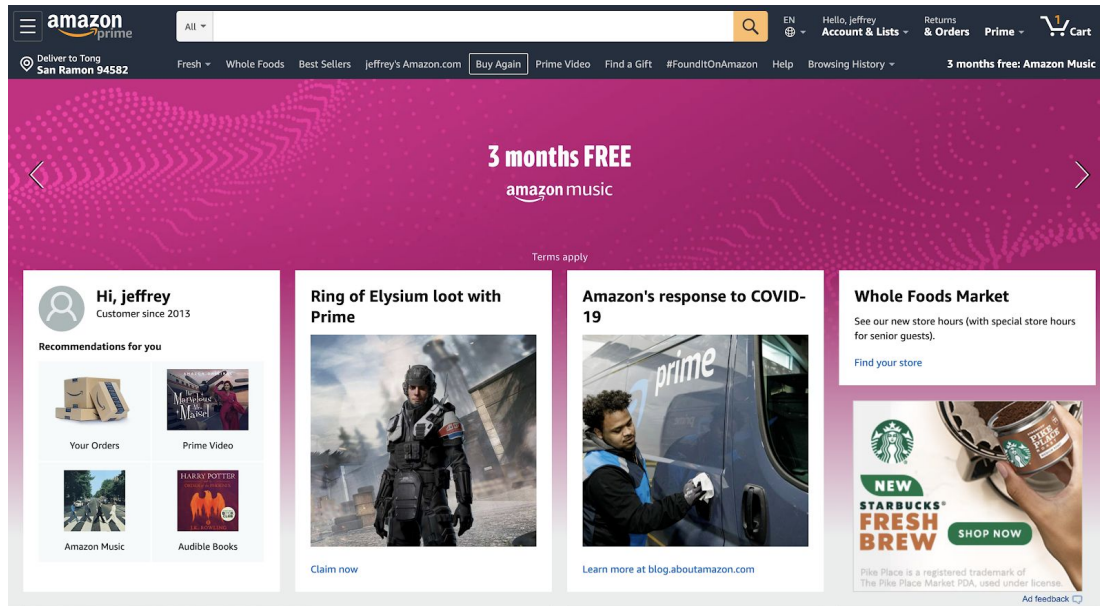


Assignment 01 - Heuristic Evaluation of Amazon and Coursicle

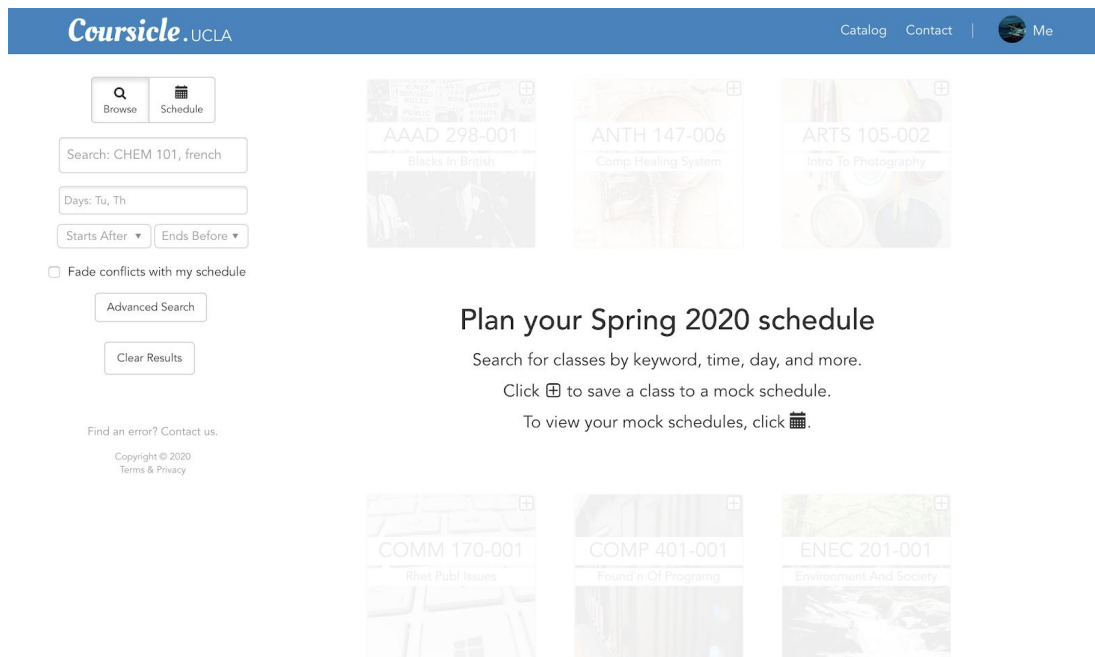
Claire Guo - DH150

Amazon:



