

Hey Brett,

Phew. That was a lot of things to think about. This ended up being really long, and there's still more I thought about that I didn't include. I hope there are at least a couple things you haven't thought about before. I'm sure I've also covered things that you've already considered in the last few years.

To give you an idea of my process- I started from analyzing what already exists, my/friends experiences with Kickstarter, and watching someone go about the browse experience who had never backed a project before. Then, I started thinking through how I wanted to do new designs. As I designed things (particularly browse) I found challenges, and re-did the designs several times to try to best address the challenges. I used Balsamiq for all of the mockups in this.

If I had more time, I'd focus on editing down this document to be more simple. I wouldn't typically write such a long document to convey simple ideas when people were around me to talk about them, but I struggled with including the right level of detail when there isn't a back-and-forth about the work.

I prioritized the browsing experience in this work for a couple reasons:

- Browsing doesn't require guesswork about what the user wants.
- Browsing is applicable to both new, and power users.
- Since you mentioned previous recommendations didn't fare substantially better than staff recommendations, I thought an investment in this area would likely have concrete returns (whereas investing in personalization might not).

Similarly, I also spent time on the "sharing" experience, because frequently your friends will know you better than we could guess algorithmically.

My work around personalization is more speculative. I think that area would require more actual data analysis to figure out which factors have the most impact for predicting which projects someone will be interested in.

If you're curious in more fleshed out thoughts on any of the "other" concepts just let me know and I'd be happy to work on them more.

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Hope you like it! I had a lot of fun thinking about the areas and working on it.
Ellen

PS- I enabled commenting in case you'd like to use that for feedback (but I do still have access to the document, so don't do that if you want it to be private!)

Section One: My Design Principles

1. Supporting, not Shopping

Kickstarter is supposed to be a way to help projects come to fruition. It isn't a place to shop, because there's always some degree of uncertainty around the projects. Throughout the experience I tried to include subtle ways to showcase that it's about supporting, not buying.

2. Serendipity

We've talked about this a bunch, but one of my favorite things about Kickstarter is the ability to find things serendipitously. People used to walk through stores and see things that struck their fancy. Now, it's more difficult to do this.

Kickstarter is still a place to find truly unique things by browsing. I wanted to create an experience that would draw people in, and allow them to see many different types of projects. Additionally, the transient nature of Kickstarter means things don't stay forever, so there's always an element of being in the right place at the right time.

The flip side of transient projects, is that there won't always be something you're looking for. I wanted to help make it easier for users to be able to make sure they do find the perfect projects when they're around (increasing the rate of serendipity).

3. Support as many Projects as possible

I also wanted to focus on a design that would help more projects reach their funding goals. While it's cool to have massively over-funded projects, it's also cool to have many small projects funded. Since most projects on Kickstarter are small, I wanted to highlight supporting small projects.

I think this is likely one of my most controversial decisions, as it led me to not show "Most Funded" or "Recently Funded." This might not be possible, but I felt like it was an interesting concept to design with.

Section Two: A Potential Discovery Design (Browse)

I wanted to take the time to go deeper on one particular concept for discovery. There are multiple other ways to do this. I chose to focus on a way of doing browsing, but this isn't the only right way to do browsing.

This is based off of brainstorming and doing some different experiments with ways to browse projects.

1. Experience Goals

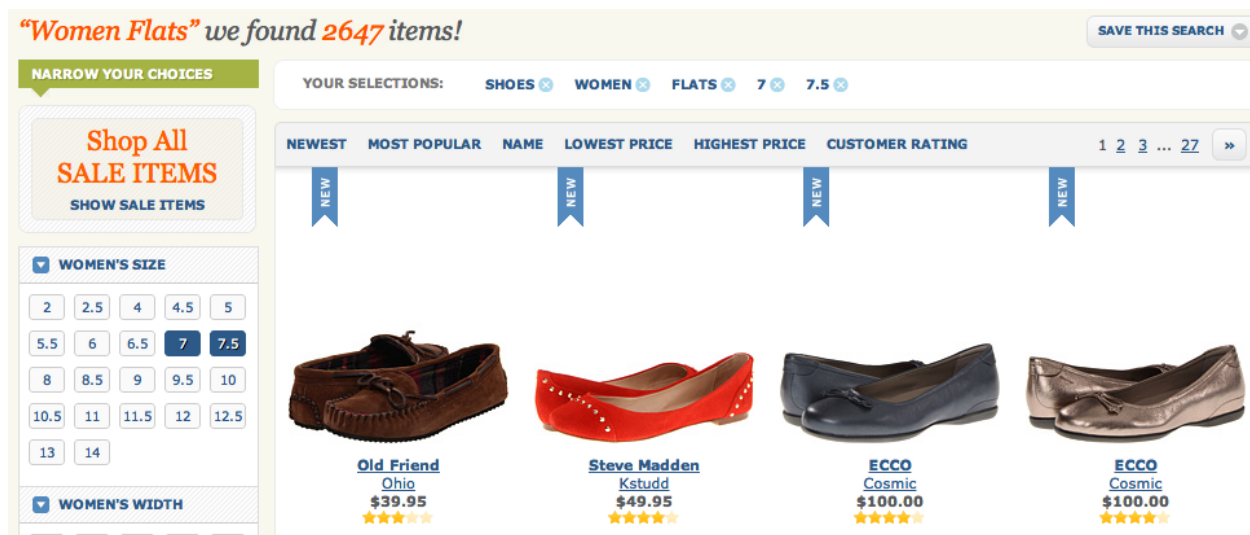
- A user can always find good/interesting projects.
- A user can always find a specific project of interest (if it exists).
- A user can always become aware if a project in their particular of interest becomes available after they are browsing.
- A user always gets at least 3 results.
- A user can continue to browse things without further navigation for as long as possible.
- A user should understand how to adding and removing filters.

