

# Project P (Fall 2018)

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## Introduction :

Craigslist.org has been a popular website since 1995. Although it has been around for more than 20 years, Craigslist has made very few changes to the original design. Based on my experience of using Craigslist, I would like to redesign the website for better usability via function and visual design changes.



Figure 1. Craigslist Home Page

## Heuristic Evaluation

What works well – Overall simplistic design.

What makes it works well – Consistency.

The Craigslist has developed a brand recognition over the years. The company values it's websites' consistent look, which hasn't been updated over the years. This approach follows the principle of "Consistency" by maintaining the same design for a longer period of time. The basic design helps make the website

memorable and instantly recognizable. Over the years, A lot of design trends have come and gone but Craigslist has ignored the trends and maintained it's bare-boned design. When a user opens the website, they are presented with all the categories and lists belong to each category. This view can be a bit overwhelming for a first-time user, but the consistent nature of the view is useful for returning users. A returning user would know which category is located. The categories and list items are in the blue color text which indicated that they are links and they get underlined once hovered over. Every post in each subcategory has the same blue text structure with underlining. This design maintains the consistency by indicating the user that each category and post is linked to other pages.

What works well – Clarity of vision and purpose.

What makes it works well – Simplicity

The Craigslist exists to provide local classifieds and forums, and that's the only purpose of it. There aren't many extras and other options. Also, no ads on the website either. The main purpose of craigslist is to help people find what they are looking for and to help people find others who want what they have, and it is designed in a way to make the process fairly straightforward and simple. The text-heavy lists allow users to choose rather than having to remember what to look for. The filters also aid in searching for something that a user might be unfamiliar with. The website displays all of the options on the home page, users don't have to look through menus or pages to find out what they are looking for. Changing the city that users want to search for classifieds is also simplified. Clicking on the city name will turn the title into a text box with a down where the location of interest can be chosen. It will also display the names of major cities and areas nearby. The cognitive task of having to remember the names of neighborhoods is avoided with the current design.

What doesn't work well – Navigation.

Why doesn't it work well – Violation of structure principle

Craigslist is a network of smaller websites held on subdomains of Craigslist.org. Each subdomain represents an actual location and has its own board of classifieds. There is no navigation menu that appears consistently throughout the website. Some pages are easily accessible from most areas of the website, but not all. On many secondary pages, a huge amount of screen space is left empty with very few navigational options. This forces the users to hit the “Back” button in the browser to go to another section of the website. Log-In and sign up options are required to create posts on Craigslist. Currently, there is a link on the home page for users to log in. This link takes them to a separate page with typical log in options. Once they log in, users are directed to a page with classifieds that they have recently posted. This process could be made smoother and simpler. Login out also leaves you with pages that don’t offer many options.

What doesn’t work well – Content hierarchy.

Why doesn’t it work well – Lack of discoverability

The current design of the Craigslist homepage, as well as sub-pages, have a lot of white space that can be utilized in order to improve discoverability. There’s so much content on Craigslist, with hundreds of different communities, categories of classifieds and posts. The Boxes that contain links on the home page and community home pages are harder to read since they are in smaller lowercase letters (Figure 1). There is no search functionality to look for a specific subcategory as well. In many categories, search results are presented as lines of texts. Users can easily overlook the details in each listing and end up not looking at results that may be relevant to them. There is no concept of notifications or saving post for later references.

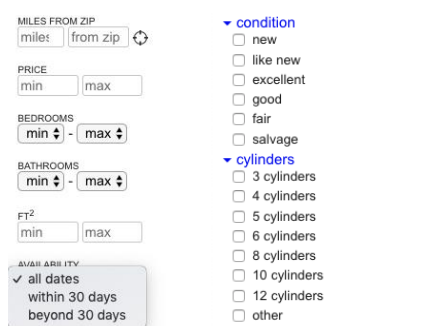


**Figure 2.** Search Results

What doesn't work well – Filtering system.

Why doesn't it work well – Direct Manipulation is not considered in the current design.