Link: https://www.amazon.com/ref=nav_logo

Coursicle:



Link: <https://www.coursicle.com/ucla/>

Motivation:

I decided to conduct a heuristic evaluation on Amazon because whenever I use Amazon to find products, I always find myself getting frustrated at very simple UX errors on the website - I never find the products I'm looking for, it is hard to find help, and I always catch myself almost clicking the wrong buttons on accident. Since Amazon is such a huge corporation, I believe its site needs better UX because it is how the company connects and communicates with its users. As a result, I was motivated to identify the specific UX faults on Amazon's website using a heuristic evaluation.

I also decided to conduct a heuristic evaluation on Coursicle because it is an app I use everyday and it is very simple compared to that of Amazon. Coursicle has very basic functions, but is very useful for students when they need to plan courses. As a result, I was motivated to identify possible UX improvements on its website to make navigating the website and course-planning less frustrating and stressful.

Description/Brief Information:

Amazon.com is an online shopping site in which users are able to purchase from a large collection of electronics, books, music, appliances, apparel, etc. and have items shipped straight to their door. Users can search for items they are looking for or scour their homepage for new finds, or products suggested by Amazon.

Coursicle is a course-planning app that includes courses, their course descriptions, and potential professors for the course for many universities in the United States. Students can choose which university they attend and create schedules of classes for their next semester or quarter. Coursicle can also track how many openings there are for a class and notify students when a spot in the course opens up for enrollment.

Overall Evaluation:

Amazon is extremely cluttered and sometimes hard to use. Before adding items into my cart, I always have to double check that I am clicking the right button, because Amazon is sometimes inconsistent with their button placements across different interfaces. The site is also overwhelming with information which makes it a dread to use. My overall evaluation of the Amazon.com website is that it has many UX issues that make using the website unenjoyable.

Coursicle is a very simple website. The concept is very straight-forward, making the website pretty easy to navigate. However, it is also very boring. My overall evaluation is that Coursicle is effective, but has room to grow to have a much more delightful user-experience.

1. VISIBILITY OF SYSTEM STATUS

Amazon

Amazon does not have any issues with this heuristic for the following reasons:

- On any screen, Amazon shows users how many items they have in their cart, informing users that items were successfully added to their cart and keeping users informed on how items they have saved and intend on buying. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

- When viewing items in the cart, Amazon provides the total price of the user's entire purchase as well as how many total items the user plans on purchasing as well, informing the user about the summary of his or her purchase. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

- After the user adds an item into their cart, the user is taken to another screen where it displays a confirmation that the item was successfully added to the cart. This clearly shows the user that their request went through. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

- When checking out, Amazon makes it clear that the user is in the check out area and no longer in their cart by bringing the user into a separate, isolated screen where the user can input their address and checkout information. This clear differentiation between the cart and checkout area communicates to the user that, when in the checkout area, their private information is being protected and that they are about to make a purchase. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

Coursicle

- When browsing for classes, Coursicle does not show readers which schedule they are on (users can create multiple schedules). This does not keep users informed on which schedule they are adding classes to. This can cause users to add classes to the wrong schedule and have less control and knowledge over their scheduling. Coursicle should add text displaying which schedule they are browsing and adding classes to at the top of every screen so that they constantly know which schedule they are on. (3)

- However, coursicle does show users which screen they are on (the browse screen or the schedule screen) at all times. This properly informs users which interface they are on and allows them to easily switch between both screens. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this. (No severity needed)

- In addition, when a searched class has a time conflict with an already scheduled class, Coursicle visibly fades the color of the new class so users know not to schedule it in. This informs users about what is already on their schedule and which classes they can or can not

add in order to prevent class time conflicts. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this. (No severity needed)

