

Date: 26.10.2023

Design Thinking Phase(s): Empathize_Define_Prototype

Topic: "A Crime of the Spirit"

User: Students (Outside)

This week, I briefly re-engaged with the Empathize phase by observing students outside the library. Following this, I looked closer at my personas and sought to make my problem statement more precise. Considering I had a productive time ideating with friends last week, I skipped engaging more with this stage (for now) and went directly to developing three low-fidelity prototypes.



EMPATHIZE

Observation: Students were observed outside the central library between 12:45-1:30. It was not raining, and special attention was placed on 1.) students coming outside of the library and 2.) students coming from another area but sitting near the library. Areas slightly further away from the library were also examined to see how other students were interacting at this time. Observations were caught via note-taking and photography (see images to Right).

DEFINE

Personas: Two personas (Pieter and Anna) were previously developed on Miro. Using data from interviews and observation, as well as feedback from last week’s exercises, I returned to these personas. This time, emphasis was placed on *feelings* that were missing and less on the individual study habits Pieter and Anna shared with the library. Detailed and succinct paragraphs were made for each persona rather than placing individual insights on sticky notes (See images to the right).

Point-Of-View: Having engaged more with my personas, I sought to make my problem statement more precise by focusing on the unique qualities of my user group. Miro was used to engage with this, and I updated my overall Space Saturate from the previous weeks to reflect the changes/developments.

PROTOTYPE

Idea from previous week: “Stick it to ‘em!’: the idea is inspired from an old hockey board game. Little books are put on moveable sticks and can be moved around "the ice" (here, it could be set like the library's collection) On each side of the board there are two "goals" (maybe bookshelves) titled KUL and UCL. Players then must decide which books will go to each library according to the rules in place from 1968 (which they, most likely, don't know at the beginning of the game). Once they think they have found the correct answer, a QR code can be used to check answers (with also a link to an informational page about the library and this history).”

Low-Fidelity Prototypes: Three low-fidelity prototypes were developed based on a sketched idea from the previous week (see description above). Updates to my personas and POV were taken into consideration when constructing the prototypes. Each prototype was developed strictly out of materials available in my house and no new items were purchased (see image to the right). This included: 1.) tape 2.) scissors 3.) old cardboard boxes 4.) paper 5.) wood skewers used for cooking 5.) green, red, and black markers and 6.) little book cutouts I had developed for an earlier version of my cultural probe (which were originally meant to be recycled before prototype phase). Each prototype was (roughly) in accordance with a 1:1 scaling framework, though sizing will certainly need to be adjusted when entering more advanced stages of the prototype phase. Potential electronic pieces/interfaces of the prototypes were drawn on each of the physical designs and are theoretically doable, though I will need feedback on this.

Method(s) used: observation, personas, point-of-view, low-fidelity prototyping

Observation: Photos



Define: Persona / POV (Anna)

Anna is a bachelor student studying History at KU Leuven. Though she is currently living in a KU Leuven kot, she grew up elsewhere within Flanders and goes home most weekends to her family. She speaks Dutch fluently, English quite well, and French and German a little bit. Her classes are mostly taught in Dutch, though some are also taught in English. This doesn't bother her because she welcomes the diversity it brings to Belgium (i.e. students coming from other European cities on Erasmus programs). This might make a couple of classes more difficult for her, but she is accepting of it as a relatively passionate student in her program.

Being Flemish, Anna is well aware of the historic tension between Dutch and French speaking people in Belgium, though not necessarily all of the facts about how this history relates to the library (such as the 1968 split). Her engagement with the central library is actually quite minimal – she doesn't actively study there, preferring to study at her faculty library or at home. She only really comes across the central library while waiting for friends outside at Ladeuzeplein or near the library's bike parking/front steps, heading to the train station, or sitting/eating on the library benches while waiting out a rainstorm. Using the space for such purposes is not hard, especially considering her lectures occur just around the corner at the Erasmushuis.

As a History major, Anna believes that the library is a valuable building, one that is beautiful, historic, and still an important spot for archival research. She has been on tours of the library but associates these more with class field trips when she was a child or experiences when first moving to Leuven. Her own research is not specific to Leuven's history, so she only engages with the library when picking up the odd book here or there (though that happens rarely because of all the books that have become digitalized). Unfortunately, the library's strict rules reinforce this lack of engagement. Anna finds the inability to bring in a water bottle or backpack quite frustrating. The noise made by other students or tourists doesn't help either.