2. Areas of Challenge

- Making sure there are at least three results.
- Figuring out how to explain recommendations/filters clearly.
- Accounting for different types of filters. For instance: it makes sense to filter to find projects in Detroit or Seattle (as you wouldn't expect a project to be listed as both) or projects that are Art or Theatre if you're interested in both. On the other hand, it isn't clear whether "Staff Recommendations" and "Projects Ending Soon" would combine to display projects that are "Staff recommendations ending soon", or projects that fall into either of these categories.

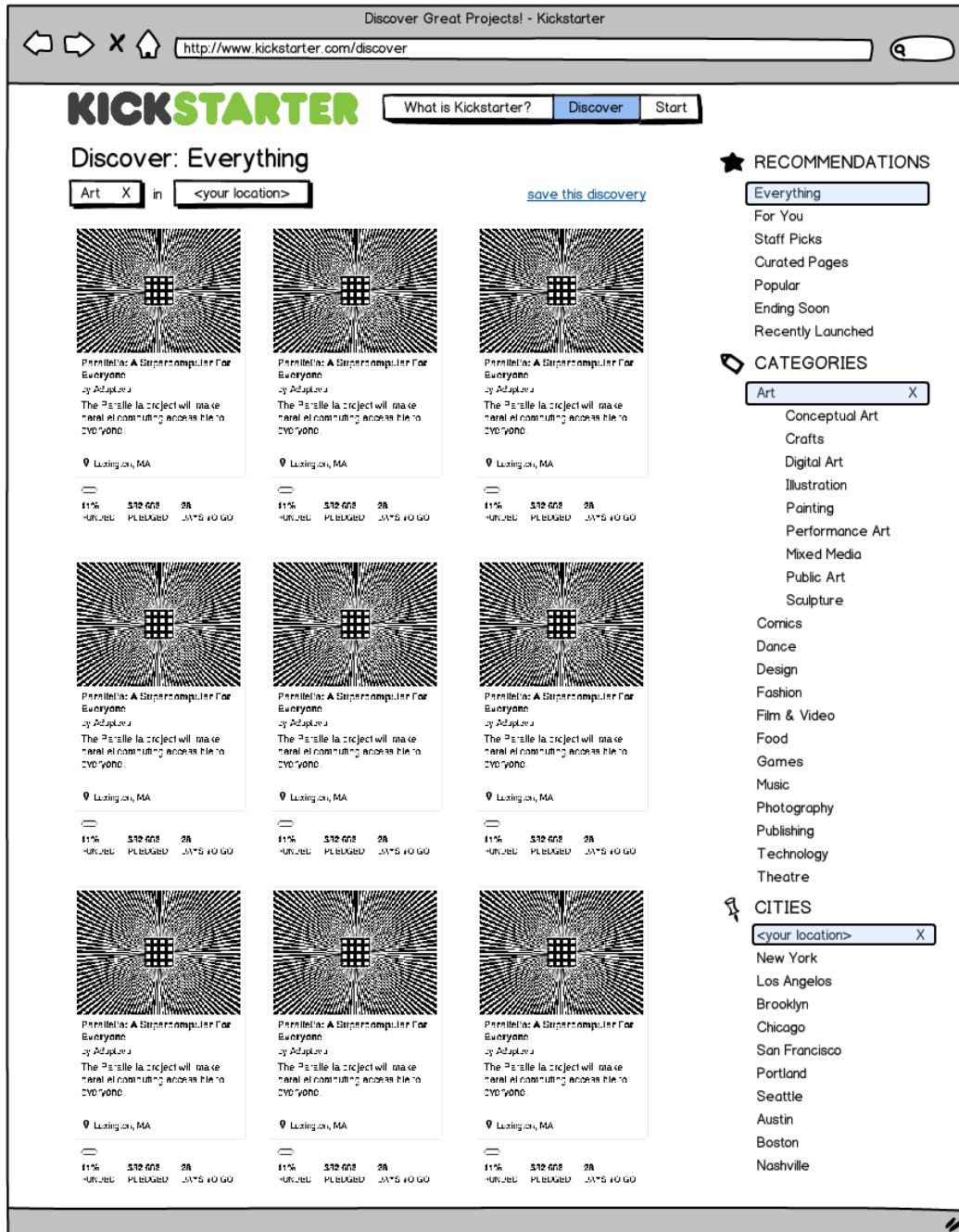
3. Inspirations

One of the ways I've seen filtering done best is on Zappos.com. It allows you to filter the shoes by type, size, color, etc. and displays all current filters at the top of the search results, like this:



- I like the the user can see all of the filters that are currently applied, there is no confusion about if order matters, because the items are displayed as tags rather than breadcrumbs.
- I dislike that many of the boxes on the left hand side have scroll boxes if there are too many options (which doesn't look visually clean).
- The multiple option bars across the top could be confusing (i.e. would newest be a filter, or a way to re-order the sorting).

4. The Design



Recommendations

I changed this section to be titled recommendations rather than features.

- To emphasize that these behave differently and aren't the same as the filters/tag features for categories and locations, they are included in the discovery title (above, Discover: Everything).
- Only one type of recommendation can be selected at a time, like in the current

experience.

- The goal is that these are types of projects that will likely be good ones for the user to view.

The Recommendations List Includes:

- [Added] Everything (If user wants to view all the Art projects, and isn't worried about a recommendation).
- [Added] For you (only if you're logged in).
- [Added] By friends (again, only if you're logged in).
- [Kept] Staff picks (as these will always be high quality projects).
- [Kept] Curated pages (recommended as curated pages as a trusted source).
- [Kept] Popular (these projects are likely preferred by users).
- [Kept] Ending soon (to emphasize the transient nature of projects, and help push projects ending soon towards their goal).
- [Kept] Recently launched (again, to emphasize that projects are temporary, to showcase new projects).
- [Cut] Recently funded (user cannot fund these, looks more like "shopping" than supporting).
- [Cut] Most funded (this seems to be more of a novelty- while it shows what can happen, it doesn't show what typically happens. I think this might be more appropriate somewhere else in the site).