2. MATCH BETWEEN SYSTEM AND THE REAL WORLD

Amazon

Amazon does not have any issues with this heuristic for the following reasons:

- Amazon uses familiar icons describing features on its site. For instance, Amazon uses a shopping cart icon to indicate where the user's shopping cart is. This familiar icon reflects the real material shopping cart seen in the real world, making it clear to users what the function of the icon is without using words. Furthermore, using this icon creates an almost real-world experience for users of adding items to their cart and proceeding to checkout when they are ready to purchase their items. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

- Amazon also uses the familiar three horizontal line icon at the top of the screen to suggest that a user can click on it to show a drop-down menu. Since many other sites use the same icon to suggest a drop-down menu, users already know what the icon means prior to using Amazon and can click on that same icon on Amazon's site to reach the menu that they were expecting. This familiarity creates a more enjoyable experience for these users on Amazon. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

Coursicle

- When a user tries to search for a subject or course's full name, such as "Archeology", "Program in Computing," or abbreviations such as "PIC", it states that there are no results, when really there are. This is because Coursicle's search bar only finds classes with names that include what was specifically typed by the user. So even though "Program in Computing" and "PIC" are other names commonly used by UCLA students for computing classes, users can only find these classes if they type in "COMPTNG." Therefore, Coursicle does not include familiar words for classes that their users might use to search for specific courses, causing frustration and confusion amongst many users. In order to improve this heuristic, Coursicle should add other, commonly used names for courses to their database so that classes are easier to find. (2)

3. USER CONTROL AND FREEDOM

Amazon

- If a user accidentally adds an item into their cart, Amazon leads them to a separate page, confirming that the item was added into the cart. However, this confirmation page does not have an option to remove the item from the cart in case it was added by mistake. In addition, if the user presses the back button on Chrome to return back to the item's site, there is no option to

remove that item from the cart. The only way to remove the item is by going to the cart and manually removing it there. This puts a lot more work on the user to try to undo their mistakes and makes the shopping experience on Amazon less enjoyable. In order to improve this heuristic, Amazon should add a "Remove from cart" button on the confirmation page. (2)

- However, one way Amazon uses this heuristic well is through its "Buy Now" option. Since the "Buy Now" button is right underneath the "Add to cart" button, many users might accidentally click the wrong button. When a user clicks "Buy Now," a pop up appears that allows users to check out right away. However, there is a clearly marked "X" at the top right corner of the pop up that users can click to quickly exit the checkout and an unwanted state. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this. (No severity needed)

Coursicle

- When users click "Catalog" on Coursicle, they are led to a separate page where there is no distinct way to leave or return back to the original browse or scheduling screen. The only way to return back to the homepage is by clicking the back button on Chrome or clicking the Coursicle logo in the top left corner. But these options are not clearly marked "out" icons to leave the catalog site. In order to give the user more control and freedom when navigating through Coursicle, an "X" button should be placed on the top right corner of the screen to clearly show a way out of the screen. (2)

- Coursicle also does not support undo/redo when adding or removing a class from the user's schedule. The only way users can re-add the classes they may have accidentally deleted is by finding them again using the browse function and adding the class again onto the schedule. This gives less control to users when fixing their mistakes. In order to improve this heuristic, Coursicle should either add undo/redo buttons or support undo and redo through Chrome. (1)

4. CONSISTENCY AND STANDARDS

Amazon

- When trying to add an item to a wedding directory, for some items, the option to add to the wedding directory is not available. If Amazon is giving the option to add certain items to a wedding directory, this option should be available consistently to all items. Another way to solve this issue is allowing the user to select an option in their settings that allows them to show the wedding directory option on each item they view or to not include the option at all. (1)

- For some items, Amazon provides an option for users to sign up for a subscription to have that item delivered to them every few weeks or months. While this may be an efficient shopping option for some users, other users prefer to only make a standard, one-time purchase. In addition, for these subscribable items, Amazon has the subscription option displayed first and users must click another option to return to the standard one-time purchase option. However, the subscribe button is also the same color and in the same location as where the add-to-cart

button would be for a standard, one-time purchase item. Therefore, if users are not careful enough to read the fine print, they may accidentally subscribe to weekly or monthly shipments of the product they only wanted delivered to them once. This potential issue is due to Amazon's inconsistency with its optional subscription items. In order to improve this issue, Amazon should have the one-time purchase option displayed first because it is the standard option, and have users who want the subscription to click for that option. Another way Amazon could improve this heuristic is to have Amazon make the subscription option a different color so it is clear to users that it is a separate option from a one-time purchase. (3)

