

USER INTERFACES

Practice 3: Prototyping Craigslist from common design.



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1. Introduction:

This forth practical assignment is based on the analysis and redesign phases of a given web-page. To fulfill this tasks, we had to take the design made in the previous practice and merge it with the design made by other groups of the class.

The practice is divided in 4 main blocks: the analysis of errors and inconsistencies of the given web-page, its redesign following the patterns and heuristics established by Nielsen, and finally the design proposed by us (with photos and explanations of the interactions).

The final block consists of talking with the other group and considering what elements of both redesigns shall we add to the final prototype, and see how are we going to make the redesign and implementation of the new page.

In this report we are going to discuss all the flaws of the initial web-page, how are we going to solve that and the final design presented with images and some explanation of what are we considering.

2. Analysis:

First of all, we have to analyze the page we're going to redesign, which is going to be *craigslist.com* as we mentioned before. We start by reaching to the main page of the website and experience it as we are normal users using an ad search engine.

When we do so, we feel by first hand what the problems and inconsistencies of the website are, which are quite many. We are going to discuss them in this section, one by one, commenting then and proposing a solution.

- **Site Genre (pattern A):** It is nowhere stated what is the type of page we are visiting. We kind of guess that we are in an E-Commerce Website, but we cannot be sure until we arrive to some ad and make an arrangement or purchase with any of the publishers. Which is no good at all. Regarding this problem, we strongly recommend using a design that clarifies that this is an ad-based website, and make the search engine easier to see and use.

Also, *Craigslist.com* offers a forum site where users can discuss various topics, share ideas, thoughts and offers, having the attributes of a community site, but clearly not being one of them due to the porpuse of the web-page.

- **User Exploration Level (pattern B):** The first thing we notice is that the information is not clearly organized within the page, it is rather displayed without any kind of organization. Given that, we propose the use of a hierarchical organization to use, so that the information that the user sees is clearly stated.

- **First Impression (pattern C):** Another problem we encounter is that the homepage of *Craigslist.com* is not strong enough to provide the user a need to keep exploring it. It lacks diversity of elements, differentiation between them and a clear display of information. All of it is thrown at the user at the same time, making it feel exhausted and overwhelmed. Due to this, we propose a creation of a simpler homepage, in order for the user to feel less threatened and more willing to search through the website. In this case, also, the information is displayed in zones where the user's eye never reaches, which results in loss of information.
- **Well-informed users (patterns D and H):** We have to keep the user informed of what's going on, and *craigslist.com* does not accomplish that very well, because all the information is thrown at the user as a rock, which makes it feel threatened and uncomfortable. That's why we propose an implementation of category pages, which makes the page look simpler and less aggressive, improving the searchability of the user throughout the website.

We added headlines to the website, making the information of the page change according to where the user is located, to make him feel more comfortable and more predisposed to keep searching through the page.

- **Searchability (pattern J):** When searching through the page, the user has to focus on the elements it encounters, because not all the pages are structured the same, even if they should belong to the same archetype of content (see 2 subcategories inside a big category), making the user feel exhausted because it has to memorize all different kind of styles, and slowing his activity in the page, which is no good for us. In order to solve this, we arrange all the different information archetypes in the same way, making the user's eye get comfortable within the page and feel welcomed instead of confused.
- **Building Trust and Credibility (pattern E):** In the case of site branding, brand image and color is consistent through all the website in order to deliver a correct perception to the target market. When talking about e-mail subscription, customers can be subscribed to a weekly newsletter with important ads for them. However, this option is switched off by default to deliver a non-aggressive experience to the user. Also, ads posted by the user and ads where the user has shown interest can be sent to the clients' email.

In the case of fair information practices, privacy policy and about us, there is a link for each category in the footer of the website, including any legal information and consideration for the client to feel secure in the website. Those links are clearly visible and reachable, creating a feel of security and well-information. Https is suggested to be taken into account when defining network connections, both to ensure the security of the accounts and for the users to feel safe and protected, which covers the topic of secure connections.