To change which recommendation section of the site the user is in, they simply click another type of recommendation on the right bar. To not be reduced to a subset of recommended projects, the user would just click "Everything."

Categories & Cities

Categories and cities function differently from the Recommendation section.

- A user can select as many categories as they like.
- If they select a category with multiple options (like Art) everything is included. If they then click on "Graphic Arts" then only Graphic Art is included and the others are removed, and can be individually selected.
- A user can select as many locations as they like by selecting ones that are already there (or searching using the search box below the locations that currently exists).
- All selected categories and cities are shown at the top as tags, under the discovery title. If a user wants to remove a filter tag they can either click the X in the tag at the top of the page.
- All selected categories are also highlighted on the right hand bar. If a user wants to remove a tag they can also do it by re-clicking on the highlighted item in the right bar (the X appears on hover).

- Possibly, these categories could be highlighted in both locations by their color on the backer wheel (this would tie them together visually, and help emphasize the importance of categories).

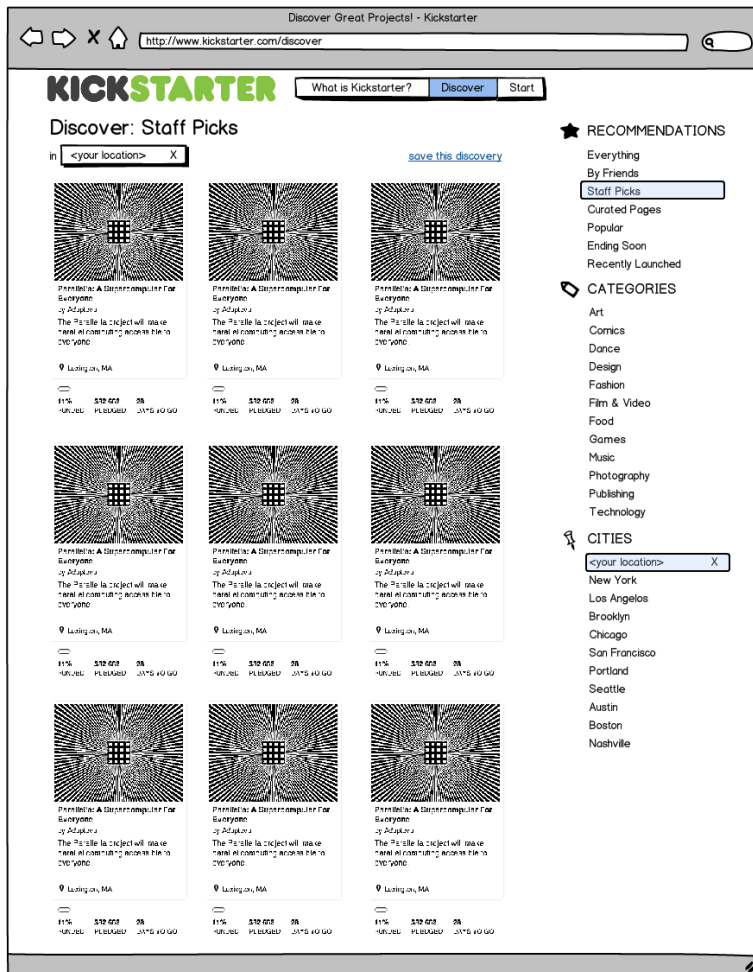
Infinite Scroll

More clicks to explore projects is extra effort (currently a user can click on a category, and then needs to click to “see more popular” or “see all in technology.”

We should let users quickly skim as many projects as they’d like so they’ll be able to see if something catches their eye. By having infinite scroll rather than categories, we’ll be able to do this (additionally, some users might not care about these additional specifications, they might just want to look at “Art.”)

Default View Choice - Staff Picks in <your Location>

- Location is one of the few things you can guess about a user the first time they visit the website, with no other information.
- Location goes along with the concept of “supporting local businesses” rather than “shopping for a new technology product.”
- Going by current location allows serendipitous discovery of new projects in new areas while traveling.
- Staff picks allows us to ensure users will be seeing high quality projects the first time they visit the website.



There won't always necessarily be staff picks in your location (especially if it's a small location).

- If there aren't any staff picks in your location, go through other options in "Recommendations" (curated pages, popular, etc) and then if none of those work, display the everything recommendation.
- If no projects are available in your location at all, pick the nearest (or largest.. i.e. New York vs. Brooklyn) location that would work + repeat these options.

Ordering of Projects

This is the logic for ordering the list of projects shown in discovery, based on the type of Discovery being done:

- If the list is ordered by: "Ending soon" put the ones with the least time left at the top. Likewise, "Recently Launched" should be most recently launched.
- Staff and Curated Picks should be the most recent items added to the curations.
- Popular should be ordered by most backings in the last hour (?) timeframe TBD.
- Small projects ordered from least amount of money requested.

What if there aren't many (or any?!) projects?

We want to always show at least three projects for any given set of filters. If there aren't very many, we should show those and then also provide alternatives. We should also indicate that the user can ask to know when there are projects available in that category.