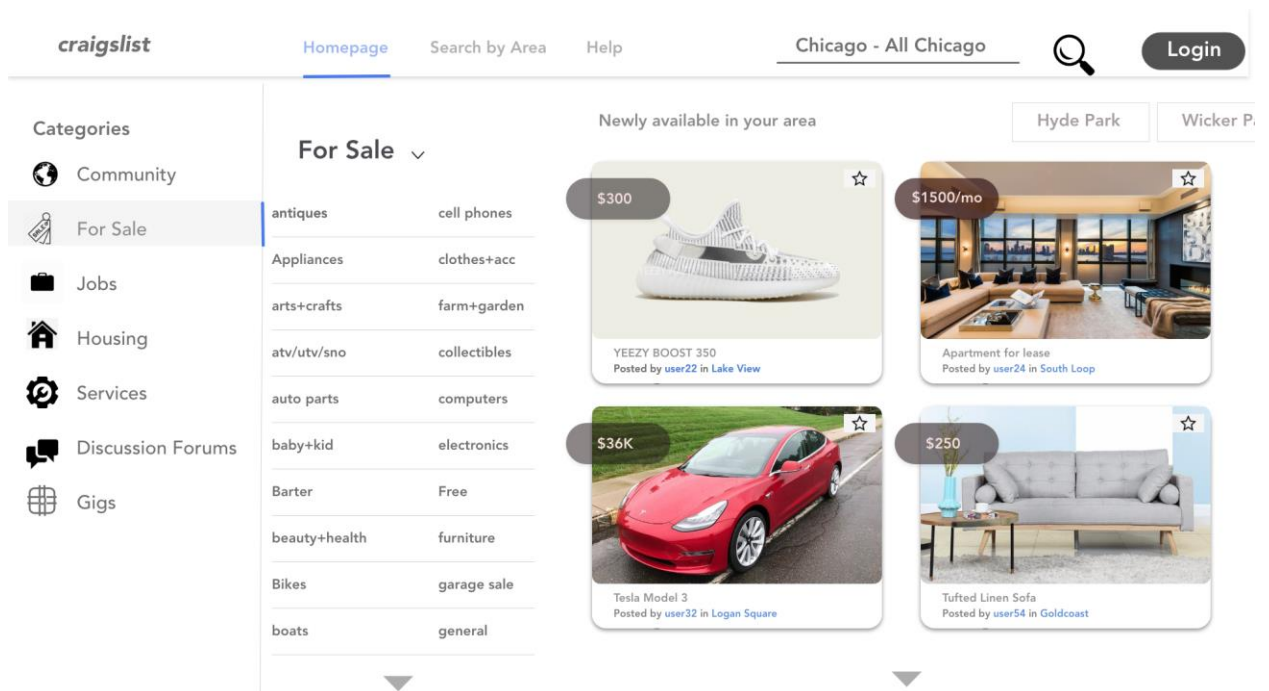
Search filter options for many categories require users manually entering values such as price range, miles from the zip code. Type of user inputs required is different for each category (Number of sq for houses and apartments, Milage for cars and truck). Having to enter the numbers for searching violates the principle of direct manipulation. There are many filter options which users can select to narrow down their search results. Each filter option has multiple sub-options to be selected. This makes the interface less invisible and cluttered.



**Figure 2.** Sample Filter Options

## Interface Redesign:





**Figure 4.** Home Page

- Using a menu to display categories on the left
- Each menu item has subcategories.
- The search bar lets you search for keywords (items, location name, zip codes)
- Random items list near user is displayed on home screen.
- Subcategories can be scrolled down to view more titles.
- The grid of listings can be scrolled up and down.

