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Just Say No to Poorly Designed Software, A Summary by Anna Moore

Author Charles Hannon airs his complaints about software not fitting the needs of those it is designed for, and how the users put up with the bad design. Users are promised certain features in the software being designed, but these features end up being left out of the final product. Software engineers rarely interview their target users, leading to the designers and users prioritizing different features and uses. Scholastic programs that are widely used also have this issue and are described as crude and inefficient. This disconnect can be solved by the designers talking to the users and learning what the users will most often be using the new program for. Many colleges are transitioning to upgraded information systems even though the new program doesn’t fit the needs of their current faculty. Users put up with bad design because they think this is the best software they can get. The solution to problematic software is to interview prospective users and use that information to build the software. Sometimes there’s a feedback option post design, but this won’t affect the current software. Another solution is to have the person purchasing the software communicate with the staff that use the software to make sure that the program meets their needs. Designers should ensure that the list of requirements highlights the necessary features the user lists. Fear of new companies falling through on contracts keeps colleges going with known companies. This keeps older companies safe and allows them to ignore new designs in favor of faster production and higher profit. If users refused inadequate systems, companies would have to design better software to meet their needs.

I think that this is an article that is very important for future software engineers and current workers in the computer science field to read. We need to keep in mind that the purpose of creating new systems is not only for profit, but to benefit people by making certain parts of their lives easier. By ignoring them not only are we creating bad products, but we are alienating our user base. To be truly successful long term, companies need to build a loyal user base. I liked how he put the responsibility in the hands of the buyer, invoking the idea of the power of the purse. Something I think many consumers and companies forget. Companies need to keep their users happy if they want to keep getting their money. This paper works to remind everyone involved in these transactions of that fact.