CMSI 370-01
Interaction Design
Fall 2015

Assignment 1020 (due 1022) Feedback

All applicable outcomes can now reach maximum proficiency values with this assignment.

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Notes while reading:

- That initial breakdown for the common forms of task management is very well done. Illustrations for each version would have helped convey the message with more impact. (*2a*)
- Ah, and there you have it in the *Component in Action* video. Pulling some static screenshots from that video would fill in the image need of the earlier section quite nicely. +(*2a*)
- Good general coverage in the *Variants* section. Nice starting point for a future contributor. +(*1a*)
- The *Priority Metrics* section is particularly well-written. The implications of each metric go in-depth nicely, for the three task switcher variants. I also like how discoverability is called out as a lingering learnability issue for task switchers; that continues to bother me about existing user interface designs. The observation of the hotkey method's specialized behavior when going back and forth between the same two tasks is a good one as well; worth exploring further in the future. +(*1b*, *2b*)
- The *Key Characteristics* section misses the point somewhat though, by ceding all discussion to the *Priority Metrics* section. Although it is true that some metrics also get mentioned as principles (Tognazzini's "efficiency of the user" and Shneiderman's "prevent errors" come to mind), note that metrics come into play *after* the fact—measuring performance—while guidelines and principles come *before* (during design and implementation). This makes them quite distinct, and in fact some principles may affect multiple metrics. You have ideas like consistency and feedback which I think can make for substantive discussions. How about Fitts's law when it comes to the task bar/tray? Some lost opportunity here. (*1b*, *2b*)
- The state diagram is quite thorough, although I think this pertains more to the states of tasks *within* a task switcher, rather than the states of the task switcher itself. (*2a*)
- For *Platform-Specific Instances*, it may seem repetitive, but I think parts of the *Component in Action* video should be pulled out and included under each paragraph for context. Imagine when this page is expanded to cover more platforms—*then* it won't seem quite as repetitive. (*2a*)
- For references, didn't you at least consult the Windows guidelines? Or did a lot of this information come solely from your knowledge/experience with Windows? If the latter, for the purposes of more formal work (like this one), it is worthwhile to track down sources for your knowledge. The material then comes across with more authority, and links that users can consult when they need more clarification or detail about something that you mentioned. (*4d*)

1a — **+** …The writeup sufficiently captures and conveys the expected mental model when interacting with task switchers, I'd say.

1b — **|** …The *Priority Metrics* section is the sole section that clearly brings in external, autonomous sources for the topic at hand. Ideally we want more of this injected throughout the writeup, with the *Key Characteristics* section being the one with the greatest need for more of this. But other sections can certainly benefit from this too.

2a — **|** …The entry is generally well-executed, but could have leveraged its video much better by picking out parts and presenting them in more specific contexts throughout the page, primarily *Typical Appearance & Behavior* and *Platform-Specific Instances*.

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2b — | …Alongside *1b*, the interaction design discussion here is strongest in *Priority Metrics* and weakest in *Key Characteristics*. Aspects of design decision-making can also appear in the other sections.

4d — | …Your own personal knowledge of task switchers, particularly in Windows, definitely comes through here, but for greater authority we want to bring in more information and sources. The one other source that is consulted for sure but not mentioned is Jakob Nielsen, who wrote about the metrics in *Usability Engineering*.

4e — You successfully issued a pull request. But all of the work landed in a single humongous commit, with a pretty generic message (precisely because the commit was that huge). The work needs to be timed and paced better. (/)

4f — Submitted on time. (+)

Update based on discussions made on 2015-11-10:

4e — Some consideration granted to accommodate initial confusion with pull requests and repositories. Still, knowing that this specific aspect is graded in the course, some form of explanation *before* the fact would have been called for (e.g., like in the description of the pull request). (|)

Updated feedback and proficiencies based on 2015-12-13 commit:

1b — | …The new content primarily quotes the Microsoft Windows Guidelines in the *Platform-Specific Instances* section. This is a good change, but the section that *really* needs additional concepts mentioned, *Key Characteristics*, continues to be missing such concepts. Fitts's Law is applicable; consistency; feedback; latency reduction; clearly-marked exits; the list is long—lots to choose from. Efficiency is there, but it already was, in the previous section.

2a — + …Added illustrations in *Platform-Specific Instances* are very helpful.

2b — | …No additional grounded discussion noted.

4d — | …The inclusion of Windows Guidelines helps, but more is needed. Nielsen was mentioned in the feedback but was not used beyond the already-existing usability metrics.

4e — | …Just one commit, no real reason to bump this.