- After searching for an item on Amazon, sometimes the list of items are listed in strips, but other times the items are listed in a grid pattern. This causes inconsistency with how items are listed and can cause confusion for users. In order to improve this heuristic, Amazon should choose one type of list display and use the same display for every item search.(1)

- For each item on Amazon, the color of the price of each item is the same color as the amount you save using Amazon's price. This creates confusion for users and possible misunderstandings because it makes them wonder which price is the actual price of the item. Users need to read the small text next to each price to decipher the difference between both prices. In order to prevent this issue from occurring, Amazon should make each price a different color and enlarge the text for the actual price of the item. (2)

- For some items, Amazon does not show its price until you click the specific color and/or size of the product. This can cause confusion for users as they might not know that they have to choose specific items to find the price for some items. In order to improve consistency throughout their site, Amazon should include a warning where the price would normally be, suggesting that price fluctuates between sizes and colors and prompting the user to select his or her size and ideal color of the item to find the most accurate price. (1)

Coursicle

- When browsing for classes on Coursicle, each class is a different color. However, when you add the class into your schedule, the class is now a different color compared to that in the browse section. This inconsistency on Coursicle can cause confusion for users who associate color to courses and may cause them to think that the classes on their schedule are different from the ones they tried to add from the browse section. In order to prevent this misunderstanding, Coursicle should make the color of each class on the schedule to match its color on the browse section. (2)

5. ERROR PREVENTION

Amazon

- For some items, Amazon provides an option for users to sign up for a subscription to have that item delivered to them every few weeks or months. While this may be an efficient shopping

option for some users, other users prefer to only make a standard, one-time purchase. The subscribe button is also the same color and in the same location as where the add-to-cart button would be for a standard, one-time purchase item. Therefore, if users are not careful enough to read the fine print, they may accidentally subscribe to weekly or monthly shipments of the product they only wanted delivered to them once. Amazon does not warn users about this potential subscription beforehand and does not ask for a confirmation after they click the subscribe button. In order to prevent users who only want to buy the item once from accidentally subscribing to multiple shipments of the item, Amazon should include this confirmation process they are currently missing. Another way Amazon could improve this heuristic is to have Amazon make the subscription option a different color so it is clear to users that it is a separate option from a one-time purchase. Both of these options will prevent the user from making an error of an accidental subscription before it happens. (3)

- Also, when a user is checking out their item and attempts to leave the check out page, Amazon asks if the user is sure they meant to leave the page. This is a good use of this heuristic because Amazon makes sure the user did not press the back or home button on accident and gives them the option to stay on the check out page. This way users would not have to retype in all of their shipping and billing information again if leaving the page was an accident. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this. (No severity needed)

Coursicle

Coursicle does not have any issues with this heuristic for the following reason:

- When a searched class has a time conflict with an already scheduled class, Coursicle visibly fades the color of the new class so users know not to schedule it in. This prevents users from potentially creating time conflicts in their schedule and avoids creating a future error or problem. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

6. RECOGNITION RATHER THAN RECALL

Amazon

- While Amazon does have an option to view one's browsing history, when users search using Amazon's search bar, it does not bring up past search options. Therefore, if users want to find something that had searched up before using the search bar, they will have to remember what they were looking for and type it all out again. Amazon can improve this heuristic by auto-completing user's searches based on their search history when they use the search bar. (1)

Coursicle

- Coursicle does not remember their users' search history. So if users want to find a class that they had searched up before, the user will have to remember the name of that specific class and type it all out. Coursicle can improve this heuristic by automatically displaying a history of

recent courses the user had searched up when the user clicks into the search bar, or auto-completing the user's searches based on their search history. (1)

7. FLEXIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY OF USE

Amazon

- From my observation, there are no accelerators on Amazon. However, I believe that there should be simple accelerators in the form of keyboard shortcuts to make adding items to the cart and checking out more efficient for expert users because these are simple and repetitive actions performed on the site.(1)

