a "reimagining" of her childhood computer, following an "alternate timeline", where she could enjoy herself in her relationship to technology, instead of pursuing hegemonic values. The project challenges stereotypical instilled values like academic success, job prestige, hard work-ethic, etc. This is especially apparent in her exclusion of multi-tasking. Operating on a fullscreen GUI, Jackie's OS combats the traditional relationship of technology and productivity. It is also set in a bedroom, a personal space of peace and rest, unlike what technology is traditionally used for. Jackie's OS redefines universal values/ principles that are designed around. For example, Windows comes blank slate ready for program installation, multi-tasking, file-management, and more productivity related tasks. From pictures to websites to postcards, Jackie's OS translates the hegemonic roots of technology to a more personal, intimate format where it is utilized as a rest stop to slow down and appreciate. Jackie's OS is a, "starting point to help democratize creative and critical engagement in technology." It inspires questioning of technologies' standards, purpose, and rigidity thereof. Overall, it is a nostalgic reimagination of technology with reconsidered, humanistic purpose.

In the context of my own project, Jackie's OS has inspired me to think deeper about myself and my past, what was particularly influential? What systems could be drastically improved if we only stopped to question it, as Jackie questioned the productive nature of tech. I think I'm going to reconsider my initial redesign of social media while I think more about what I'm passionate about changing as it relates to my character.

HyperLit

HyperLit is a program or website that motivates users to read daily with game-like incentive. I interpret it as a commentary on the modern lives of 21st century people that are so busy and stimulated all the time, as it refers to "habits generated in the digital economy". It strives to promote a "social reading environment", I interpret as reintegrating reading as an integral part of users' lives, as it once was. Unfortunately, I really didn't understand HyperLit or get a firm grasp on what it aimed to do. It was very vague to me.

In relation to my own project, it reminds me to focus on a specific type of observable flaw, especially in society, to present a solution for.

Ultimately, the guidelines to what it ****should**** be.

Introduction to Design Thinking: School Lunch Redesign

For the Design Thinking Workshop, I asked my mom. (on a whim) to volunteer as my partner. Though someone my age would be much more insightful with a plethora of issues to target, I couldn't find the time elsewhere with friends my age. I began by charting out my own experiences with school lunch. I'd feel good that I was being dismissed to lunch. I'd either choose to buy lunch or wait until I got home to eat depending on the options. Maybe I'd go outside and bask in the sun with friends if it was a particularly nice day. Otherwise I might spend time avoiding the chatty cafeteria in the writing center, left to my own devices.

Interview

I began by interviewing with simple questions like, what do you like about school lunch? My mom recalled her time in high school for this activity. She appreciated the diverse options that made school lunch worth having. This included hamburgers, with quality meat and wheat bread, a salad bar that offered, "fruit salad, chocolate milk, chicken sandwiches, cheeseburgers," and, well, salad of course. "Good enough to where teenagers wanted to eat it," She said. The school also had a snack bar that sold "imported" food like Taco Bell burritos. Most of all, an open campus that allowed students to freely come and go to traverse town where local restaurants, fast-food chains, and more were all within walking distance. In comparison to my own experience, she proudly said "It was the 90's, they never ran out of food." Because somehow, public schools today can't even keep what little options they do have in-stock to supply all three lunches of the day. In the end, somebody's gotta settle for a half-frozen turkey wrap. When prompted about dislikes or issues, however, she couldn't name any. So I asked about the various honorable mentions searching for potential flaws to dissect. She explained that the salad bar could use some warmers to prevent fries from getting hard and cold, but that was too surface-level. Unfortunately, the 90's was just that perfect.

Framing the problem

My mom's goals and wishes were essential and honestly irrelevant. To eat, socialize, and get to and from school if heading out for lunch. But none of that was a particularly good candidate for redesigning. I was all about ready to give up and was imagining how I'd end the log. It wasn't until I got to insights that I realized, the food she mentioned and retold stories involving which all sounded appealing, but every meal item was similar. It was mostly junk food. Burgers, burritos, french fries, etc. Though healthier options like the salad bar were present, it was told to be a stagnant, unrotated likely neglected area, compared to the various junk food options in constant rotation. Could the schools' foods have formed poor eating habits in students early on by making it their norm? So there I had my Point of View. Alice, (my mom) / students in general, need a means of healthier food choices in school because the school favors typical "junk" and make healthier options less appealing.

Ideation

Now it was time to conceptualize. Here's how I framed it: "Predominant junk food choices at school lunch cafeteria outweigh healthier ones to students". Though ideation is meant to go beyond the obvious and drive innovation, I could only think of the obvious. I sketched out little doodle solutions which were:

1. Nutritional infographics strategically placed where students choose what to eat.
2. Expand upon existing fresh food options. (like new salad bar additions, fresh dishes, diverse salad dressings, etc.)
3. Stress nutritional education to students. (whether in health class or assemblies with a guest speaker)
4. Upcharge junk foods while offering fresh foods for cheaper.

I didn't have a 5th option, as I was already overinvested in time and couldn't imagine a genuinely beneficial one. I share'd these with my partner and she was on board with the poster idea, informing students through education, expanding healthier options, and that they should be more accessible than junk food. She proposed that since Friday's were already hype marking the end of the school week, Monday could be a day a day with loose restrictions on junk food. Giving students the freedom to choose indulgence, like its affordability or availability, effectively incentivizing the beginning of the school week, as well as school dining. That is to say, should healthier options be prioritized already.

Iteration

My full solution mock-up:

- Nutritional infographic posters in cafeteria
- Emphasizing long-term physiological effects of junk/ processed foods
 - in health class, or assemblies with guest speaker
- Make fresh and healthy foods more accessible
 - More options with variety
 - Cheaper than junk food alternatives
- Make Mondays great again
 - let students decide between either junk or fresh on Mondays;

lighter "push" for health

Prototyping

To build and test a solution, I didn't know how to physically represent any solutions to interact with. So, I went online and selected three nutritional infographics that looked relevant to a cafeteria. I displayed these options to my partner and asked for input. Of the three, one was a food pyramid which was recieved negatively, as it is an outdated and ill-informed concept that still circulates today. With that out of the way, a good poster seems to be composed of appealing graphics with captivating colors, and easy to read & understand info. My partner pointed out that posters are quite insignificant to teens, as they are easy to subconsciously percieve and tune-out; not being put into action. So, perhaps another medium? Another approach she suggested was to utilize aggressive posters such as a display of a fit, in-shape person with a fresh and healthy meal, whereas beside them would be a disorderly person with diseases like cancer, diabetes, obesity, Rx bottles, with fast food, all imagery to illustrate the long-term effects of nutrition choices.

Reflection

Two prototypes I would try next:

- Designing "aggressively"-captivating posters relevant to nutrition that would genuinely be well-recieved among the youth
- Convincing lectures on nutrition (backed by long-term studies & testimonies) that equip students with the knowledge to have a healthy conscience when it comes to food.

Our interaction, fueled by discussion, made me realize the issue was hardly about increasing the healthier options, it was more-so in the fact that teens prefer junk food, a matter of personal decision-making. With that in mind, I developed a new Point of View: Students overall need a way to positively reinforce healthy decision-making because healthy foods are available, yet students prefer consumption of junk food regardless.