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COM 421 - Technical Communication
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Documenting the Usability Audit

Usability Audit for IIT mobile ID

Objective:

This usability evaluation analyzes and documents the usability barriers to the IIT MobileID app, which allows users to access restricted areas of the campus without using their physical ID. Despite its practical purpose, the app's functionality is affected by a number of flaws.

These include:

1. **Challenges in implementing the technology:**
    - **The accuracy of the phone's location can be affected if the location recorded does not match the user's actual location.**
    - **Users are required to manually disable virtual private networks in order to access queries properly, as these are incompatible with VPN use.**

2. **Interface limitations:**

    - **Unclear and confusing location names, such as "## Indoor Parking Lot," can cause user discomfort, especially in areas with multiple entrances or exits.**
    - **A simple and outdated user interface must have the required functionalities to facilitate task completion or navigation.**

3. **Inefficiencies in the user workflow:**

    - **Requiring users to access the app, log in, and manually choose the correct location to unlock doors can lead to potential errors and delays.**
    - **The audit will detail monitoring users performing critical tasks within the app, such as identifying specific locations and opening doors.**

User feedback will also be collected to identify areas for improvement and pain points. The primary goal is to provide informed redesign suggestions that improve the app's usability, such as including digital wallets (such as Apple Wallet) and implementing a map feature to make choosing a location easier.

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Participants:

Tasks Observed

Observations

A significant variation in app awareness and usage was noted among participants. While some students, had never heard of the Mobile ID application, others used it occasionally, with frequencies ranging from "rarely, if ever" to "a couple of times per month." Commonly reported access points included dorm rooms, residence halls, and classrooms, indicating that the app is primarily associated with these locations. Many participants highlighted recurring issues that hindered their user experience. Frequent problems included login failures, the app needing to respond when trying to open doors, and confusion about which location to select. Location-related issues, such as the app not working with VPNs or location services being disabled, were also common.

Additionally, some respondents found the app inconvenient because it always prompted for a PIN code and automatically opened a preselected door, reducing its flexibility. When asked about desired improvements, the majority expressed enthusiasm for features like wallet integration, enabling access through facial recognition without needing physical scanners, and an in-app map to visualize all scanner locations. These features were compared to similar functionalities in widely used applications like Apple Wallet and the Ventra app. Some participants also suggested that the app should provide better feedback, such as indicating proximity to the scanner and whether the user was close enough for successful access.

Debriefing Responses

The feedback revealed a mix of frustration and optimism regarding the app's potential. Many respondents found the current version of Mobile ID unreliable, with issues like app crashes and poor responsiveness being major deterrents. However, they also recognized the app's utility when functioning correctly. The majority supported integrating features that would streamline access, such as wallet-based scanning and location mapping, emphasizing that these would significantly enhance the user experience. Others suggested that improving the app’s design and providing clearer feedback during use would help resolve confusion and usability challenges.

Conclusion

The Mobile ID application presents a promising tool for improving accessibility at Illinois Tech, but its current state falls short of expectations. A lack of awareness among some users and inconsistent functionality among those who use the app regularly

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highlights areas needing attention. Frequent glitches, login issues, and unintuitive design choices have negatively impacted the user experience. Despite these challenges, there is strong interest in enhancing the app with wallet integration, an in-app map, and clearer feedback mechanisms. Addressing these concerns and implementing the suggested features could not only resolve the issues reported but also encourage broader adoption and satisfaction among the student body.