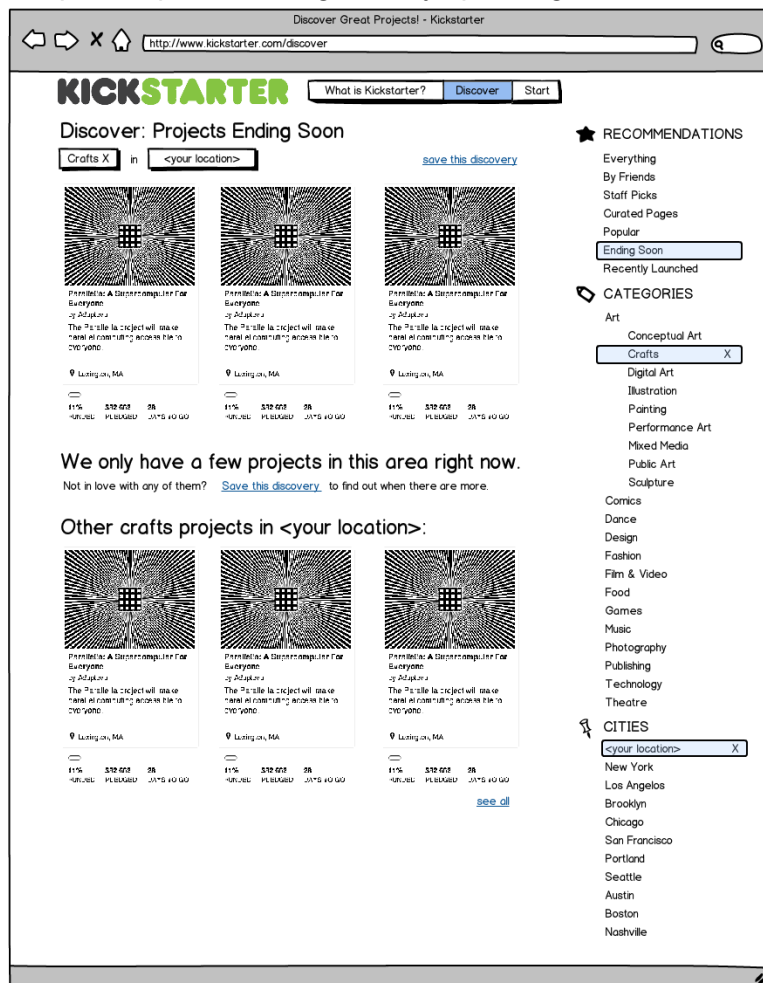
For instance, if a user has selected a category, place, and recommendation provide alternatives for:

- Category, Place
- Category, Recommendation
- Place, Recommendation

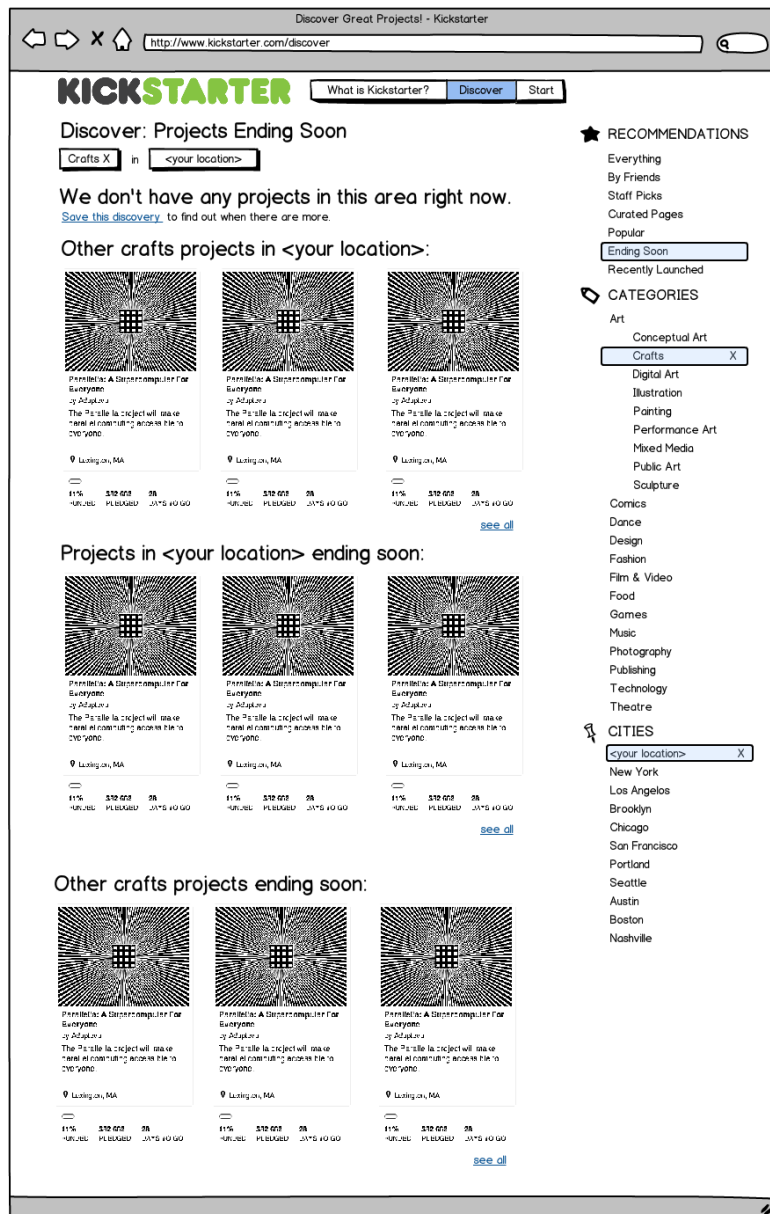
If a user has only provided a category and a place:

- All for that place
- All for that category

Not picture perfect, but generally speaking:



We should do a similar thing when no projects are available.