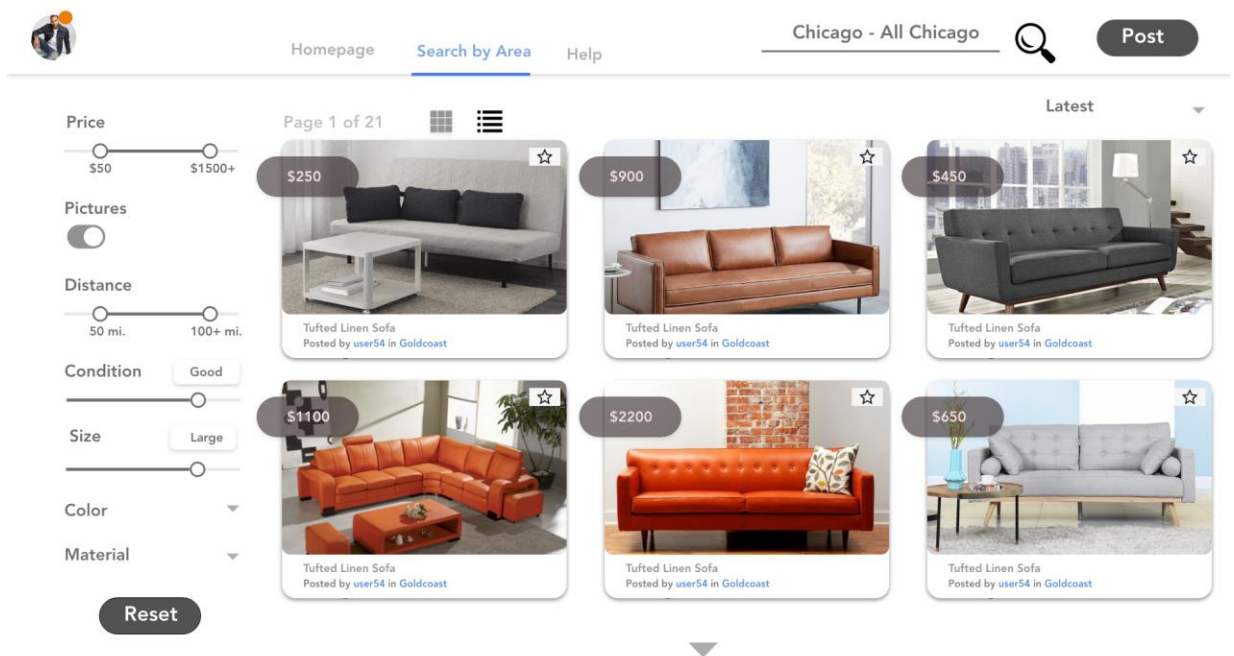
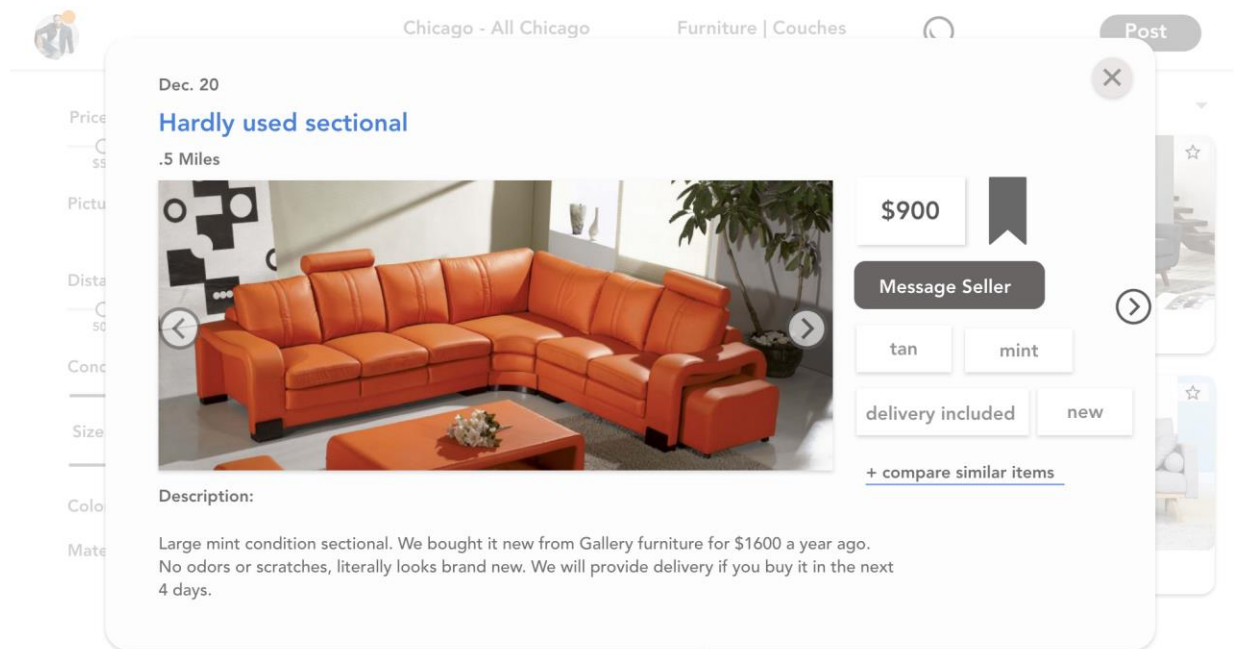


Figure 5. Results Page

- Search results appear in grid view and can be scrolled down.
- Results boxes are links to the detailed post.
- Results can be saved for later reference by clicking the star icon.
- User's profile can be accessed by clicking the profile picture on top left.
- Filter criteria can be changed in the left pane.
- "Color" and "Material" filter can be expanded by clicking on down arrows.
- "Reset" button will set the filter settings to default values (to be determined).
- "Post" button can be used to list items for sale.
- The red dot in the profile picture indicates that there are unread notifications.



