

FALL 2020 INTERACTION DESIGN PROJECT

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MILESTONE 2 - DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

PROJECT INTERFACE

Summary:

gather is a social media platform that promotes inclusivity, specifically for underrepresented communities. We strive to create a safe space for these groups to openly communicate and share advice.

We have created three possible interface mock-ups to help guide our design process both visually and technologically. These sketches are all very contrasting interpretations of how we can build our app. They succeed and fail in different aspects which we discuss in the reflection at the end. The design process below outlines the main features of our application that will be reflected in the pages of the interface. We specify the main goals of each page that will be reflected in our final design.

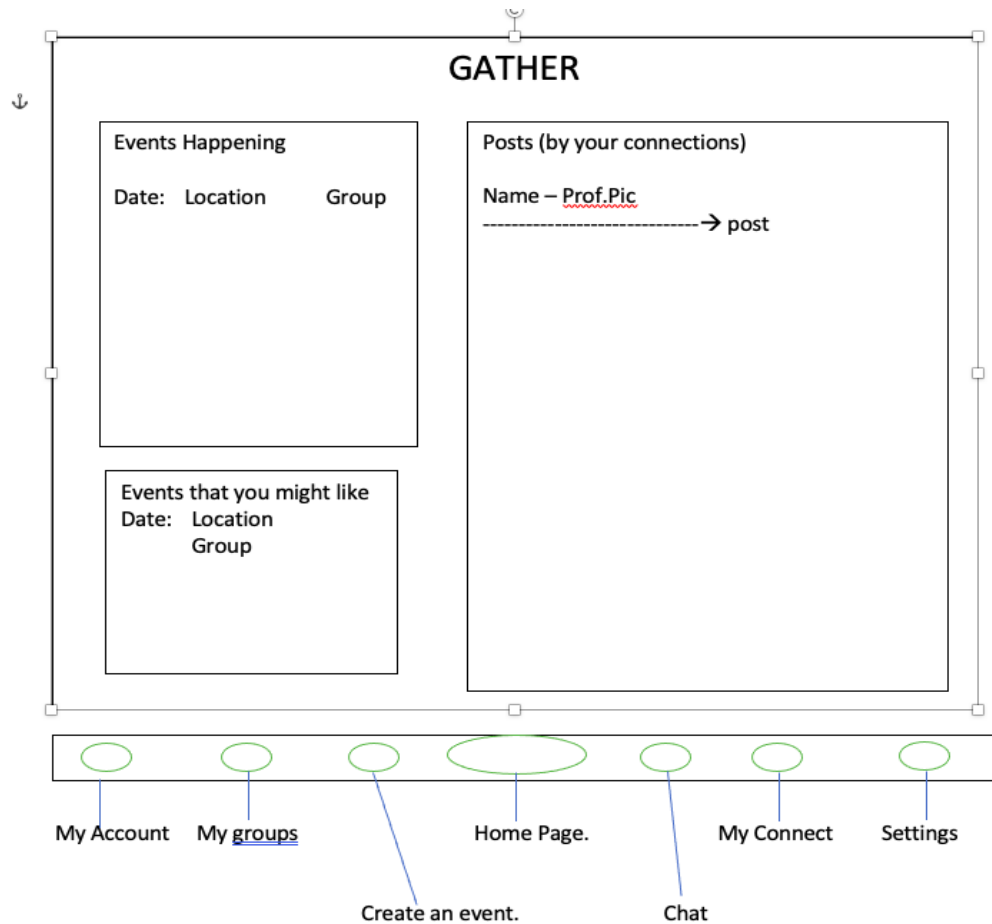
Design Process:

- Home Page: The goal of our home page is to provide our user with an interface to communicate with other members of their communities.
 - View recent posts from communities
 - Access joined communities
 - Interact with other users
 - Access profile
- Profile: Our profile/settings page allows the user to personalize their profile, the appearance of the application, and access information.
 - Access settings
 - View profile
 - Change profile
 - Access groups
- Search: The search page will be used to find new communities, posts, threads, and events happening.

- Find threads (new and old)
- Join new communities
- Find specific posts
- Locate events happening near a pinpoint on a map

DESIGN 1

Home Page:



Create Event Page:

Event Creator

Event Title: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Time: _____

Public/Private

Share w/ friends or make public?