Because she doesn't go to the library to study, she ends up sitting on her phone, listening to music, or eating a snack when waiting by the library for the reasons mentioned above. If there are not too many people around, she might even phone home/friends. These activities act more as a way to "kill time" than anything else.

Anna wishes she knew more about the library but is not all that committed to exploring the inside of it much more. In other words...

Anna NEEDS a more informal way to engage with the library's history BECAUSE she is intellectually curious, is aware of Belgian history, perceives the library as historically important, but uses the library as more of an intermediary "waiting" space than an active place of study.

Prototype: Material Used



Define: Persona / POV (Pieter)

Pieter is a bachelor student in a STEM related field at KU Leuven. Though he is currently living in a KU Leuven kot, he grew up elsewhere within Flanders and goes home most weekends to his family. He speaks Dutch fluently, English quite well, and French and German a little bit. His classes are mostly taught in Dutch and are not located as close to the library as Anna, though he still makes the journey by bike.

Being Flemish, Pieter is well aware of the historic tension between Dutch and French speaking people in Belgium, though not necessarily all of the facts about how this history relates to the library (such as the 1968 split). His engagement with the library is fairly active – it is one of his main places of study. Though Pieter finds the library rules annoying and never checks out any of the books, the library's character and aesthetic beauty inspire him.

Because Pieter is willing to put up with the library rules in order to experience the beauty of the library's study spaces, he often stays for long periods and will leave the main study room for short periods to drink water or eat a snack. If it is sunny enough, he will go sit out at Ladeuzeplein while snacking on a piece of fruit and scrolling on his phone. If it is rainy or a bit colder, he will stay under the library's protective covering and either sit or walk back-and-forth on his phone until he is prepared to go back inside. If he is with friends, they may accompany him in this. In a similar way to Anna, this is a "wasting time" activity, though one that acts as an important refresher.

Pieter believes that the library is an important building and wishes he knew more about it when asked. He might not directly care about the books in it *today*, but still sees value in the history behind them. He is interested in this history, but admittedly not really that committed with looking it up himself (with the exception of doing a library tour when he first came to Leuven years ago).

In other words...

Pieter NEEDS an easy way to engage with the library's history on his study breaks BECAUSE he is intellectually curious and is a fan of the library but lacking in initiative or time when he is doing class work in the library's main study room.

Results:

EMPATHIZE

Observation: Considering there was no rain, many students were sitting outside at Ladeuzeplein or the benches near the fountain at the left of the library. Some younger students had gathered at the benches at the Library's left entrance. Since my last documentation, the library has also put out several aggressive signs discouraging students from eating near the library. (see photons on previous slide).

DEFINE

Personas / Point-Of-View: See images on previous page. New POV for Anna → Anna NEEDS a more informal way to engage with the library's history BECAUSE she is intellectually curious, is aware of Belgian history, perceives the library as historically important, but uses the library as more of an intermediary "waiting" space than an active place of study.