- **Error Prevention (pattern K / heuristic):** When the user fails in doing some task, there is no easy job in returning to a previous phase where the error is no more. The user has to terminate all processes he's into and start them again in order to prevent those errors. That's why we create a navigable "menu" in form of text above the content of each page, telling us where are we, being able to click on it to return to other pages.
- **User Guidance (patterns K and H):** There's also no way of helping the user obtain the information he wants, so what we propose is a structural organization, based on a hierarchy, which helps the user with the surfing of the webpage, along with searching autocompleting, that allows him to make quicker and more useful searches.
- **Recognition rather than recall (heuristic):** When searching through the page, the user struggles to do so because of all the elements that bombard them with different meanings and information. He is not able to traverse through the pages smoothly, because he cannot recognize all the elements it is presented. That's why we have thought of a more simplest way of arranging elements, all labeled with their corresponding symbols according to general standards.
- **Contrast (heuristic):** In *craigslist.com* there is a high contrast between the white color of the background and the intense blue used for typing, which provokes ocular pain and exhaustion, resulting in the user spending less time searching through our page, which does not benefit either us or the ad publishers. In order to solve this problem, we simply have to substitute that aggressive blue with a more neutral gray tone, which will decrease eye damage and increase surfability time.

3. Redesign:

Taking into account all the inconsistencies and errors previously mentioned, our redesign phase was divided in several parts:

- **Functionalities:** there are 2 basic functionalities that we have introduced to the web-page ads: *Report* and *Favorite*. Report helps the domain to maintain a clean list of ads without having any spam or repeated posts, and favorite helps people who have a Craigslist account to keep track of their favorite offers and advertisement.

Additionally, there are some duplicated functionalities that we have been placed together: all the options which are placed at the left side of the page, such as "About", "Terms of use", "Privacy" would be summarize and placed in a footer, to avoid occupying part of the page, where other functionalities could be placed. There are also some broken links that should be removed (Ex: "Craigslist TV").

We have implemented also the ability to sort the advertisements of a given subcategory using the functionality called *Sort By*, which asks the user which way to sort the ads, and then sorts them, helping the user navigate through the page.

- **Reorganization of menus:** The way users navigate through Craigslist is very uncomfortable, given that there are plenty of submenus to search through and there is not a clear sequence of steps until someone can contact a person who post an advertisement: in some categories there are 3 middle pages to traverse, in other, because of the change in the hierarchical structure, there are only 2. We are globalizing that fact by making all the transitions have the same number of steps, in which way the user can recognize a path before executing it.

There should be a more clear way to navigate through the web-page, giving the user the global view of the page and letting him change from one group of ads to other without going back to the main page. For achieving that, we propose a **menu section in the left part** which all the possible categories of ads. Once one of those is pressed, a submenu emerged, giving the user the possibility of consider all the subcategories of the chosen category, reducing the number of steps he has to take in order to get to his goal location in our website.

- **Consistency:** Web pages should keep a consistency style between their different pages and navigation flows. In this case the page change where someone select a specific category, which is not good for the user, because it makes him get lost and disoriented every time he navigates through a new category inside our website.

In our solution we proposed a similar template for all the pages, defined by a title, a footer, a menu in the left part of the display and a main body containing a search bar and the main contents of that page in specific, keeping the paths uniform and with the same style and typology.

- **Icons:** There are not so many icons in *Craigslist*, and this is something that should be corrected, because people always try to associate images with specific actions, because that's how they have been navigating their whole life.

We will propose a system in which **each subcategory** of a given category has **an associated image** so that they can be easily identifiable. Additionally to this, the main title of the page, should contain the image of the web-page, trying to create an identifiable icon for the user.

- **Buttons:** Although we have not added any new buttons but the *Report* and *Favorite* ones, a redesign Craigslist should have some buttons organized in a group of buttons inside each specific advertisement, making clear for the user where he has to click, and when is he allowed to do so.

For instance: instead of having like 2 different lists in the left part of the page with links to information that the common user do not want to see frequently, they should be in a common list, in some place where they do not occupy important regions of the page, leaving less space to the important contents. All this non-frequently used buttons are to be placed in the footer of the website, where the user does not look at frequently enough.