**Figure 6.** Sample listing

- A detailed post is opened when a listing in the results page is clicked.
- Tags on the right are clickable.
- “Message Seller” button opens up a message box, allows communicating with the seller.
- “Compare similar items” will open up another results page with similar items.
- Each post has multiple pictures of the item. The left and right arrows can be used to navigate to the other pictures.
- Arrow icons allow navigation between posts.

### **Interface Justification:**

In my redesign of Craigslist, I have focused on finding information about products quickly and easily. Users want to feel like at ease when navigating



through many options. Looking at the information should be stress-free and smooth. My approach to reducing the amount of visual noise is to cluster information by using sub navigation bars, icons, and sliders.

The overall lack of hierarchy and grouping is distracting to users as there is a lack of prominent titles to inform the user where they are. I wanted to redesign the page in a way that brings order and simplicity to the content hierarchy by using menus, submenus.

The navigation flow is also changed. When users log in to Craigslist, They will be presented with the home page (Figure 4) instead of being directed to a page with a page with classifieds that they have recently posted. The homepage will be presented once users complete the steps to sign up for an account. The proposed design is using the space left out by the existing design to make the navigation between home page (figure 4) and result page (figure 5) much simpler. By using the “search by area” tab, users can define which zip code, the neighborhood they want to search for the specific item that they have selected from the left pane. A back button is not needed in the proposed design due to how it is structured (navigation between the home page and result pages). Back buttons are not used in the current design. Even though it is not a positive element, I thought of having a structure similar to the original design.

The original Craigslist site too cluttered and difficult to navigate around and a clean, minimalistic site which in return would provide an easy navigational experience for the users. To support this goal, I have included a left sidebar menu to access each category separately. My idea was to incorporate the principle of discoverability is through changes to the home page where users can easily find the available actions.

The categories section is coded with icons where users can easily figure out what each category represents and increase the readability. The original Craigslist displays all the categories and subcategories in table format in the home screen. Browsing for subcategories can be difficult with all the text extended over the screen. By having an organized structure, users will quickly be able to find what they are looking for and they also help to reduce ambiguity by communicating

the type of content. After creating the left pane menu, there was a lot of white space available on the screen. I thought of displaying random posts near the user location to fill the space.

During the redesign process, I determined that the typography and color scheme is essential in order to improve the discoverability and overall visual appearance. The original design of Craigslist is a simple white background with blue color text on laid out and some highlighted areas with color grey. I thought of preserving some elements of the original design, Such as the iconic white background. A shade of color black used as the main text color on all the pages. I wanted to keep the text and icon colors in blue, but black looked cleaner and easier to read.

The principle of affordance is incorporated into the proposed design by adding buttons and left/right arrow icons. The arrow icons on the results page indicate that there are content to the left and right on the element and user can view them by clicking on the arrow icons. Search results are categorized into grids making easier for users to see the content of each listing without having to read through lines of text. The layout allows users to quickly digest content and take action. Each listing can be clicked to open for more information (figure 6), the same as the original Craigslist approach. But new design doesn't take users to a separate page. Instead, users will stay on the same page and a card containing information about the lists item will overlay the current screen.

Background blurs out when a listing is open. This lets users know that they have opened a listing and other functions are not be available until they close it. Users can use the arrow icons to scroll through listing horizontally. The red dot attached to the profile picture (Figure 5) gives users a familiar feeling about notifications that need their attention. Original Craigslist does not have a way of alerting users about new activity regarding the user actions such as messages from sellers. The principle of perceptibility is incorporated by giving users the ability to perceive the state of the system.

Piling up texts one by one increases the complexity(Figure 2). In Figure 5, filter section is redesign to use sliders and drop downs to make the filter area less cluttered. Original Craigslist filters are harder to read and keep track of. The number of options for the filters is reduced and many filters are added to the

drop down to keep the interface simpler. Filter section will be on the left as in the original Craigslist. The filter selection dynamically populates the results. On scroll to left, filter selection can be collapsed, so users can focus on the results. Using sliders to change filter settings give users a sense of direct manipulation. Contents of the filter section vary depending on the category. Needfinding surveys and interviews are required to find out what filter options are least used and place them in a different section.

While these changes will not address all of the functions that need redesigning (messaging, posting and many more), they would help make the website more visually appealing and most importantly, more usable.

## References

1. Udacity Lectures.

Adobe XD was used to create the wireframes and diagrams.

Original diagrams which are create with Adobe XD can be found in this link.

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1\\_E0CRwcSD3SuVMuCs90AAtNJ-iXp3OHY?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_E0CRwcSD3SuVMuCs90AAtNJ-iXp3OHY?usp=sharing)