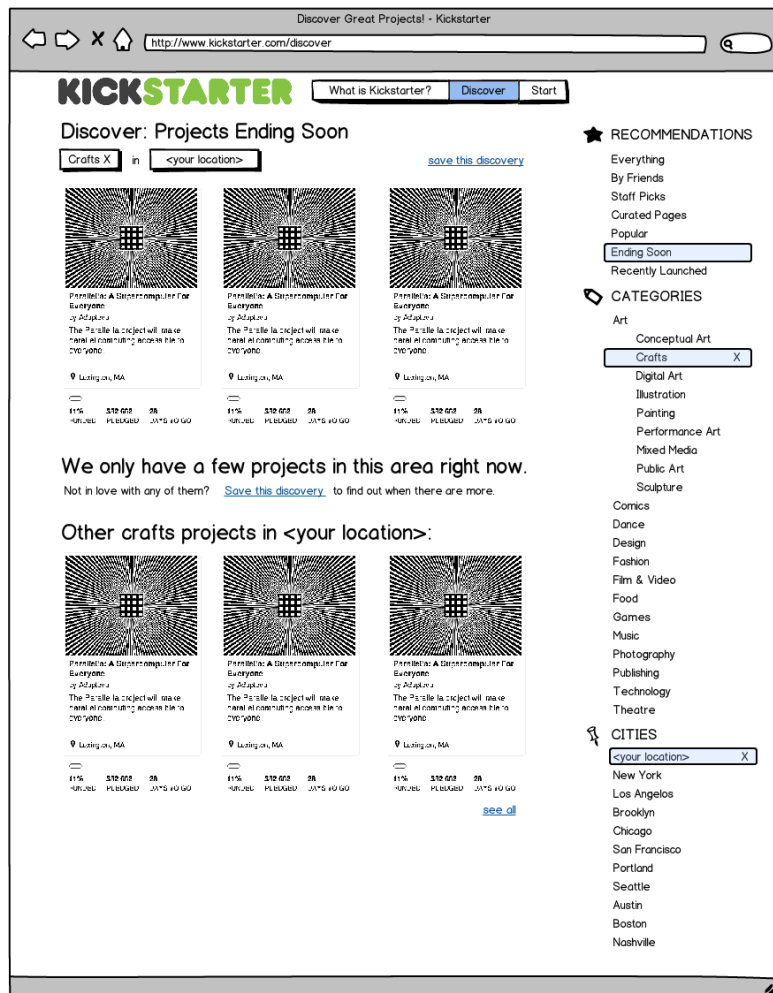


Saving Discoveries

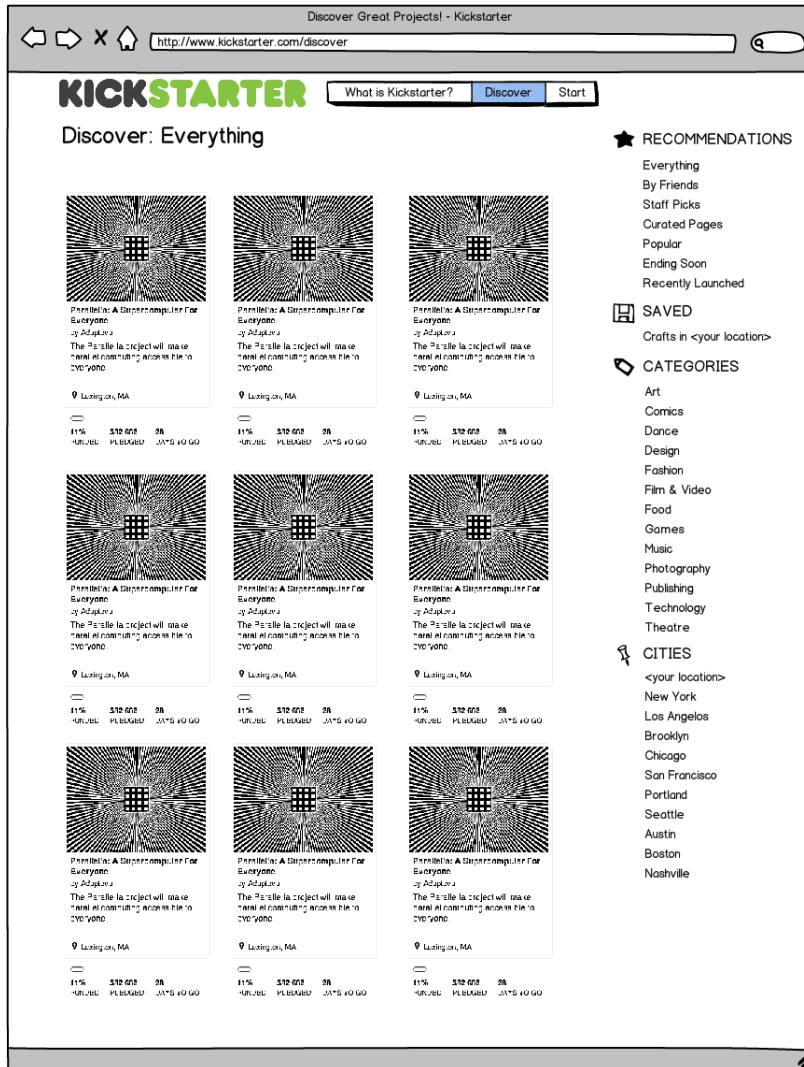
I also added an option to save a discovery. If a user wants to continually get back to the same set of filters (i.e. they're always interested in film projects in Seattle or Detroit) they should be able to quickly get to those. Once a project is saved, it should just serve to overlay filters.

Offering a user the chance to save and be alerted (such as by email) by projects in an area of interest may also convince a user to sign up. If they do so, they'd get the benefit of the social features, and we'd be better able to give recommendations.

In this case, for instance, there aren't many options for Crafts Ending Soon in <your location>:



If the user clicked on “save this discovery” they would go through a screen to set preferences (i.e. for email) and after providing a title, they’d get a category for saved filters on the right hand side with their titles for filter sets under it.



Then, if the user clicked under the SAVED header in the right hand bar to “Crafts in <your location>” would re-set the filters to be “crafts” and <your location> (i.e. Portland or something).