4. Prototyping:

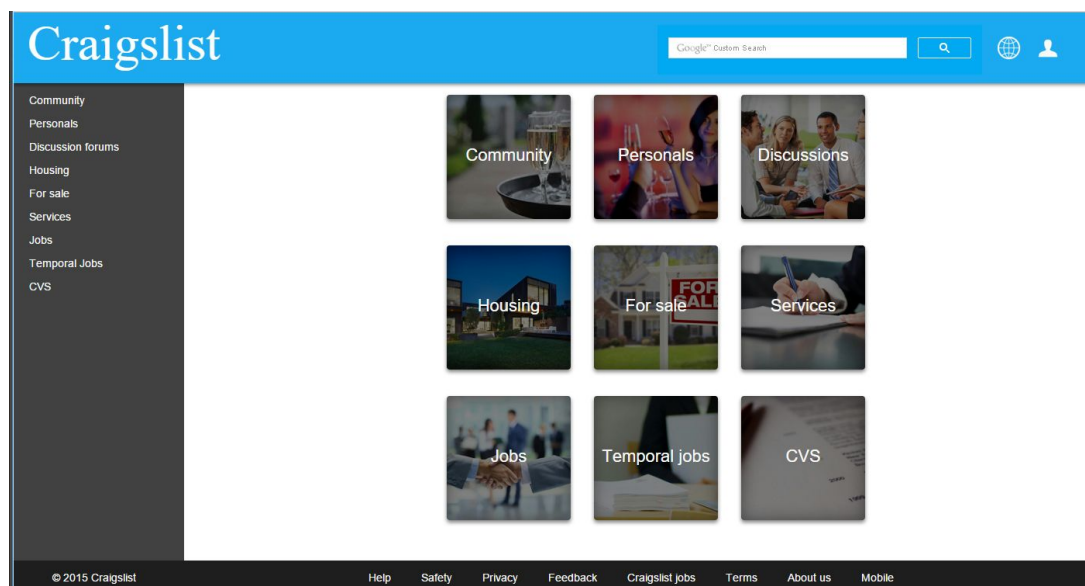
When it comes to prototyping, we did an initial sketch using the program *Adobe Muse*, which consisted of set of pages that we later implemented in a project, using HTML, CSS, Javascript, our usual tools.

Here we are presenting all of those pages, making comments in each one of them about the design thought process, and different remarks on them.

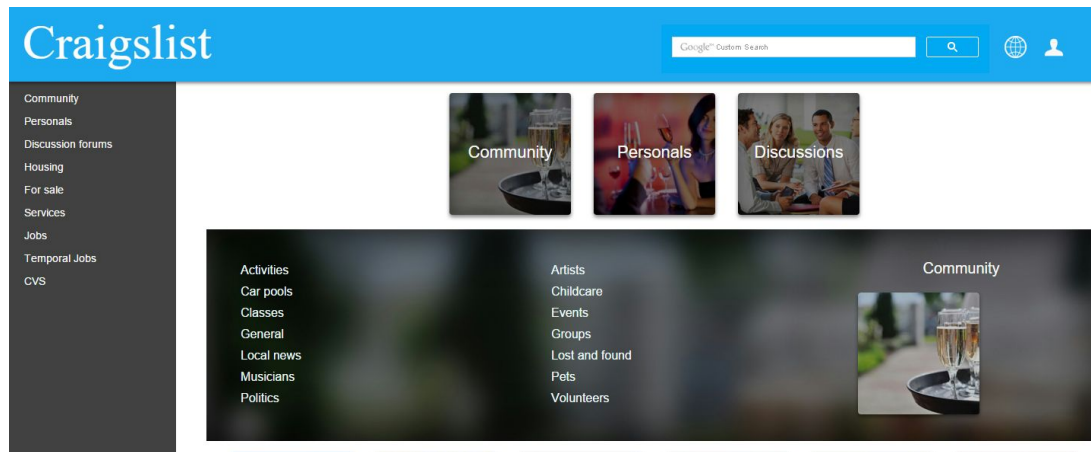
The process we had to design was the one in which the user access the website, enters a given subcategory inside a bigger category, and then searches through all the ads, selects one and contacts the seller. This is going to cover 3 pages on our website: **Home**, **Subcategory** and **Advertisement**.