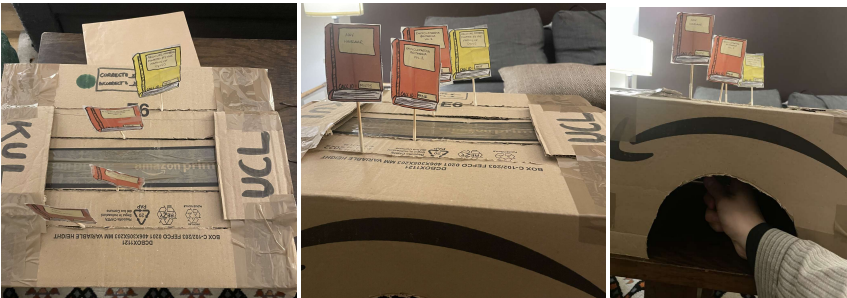
PROTOTYPE

Prototype 1: The goal is to have a library-based room (here, just a box) with designs in it that make it look like KU Leuven's library. Sticking out of it are little books on pegs and the user/player must decide if they should be sent to KUL or UCL. Ideally there would be a way for the design to comprehend which answers are correct and incorrect so the user/player can continue until they have properly "shelved" all the books (i.e., an interface that says XX correct and XX incorrect after they have moved the books). For instance, I imagined a sensor on each of the pegs that corresponds with another sensor at the side it belongs. A button could then be used to reveal correct and incorrect messages. Either an informational plaque or QR code could be used to provide more information on the 1968 divide of the library, so the user has an opportunity to learn more after playing the game. Ideally, this would be located outside of the library in the protected area (near where bikes are stored, possibly). Then Anna or Pieter (my two Personas) could engage with this history quite casually while waiting around the outside of the library.

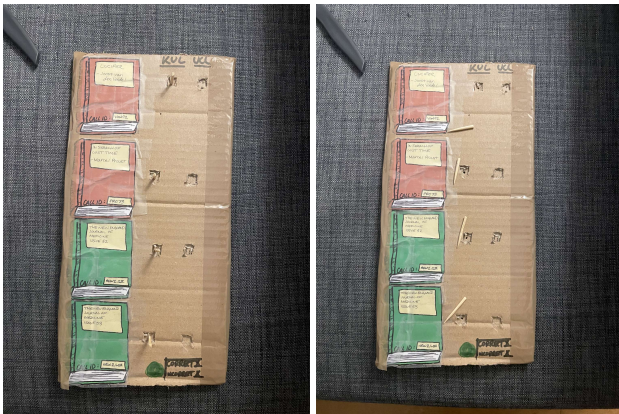
Prototype 2: This design follows the same idea as Prototype 1, but it would be on a flat plaque and use pegs instead of books on sticks. The pegs would hang from the plaque on a string or metal chain, leaving the user/player in need of guessing how to peg the books – would it belong to the KUL or UCL during the 1968 split? Ideally, each book would have a correct answer programmed into the design, so when the user/player hits the green button (lower right-hand corner) it would say how many are correct/incorrect. Without saying exactly which are correct/incorrect, the player/user would need to continue to play until it says all are correct. Again, this is designed to be placed outside the library, possibly on the wall near one of the benches at the left/right entrances.

Prototype 3: Unlike Prototypes 1 and 2, this design would be used to focus on one (or a few) book(s) at a time. A digital interface could ask the main question: Where would this book (or in some cases, books) have gone during the 1968 split? The user/player can answer individually (Here, Green button for KUL, Red Button for UCL) with an immediate response letting them know if they are correct/incorrect. If possible, there could be a programmed answer that provides more information on the book itself as it relates to the split. This could be interesting because I could then look closer at some of the contentious features of the split (i.e., certain books that went to one of the university when the other library really wanted them).

Prototype 1



Prototype 2



Prototype 3



Future Actions:

EMPATHIZE

I am satisfied (for now) with the work I have done in the empathize phase, and I think I know my end user quite well. For now, I do not see the need for any more interviews, but I will continue to observe and possibly deploy more cultural probes as I work on my prototype phase.

DEFINE

I am happy with the personas I am developing and their POV's. Because I have developed more thorough descriptions of my user, I would like to now compare with other classmates who are also dealing with students outside. I would like to see if there is anything I have implicitly overlooked. I would also like to discuss my POV with others to see if my problem statement is strong enough. I feel more confident in it, but I am hopeful for some constructive feedback.

PROTOTYPE

I am happy with the three designs I have produced (particularly prototype 1) and would like to continue developing them. Next steps would involve testing the more theoretical or technical aspects for my designs. For instance, I must figure out whether there is a way for Correct and Incorrect answers to show based on the user/player's choices when playing the game.

OTHER

One question I am grappling with is whether students will engage with this game. Based on my interviews and observations, I think so (see my personas for more on this too). I think this idea offers an easy way to engage with the library and is pointed towards students who are intellectually curious but in a state of "waiting" for maybe a friend (such as in Anna's case) or on a study break (such as in Pieter's). I do feel a lack of certainty around this though, and maybe I could find to be more confident in this *before* getting too far in developing it? Maybe I could deploy a different probe that mimics similar modes of engagement and see if students engage? If you can provide any feedback on this, that would be great.