Summary of Key Changes in the Browse Experience

1. Changing features to recommendations.
2. Allowing layering of multiple categories and/or cities.
3. Default view of Staff Picks in <your location> and alternatives to the default view for when there aren't enough projects.
4. Infinite scroll rather than discrete categories when browsing.
5. Design for few/no projects in a set of filters.
6. Allowing “saving” of discoveries.

Section Three: A Share Feature

1. Experience Goals

- A user can always share a project to whoever they want (people on Kickstarter, Facebook, Twitter, a website, or everyone).
- Let a user show a project to friends without necessarily backing it themselves.

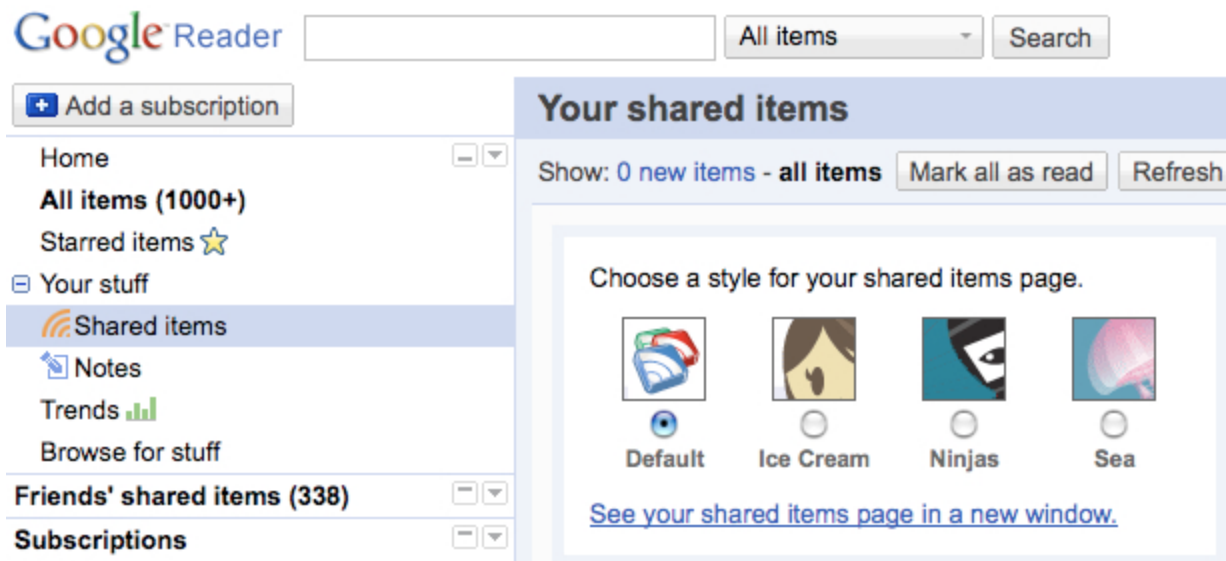
2. Areas of Challenge

- Making sharing/social not feeling intrusive.
- Lightweight experience, hopefully lightweight engineering cost (especially given all the work that already went into developing the current social features).
- Handling sharing as a transient experience (not all shared projects will be funded).

3. Inspirations

One of my favorite sharing experiences was the former Google reader sharing experience. It was beneficial because you were quickly able to view everything your friends had shared (usually high quality) and it was specific to the platform.

It used to look like this,



The design to add an item to your friends' shared feed looked like this:



4. The Design:

For Sharing



Like 162 people like this. Be the first of your friends. [email](#) [Tweet](#) [Embed](#) <http://kck.st/QmH73O>

A book of lessons and inspiration on creating standout user experiences.

Launched: Sep 13, 2012
Funding ends: Oct 13, 2012
[Remind me](#) [share](#)

Email Button

This is common in news stories, and there are some commonalities between news stories/Kickstarter - the part where you might want to share to one specific person, and the part where it's a transient piece of information (news isn't relevant forever, and Kickstarter projects

aren't up forever).