4.1 Home:

In this page we have a list of all the categories existing in the website, presented in such a way that is easier for the user to identify and search through them, with a desplegable menu for each of the categories that show up the subcategories of it. We also have a left menu in which the same information is presented, but in a different format so the user has another way of accessing to the same part of the website.



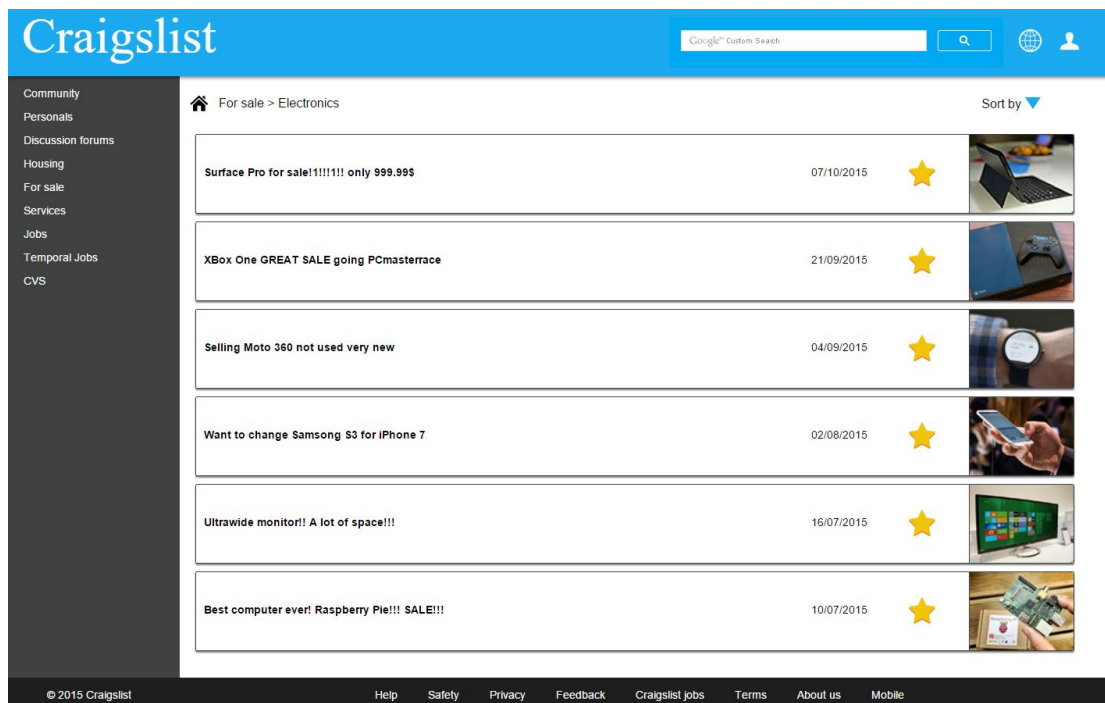
When clicking one of the categories, a menu pops up with all the subcategories of that menu.