- While Amazon has filters that users can choose to narrow down their searches, there are too many filter options that it takes too long to read and choose select options. As a result, having too many filter options makes them inefficient to users. Amazon should narrow their filters, or group their filters into drop-down menus by category (ex. one drop-down menu for reviews and another for brands, etc.) so users can decide which filters they want to use without being overwhelmed and having to see all of the filter options cluttered together. (2)

Coursicle

Coursicle does not have any issues with this heuristic for the following reasons:

- There is no accelerator on Coursicle. However, I believe Coursicle does not need an accelerator because all of the functions and actions on the page are simple and both novice and expert users can easily access and use them. Adding an accelerator is unnecessary and it would not cause a drastic increase in efficiency. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

- When a user searches for classes on the catalog option on Coursicle, they can also add classes they found on the Catalog onto their schedule. This allows for greater flexibility because users can add classes in multiple ways and according to their preference, whether they prefer to browse to search for classes, or use the course catalog. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

8. AESTHETIC AND MINIMALIST DESIGN

Amazon

- Amazon does not have a minimalist design because it contains unnecessary information. For instance, the header contains unimportant text such as the address linked to the account (this can be viewed during check out, it does not need to be visible at all times on the site), each drop down menu has too many options to choose from, and the homepage is packed with as many images of potential products Amazon can fit on the users' screens. This causes the homepage and the drop-down menus to be hard to read and overwhelming for users. Amazon should

simplify this homepage by taking away some of its advertisements for suggested products and making it more welcoming. (2)

- In addition, when viewing items, the product description, discounts, price of the item, and sponsored products are all cramped into one space on the site. This can decrease visibility on important information, like the actual price of the item. In order to improve the minimalism of Amazon's interface, Amazon should separate nonessential information, such as other sponsored products and product details, from essential information using blank space. This will make the user feel less constricted when using the website. (2)

Coursicle

- Coursicle does a good job with minimalism on their site. Each course has a very simple, colored background, with the course number and name written on the front. When users want to read more about certain courses, they can click on the course which will then open up to show more information such as the course description, location, and course times. This way, Coursicle does not show nonessential information where and when it is not needed. Therefore, no improvements need to be made. (No severity needed)

9. HELP USERS RECOGNIZE, DIAGNOSE, AND RECOVER FROM ERRORS

Amazon

Amazon does not have any issues with this heuristic for the following reasons:

- When there is an error on Amazon's end, Amazon apologizes for their error and includes a picture of a cute dog to make the error page more enjoyable for users and less frustrating. In addition, Amazon prompts the user to click the back arrow to try to go back or attempt to return to the Amazon homepage in order to solve the issue. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

- When a user slightly misspelled a word they are searching, Amazon detects the potential spelling error and provides the user with results from the corrected spelling, asking the user if he or she meant to search for the correct spelling. However, Amazon also lets the user choose if he or she wants to continue searching with the alleged misspelled version of the item. This politely communicates to the user that there was an error and quickly finds a solution to it, making the user's experience more efficient and enjoyable. Therefore, no improvements are needed for this site. (No severity needed)

Coursicle

- When there are no classes available after the user browses the site under a certain set of filters, Coursicle returns an error message stating that there are no results and prompts the user to select different filters. While this error message does suggest that the user find a solution by changing around the filters, the solution is very general and obvious. Coursicle can improve in this heuristic by telling the user which filter(s) specifically has caused the error. This way the

user will know precisely which filter(s) they need to change and can keep the other filters the same. (1)

10. HELP AND DOCUMENTATION

Amazon

- While Amazon's "Help" page is easy to navigate, in which help information is easy to search and Amazon provides direct links to sites or functions that bring the user directly to pages that navigate the user through specific steps to carry out their tasks, the "Help" button is hard to find. It is located at the bottom right of the footer on every screen in small text, surrounded by other functions as well. In order to make this function more visible and easy to find, Amazon should put a help icon (?) at the top of the site on the header so it will be accessible from every interface.(2)

Coursicle

- Coursicle does not have a help feature or page at all. This makes it impossible for Coursicle to provide solutions to users who are unfamiliar at navigating through the site. I suggest that Coursicle add a visible and easy-access help feature on their site's top dashboard that users can click to search for help on specific features on Coursicle.(3)