

COMP 3020 : Human Computer Interaction 1

Assignment 1

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Breadth

Dimmer Knob

While over at a friend's recently I was instructed to turn on a light, which was done fairly easily by pushing the knob like a button. My friend then instructed me to make it brighter which I intuitively knew would be done by turning it to the right. Unfortunately said dimmer didn't have a proper end stop, and when I turned it to max the knob fell off. This has happened on various occasions, and even though its very easy to just put the knob back on, I find it to be a failure in design that could have easily been rectified. In terms of the good, the knob has the familiarity of having the left as the negative side and the right as the positive side as well as having the switch being a button press which is also similar to pressing a switch. However the bad of having the knob fall off whenever you try to turn the lights on all the way is an issue. Ideas that I came up with to deal with the issue include gluing the knob onto the dial it sits on or put markings on the knob and on the wall to indicate where the turning stops.

Using the Space Bar with Youtube

Back when Youtube introduced using the space bar to play and pause, it seemed like it would improve the user experience, and to be honest when you're only watching Youtube videos it works rather well.

However, the space bar controls don't do much for efficiency when it comes to multi-tasking. I would switch between pages to do other task, and would return to space being mapped to downwards scroll instead of play/pause. Luckily I found a workaround to this issue in the form of the application 'BeardedSpice', which allowed me to set the focus to a specific tab and just use my macbook's media keys to control Youtube, without even having to be on said tab.

Death of my phone's mic

Recently, I started to receive calls and would hear callers repeatedly calling out my name as if they couldn't hear me. I decided to investigate and came to the conclusion that the mic for the phone died. Luckily as a younger person who listens to a lot of music, I had my earbuds on hand. I plugged them in and proceeded to try calling a friend to see if the mic of the earbuds would be sufficient, and successfully they were. I put this as a plus for the design of the phone, as it allowed for anything using the mic to know to automatically switch over to the earbud's mic, thus causing a major issue to have a rather simple solution.

Winnipeg Transit and their flat 'Press to Exit' tabs

More so an issue for me personally during winter, I have seen a few people have the issue in the summer/fall months. Unlike with the older tactile 'Press here' tabs where you can feel the feedback by pressing on the tabs, the flat ones have no such feedback, which in turn makes them impossible to use with gloves and a bit 'iffy' if you aren't familiar with their operation. Personally in winter my work around is either to take off the my gloves, if that fails just walk to the front of the bus and exit.

My Camera's Ridiculously Placed Video Record Button

When upgrading to a new camera, there's some things you just have to get used to. One of these things I thought would have to be the camera's record button. It was flat, small, concave, and recessed into the body of the camera. This made pressing it a chore, and due to not having any tactile feedback, you would never know if you pressed it or not until you looked at the screen. This was a cause of frustration for awhile and recently, I decided to check the internet to see if other individuals had similar issues. Many of them suggested using custom function buttons to map 'record' to one of the custom buttons (raised buttons of bigger size with a feedback click and located on the top of the camera). No more missing shots or button frustration for me.

E2 Faucet Proximity to Basin

In the bathrooms in E2 (not sure if in any other building at U of M) they have the faucets running the water too close to the basin for use with two hands at the same time. Often I would completely forget about this issue and proceed to rub both hands together under the water, only to have my fingers bump into the basin. The workaround used when I remember to use it, is to use the faucet with one hand at a time.

Lack of Cushion on Chair's Armrests

The chair I have at my bedroom desk, was something I picked up from my landlord after he no longer had need for it and I was in the market for a more comfortable sitting solution. However the chair had its armrest padding missing and were just metal plates with bolts sticking out of them (very uncomfortable to use). To solve this issue, I had an idea to go out and find some soft material and duct tape it to the armrest, but alas due to laziness I opted to either wear my hoodie (which has soft material in the sleeves) or just swivel the armrests off to the sides so that my arms fall between the armrest and my torso.

Google Now

As a user of an android phone, I am an avid user of Google Now. It's design makes searching a lot quicker than using Chrome. In the time it would take for me to think, "I should google 'xyz'" I can literally just say "Okay google, 'xyz'". It is very efficient and quite useful (only issue now being I need to have my earbuds to use it as mentioned above). No major issues otherwise.

Playstation Voice Navigation

In a similar vein as Google Now, Playstation Voice Navigation makes life so much easier. With the ability to call apps and games by name and tell them to launch as opposed to searching around and then clicking on it. Making the navigation process quick and easy, and since I usually game with a headset anyway, all the necessary items are already in place for me to use the feature.

LinkedIn User Experience

As someone new to using linkedIn I thought the set up process would be daunting. However thanks to their design, constant feedback and intuitive introduction as to how the site works I was able to get started with it rather easily. From the "Improve your profile" option they have which very easy to find, to their constant recommendations as to things you can do to improve your chances of being found by an employer, the whole experience was just great.

Design Principles

Familiarity

Does the experience match that of something the user should be familiar with. Can they just look at it and tell what does what based on previous interaction with other things.
eg. Voice controls, are familiar because most people know how to talk to other people.

Comfort/Ergonomics

Is the experience physically pleasant for the user.
eg. The above mentioned chair is seen as a failure in design, because it's uncomfortable when used as intended.

Practicality

Is the experience suited to the intended use of the product.
eg. The record button on the camera is seen as a design flaw because, its a hard to press button which is used for one of the camera's major functions.

Functionality

Does the product fulfill a particular need of the user.

eg. The LinkedIn User Experience is very functional, as not only does it fulfill the need of having an online resumé but also walks you through how to improve what you already have.

Speed

Does the experience help speed up the user's activity or slow it down.

eg. The voice commands help speed up the activity of the user by allowing him to do in 2 quick steps what would have taken more.

Artifacts

The Good (Dualshock 4)

As someone who grew up using all previous iterations of this controller, I am very familiar with the button layout and in-game mapping. Its like second nature to me. Beside this the control contours to the hand, and the buttons are close enough so that no buttons feels out of reach. This makes using the controller for extended hours an easy task. The controller also allows for the playing of games in both 2d and 3d perspectives without ever feeling strange or out of place (at least with any game with a standard control scheme). Each button can be used for a different purposes and have very pleasing feedback when pressed. In addition to all this, this controller also has voice commands for navigation at the home screen, which then feed into its ability to speed up my navigation and thus make for a very efficient and enjoyable experience.

The Bad (Non Airblade Hand Dryers)

Though very familiar these types of hand dryers don't really have much else going for them in terms of design. They aren't very comfortable to use, as they basically feel like a human breathing one long continuous exhale on your hand. They also take almost forever to actually dry hands unless you shake the excess water off, and even when you do it still takes significantly longer than it does with an airblade or drying your hands with paper. These dryers take too long to fulfill their purpose, which in this fast paced environment basically means it fails at it. Basically it is a device which is too slow, uncomfortable and impractical to effectively function as a sensible replacement for paper towels. With all this, it's pretty easy to see why Non Airblade hand dryers are a failure at design.