Share Button

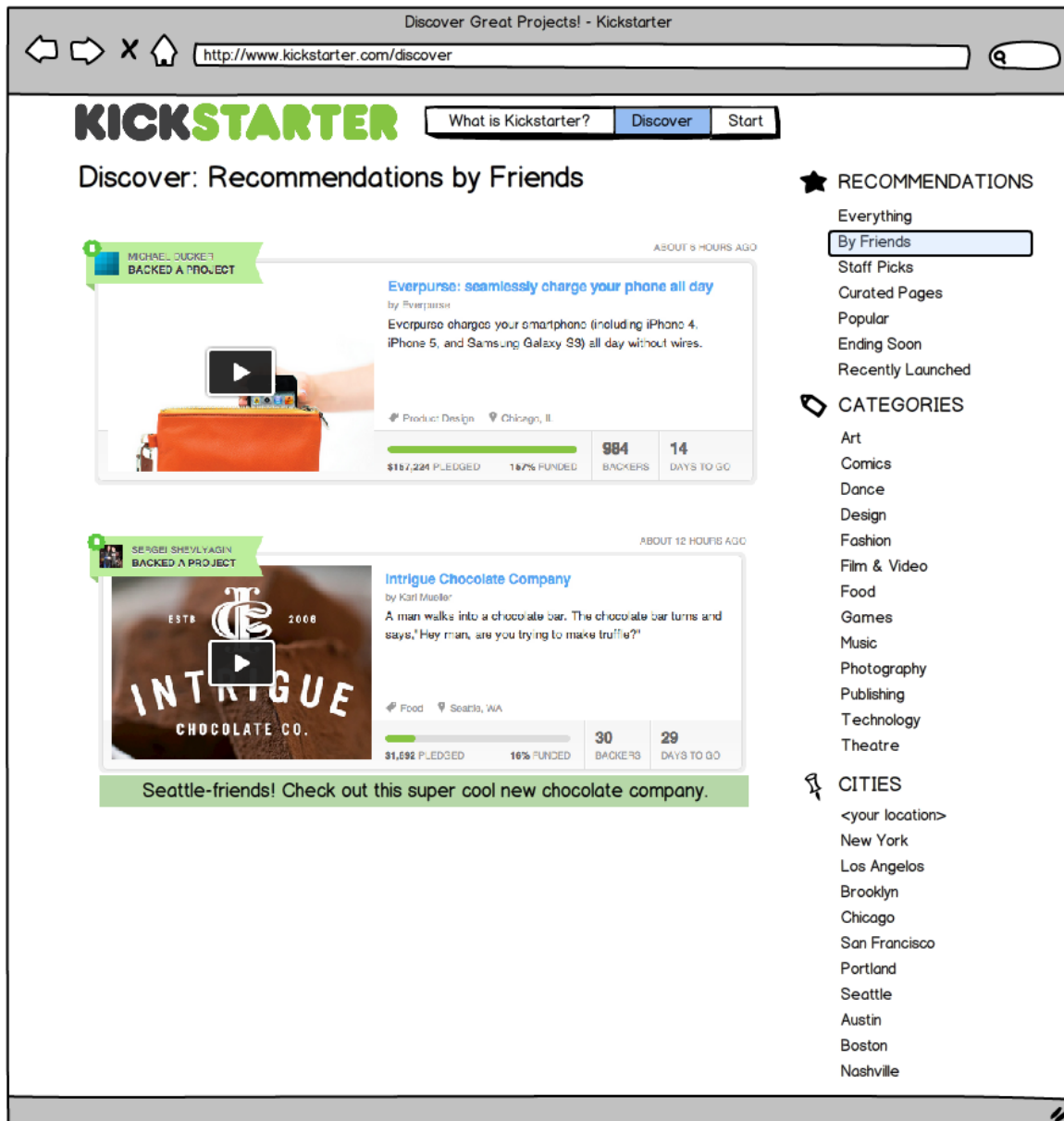
- Kickstarter already has a very passive paradigm for sharing, as projects you back are shared with Kickstarter friends.
- Kickstarter also has the concept of curation (for only specific groups/people), where you can curate a project and add a blurb. This is a type of exclusive sharing.
- Adding a "Share" button allows a user to share a project and add a blurb without necessarily backing it or having their own curated page.
 - The blurb is necessary so people know why you're sharing (it's clear why you're sharing if you already backed the project- it's because you want it to succeed!)
 - People who have a curated page could have both a share and curate button (share being only for friends, curated being the public page).
- A user might share because they see a project friends might like, but they may not be able to back right now (for financial reasons, or it isn't in their area of interest). This would be a time to share the project to those who are following you.
- Sometimes you see a project, and you aren't ready to back it. If your friends read it, and then back it, you might be more likely to back it later on, increasing overall backing.
- One liability with this might be if people shared a project hurtfully or sarcastically. Since this is only to the user's friends, hopefully this would not be too much of an issue.

For Seeing Shared Items

Backer Profile

Not planning to have the "shared" projects appear in a backers' profile. It's a transient type of sharing meant only for the activity feed/discovery.

In the Recommendations By Friends section



- Both backed and shared projects would appear.
- Provides a quick filter to see all the projects your friends were recently interested in (instead of having to go back through old emails).
- Doesn't include the other information from the activity feed.

In the Activity Feed

Shared items could also surface in the activity feed.

Section Four: Personalized Recommendations

1. Experience Goals

- We can recommend projects to the user that they like better than another random sampling, staff picks, etc.
- The user feels like the projects are picked explicitly for them.
- The user can help improve the recommendations.
- The experience feels “magical” or has some element of intrigue and doesn’t explicitly state why a user is seeing every project (especially since browsing is so explicit).
- The user occasionally sees something they would never expect.

2. Areas of Challenge

- Figuring out what a user will like, which factors have the most impact.

