Standing Out in the Sea of Online Workers

Understanding & Designing Systems that Support the Online Self-Presentation of Freelancers

Worldwide, freelancers are a prominent group of workers who face growing job opportunities via online labor platforms. Freelancers represent 6.9% of workers in the US, and freelancing in the EU has grown by 24% from 2008 to 2015. Socio-technical systems may support the self-presentation of freelancers, but remain open to biases by gender and work experience, and may prevent freelancers from effectively managing impressions for different audiences.

While HCI scholars have begun to describe how freelancers use socio-technical systems for self-presentation, we do not yet understand **how to effectively design systems that support freelancers' self-presentation.**

RESEARCH AGENDA

PRICING

How Do Freelancers Price Their Services Online?
Gender and work experience influence negotiation practices and earning ability, but we have yet to understand how they influence the online bill rates.

Methodology
* Analysis of hourly rate data from ~55,000 Upwork freelancers in various job categories
* Semi-structured interviews and survey of freelancers on and off Upwork to understand pricing strategies

Findings
The median woman freelancer in the US on Upwork asks for 13.6% less in hourly rate than the median man, but may earn as much in revenue by working more hours

** **Foong**, Vincent, Hecht, & Gerber. Women (Still) Ask For Less: Gender Differences in Hourly Rate in an Online Labor Marketplace. (CSCW '18)*

PORTFOLIO

How Might We Support Freelancers in Curating their Portfolio of Work?
Freelancers must constantly curate their online portfolios to attract the attention of new clients, but it can be difficult to understand which projects to include that best represent their work without feedback.

Methodology
* Need-finding interviews with 16 freelance visual designers and design students
* Experiment with 95 designers to prompt portfolio-focused feedback online
* Design-based research to evaluate a system for guiding portfolio curation

Findings
Prompting designers to compare another designer's project in the context of their portfolio encourages portfolio-focused feedback, but this feedback may still be too general to be helpful for curating an online portfolio.

** **Foong**, Kim, Dontcheva, & Gerber. Designing for Brand-level Feedback in Online Creative Communities. (In progress).*

FEEDBACK

How Might We Design Effective Online Feedback Exchange (OFE) Systems?
OFE systems can help freelancers collect feedback to curate their portfolios, but it is unclear how we might design effective, end-to-end OFE systems.
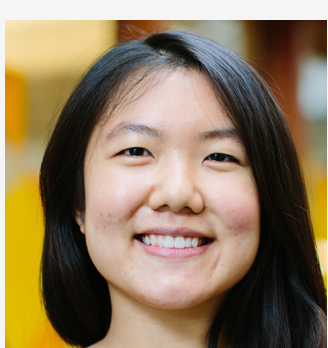
Methodology
* Literature review of design education, learning sciences, and organizational behavior
* Think-aloud study with novice and expert visual designers responding to crowdsourced feedback

Findings
Holistic OFE systems should be designed to support 5 processes, including determining a need for feedback, asking for feedback, incentivizing feedback providers, structuring feedback, and sensemaking.

** **Foong**, Dow, Bailey, & Gerber. Online Feedback Exchange: A Framework for Understanding the Socio-Psychological Factors. (CHI '17)*
** **Foong**, Gergle, & Gerber. Novice and Expert Sensemaking of Crowdsourced Design Feedback. (CSCW '18)*

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