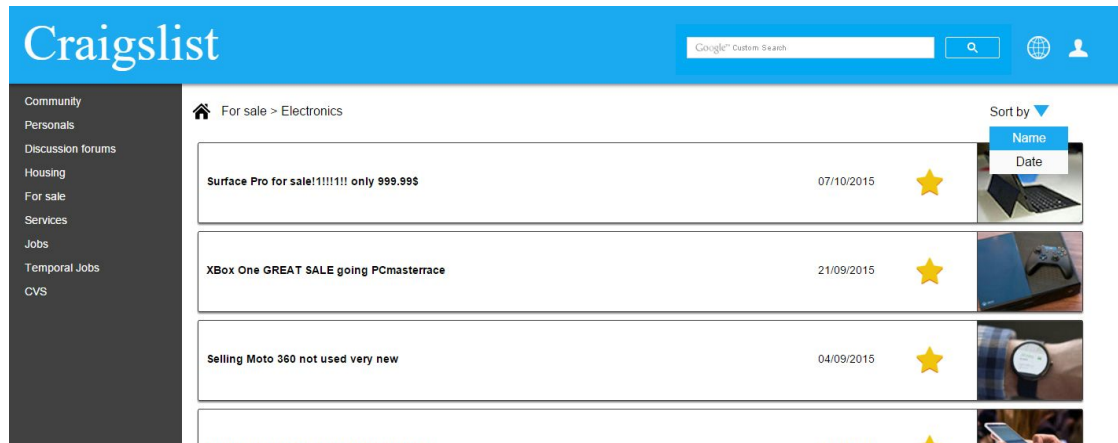
This way the user can search through the page easily.

4.2 Subcategory:

In this page we show all the different advertisements of a given subcategory inside the website. We do this in such a way to show the user all the useful information he has available inside those ads, such as the name, the date and a small image representing the product and/or service.

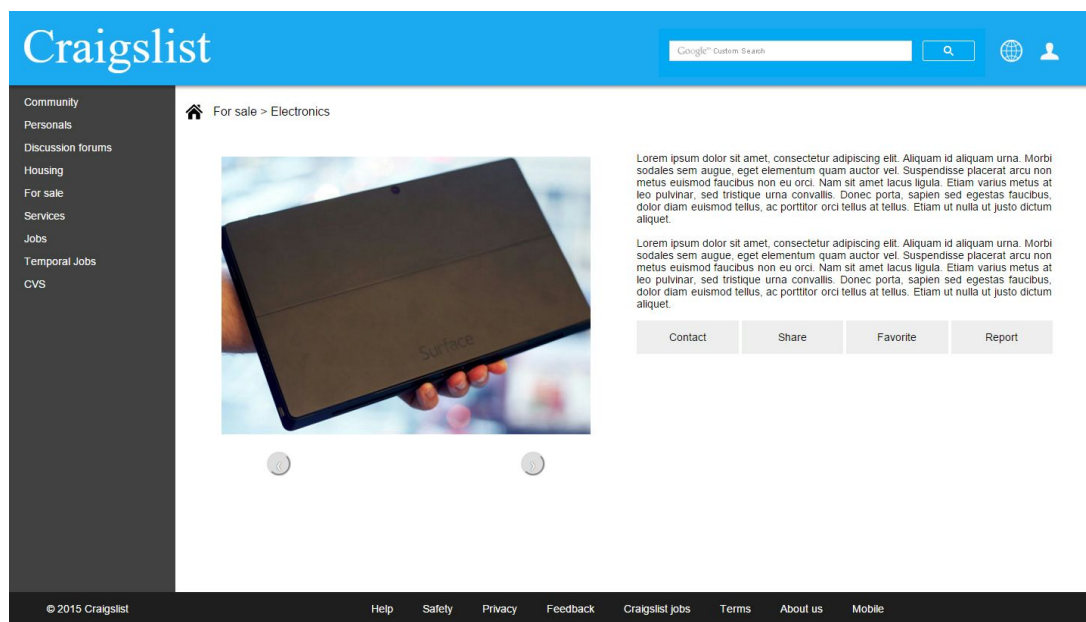


We also have, as we said before, a button that sorts the ads of the page, either by name or date in which it was published, so the user can traverse through the information with ease.

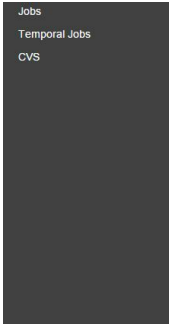


4.3 Advertisement:

In this case, we present one of the advertisements of our page in a simple format, with the title, the description of the ad and a slider of images that the person of interest can upload to show and promote his product. Below that we have a selection of buttons that helps us contact the advertiser, report the ad, share it or add it to favorites.



As we see, if we click on *Contact* a pop up will appear with different buttons, each of them showing the personal information of the advertiser, so we can contact him via different possible ways.



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