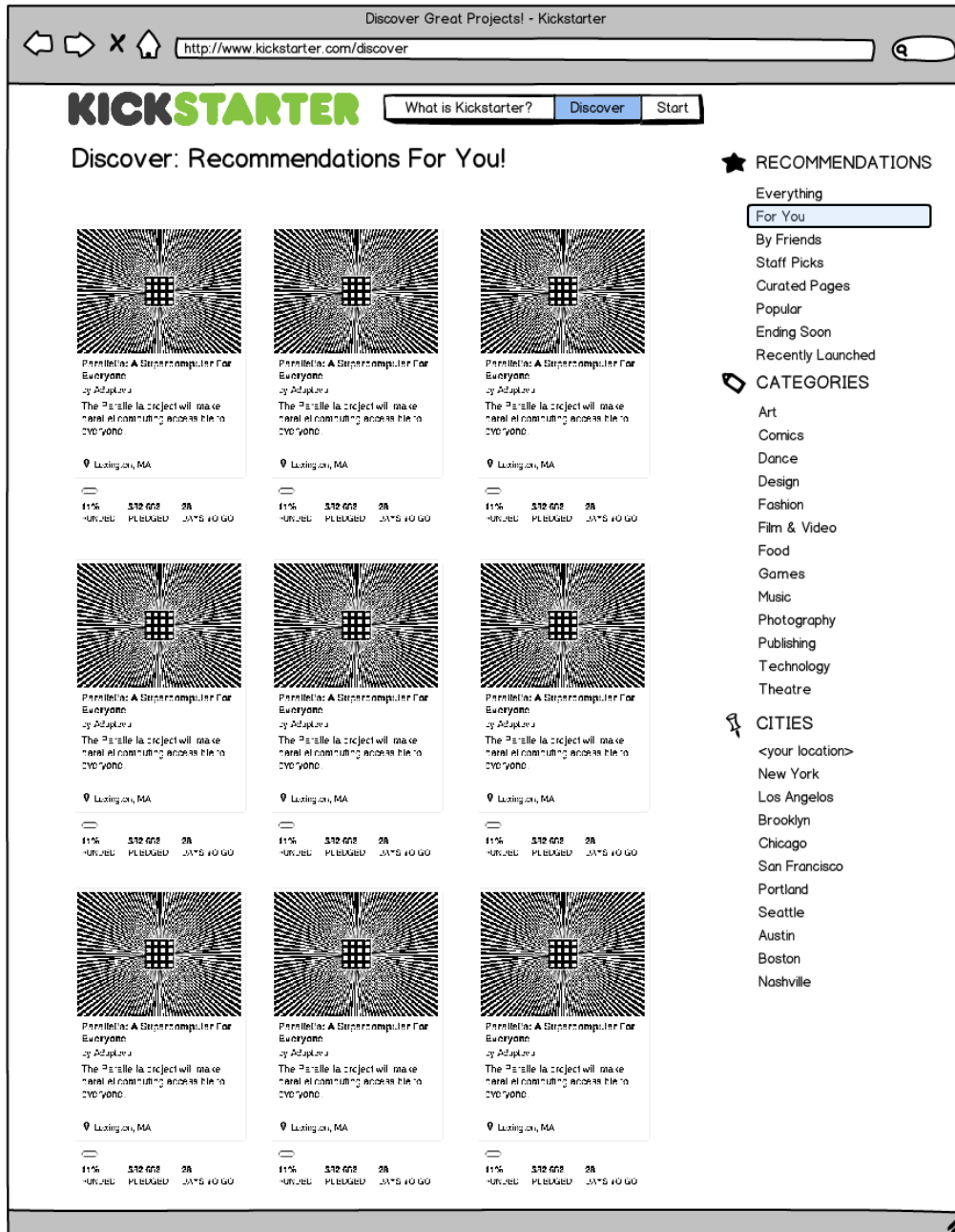
3. Inspirations

My best inspiration here is the Pandora experience. Pandora has all hand tagged music and creates a radio station based off what you like and dislike.

I’d like to include a way for user to say they like, or dislike a recommendation.

More importantly, I like the Pandora feature that allows the user to “see why this song was selected” (sorry- I can’t get an image from Germany, as Pandora isn’t available here). While Pandora says things like “Because of guitar harmony” we could include things like “because you previously backed this creator.” While we wouldn’t need to state this explicitly, if the user was curious they could find out where recommendations are coming from.

4. The Design



Visual Design

The actual design would look very similar to the other browse pages (and still allow for category/city filtering).

It would include buttons to “+” or “-” each recommendation included to help include the algorithm.

Factors to consider for recommendations

- The city you live in now
- The cities you have lived in (inferred from schools/jobs on Facebook, if Facebook connected)
- Cities you are currently in (i.e. travel)
- Creators you have backed before
- Friends who have created a project
- Friends of friends who have created a project
- Projects similar to other projects you have backed

Section Five: Other ideas

The Random Button

One of the nice things about Kickstarter is there are tons of projects. The bottom of the recommendations page could say “show me something random” or you could create a page for kickstarter.com/random that just displays a random project. This could have something like Stumbleupon so you could keep hitting “next next next” on random projects, just to get an exposure to a wide range of things.

Kickstarter Roulette

You could also do something based off of the backing wheel. I used to love the “Wheel of Enchantment” on Neopets (which looks a lot like the backing wheel). You could do a spin of the wheel to get a category, then show a random project within that category. You could weight this to favor categories based on how much you’ve backed them, or the inverse (to try to expose a user to new categories).

Allow Every User a Curated Page

I’m sure there’s a good reason this doesn’t exist. It did occur to me though, so I figured I’d throw it in. It’d be almost like a Pinterest board.

Different ways to show Funding Goals

- Not show funding goals at all. This would force users to just focus on the project and if they want one, and less on the funding level. I think this would be a detriment (i.e. people probably feel more confident funding things that already have funding).
- You could go the opposite way and give more details, by showing the probability that a project will be funded.

- You could surface a random fact about the funding level, such as “most people are backing at the X level for X reward.”

Lightweight Backing

Currently, a user has to have a full account to back. What if we let users back using only an email address, then, with permission tracked items they backed? After several backings they might decide to formally join, and we'd be able to create the backing page off of what we already knew.

Appendix: Pros and Cons

To come up with Pros & Cons I looked primarily to a few things:

- A heuristic walkthrough.
- Observing someone that I don't know well browse Kickstarter (he had browsed before, but never used the site to back something).
- My own experience using/browsing Kickstarter over the past 1-2 years.
- How my mom has used Kickstarter in the last 6 months - 1 year.

This is a pretty rough table I came up with based on a few pages of initial notes:

	Pros	Cons
Homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picks city based on my location if I'm not logged in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still get an explanation of what Kickstarter is when logged in, even though I've already backed lots of things. • I only see one project when logged in. • Categories aren't linked with colors. • Don't take advantage of surfacing my different location (Germany vs. Seattle). • Popular things that are surfaced have frequently already been funded, so there's nothing I can do with them.
Social & Emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like that it's about connecting to FB, not Twitter • Being able to opt out of emails is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone I know launches a project and someone I know backs something are VERY different. • Friend-ing doesn't prioritize people I'm not already friends with.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like friend-backing emails, but any way to aggregate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe have the activity feed be full page and not the drop down?
Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to navigate because everything behaves the same way • Like the small projects category 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling projects that fall in multiple categories (i.e. theatre and art) • Recently funded in list vs. recently launched in sidebar • How do staff picks really work? • What are curated pages? • How to show that categories expand • Can't back without logging in