Description

Font Font Size Font Color Bold Insert

Picture, Sticker, Emoji

CREATE

Our first iteration of the design was focused on a simple and flexible mockup that could be adapted to either a web or mobile application. When opened the application takes the user to a simplistic homepage where they are able to view different community forums, see upcoming events as well as being recommended potential events that the user may like, and a utility navigation bar at the bottom to allow the user to access the other features available to the user.

Our original focus was around the idea of "events." People can create any type of event with simple text boxes and layout to allow clearance between the different characteristics of an event. The description box also allows the user to customize the way in which they present their event and allows users more expressiveness.

Strengths:

- Simple and intuitive design to make as little explanation as needed for the user to effectively use our app.
- The bottom navbar at the bottom of the homepage allows for easy, one-click access, to all major features of our app.
- This design focuses on creating events, an aspect not as emphasized in our other designs. This encourages interaction between users and communities to a level beyond talking in threads.

Weaknesses:

- The app may be too “simplistic” and make the users bored or lose interest.
- This design does not focus on the aspect of chatting with other users as much as we would like our application to.
- The homepage is more focused on overall peer-to-peer interaction rather than community-organized forums, making it more difficult to build a searchable community.
- While we wanted the design to be adaptable for both web and mobile users there is some ambiguity that could cause confusion for a user depending on which platform they access our application from.

DESIGN 2

Home Page:



Home Page (with full community view aspect):



Profile Page:



This iteration of our application is an infinite scroller that mimics popular social media apps such as Instagram and Tiktok. On launch, the user is taken to the homepage where they are shown the most recent posts of people in their communities. They also can access their messages and profile from this page. This design also showcases a dropdown that allows the user to see all of their communities that they are a part of as well as search for new ones. Lastly it shows a profile page that has the user's most recent posts as well as their settings and saved folder.

We decided to create a design in this format because similar social media apps are extremely popular and scale well.

Strengths:

- This design is easy to use and familiar to many users that have experienced other social media platforms.
- Recent posts and communities are visible and easy to access from launch of the app.
- Homepage and Profile are well organized and can show multiple posts from different communities.

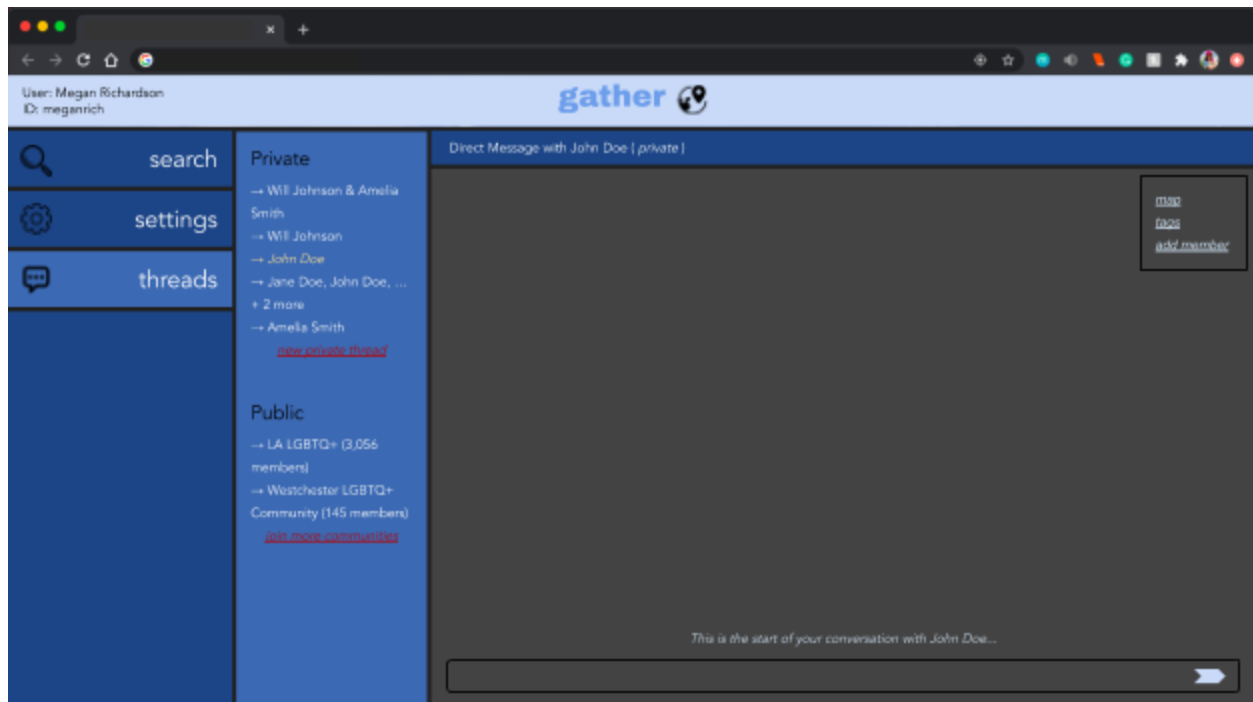
Weaknesses:

- Many important features must be hidden for a simple and clean display.
- There is a lack of personal customization.
- May be too similar to applications such as Instagram and could be seen as a “knockoff”.

DESIGN 2

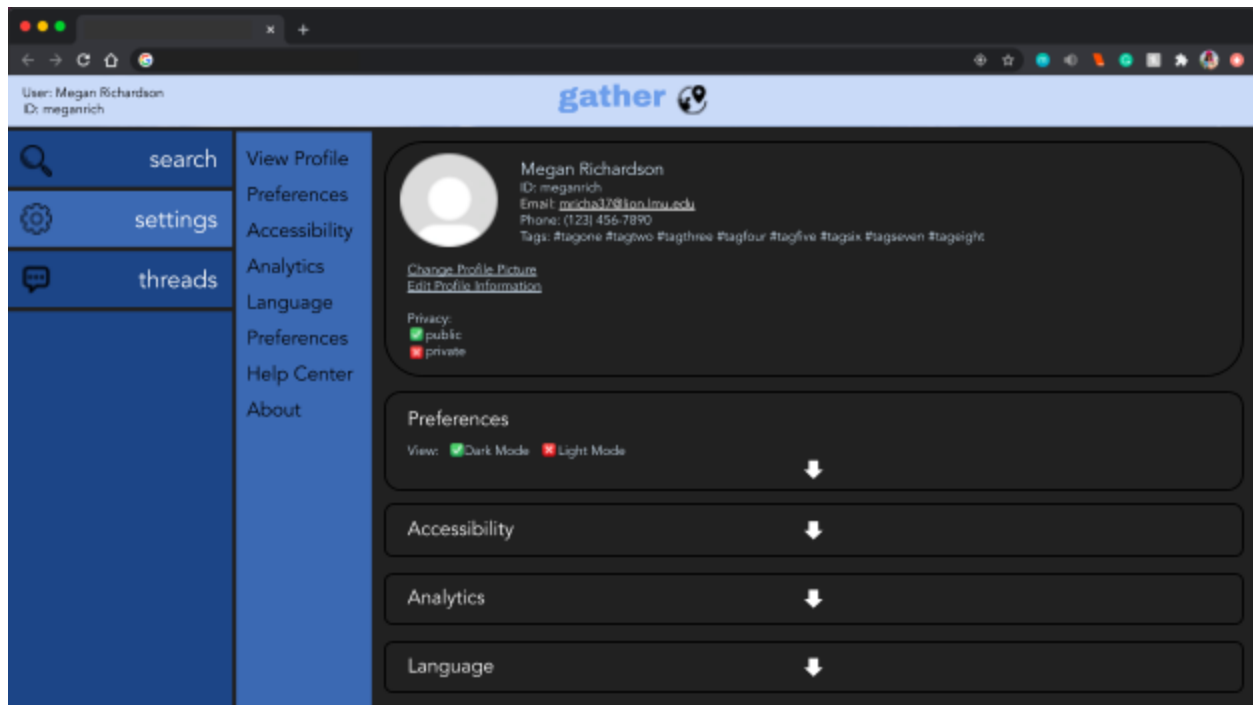
Private Chat Page:

This page below is an example of a new private conversation with one other user (John Doe). Our simple interface starts the conversation as blank and allows the user to see options, like *add member* and *map*, so that they can view information from the chat and alter it as needed. The menu to the left of the chat lists all of the threads the user is a member of. This allows the user to easily click between their chats to interact with different groups.



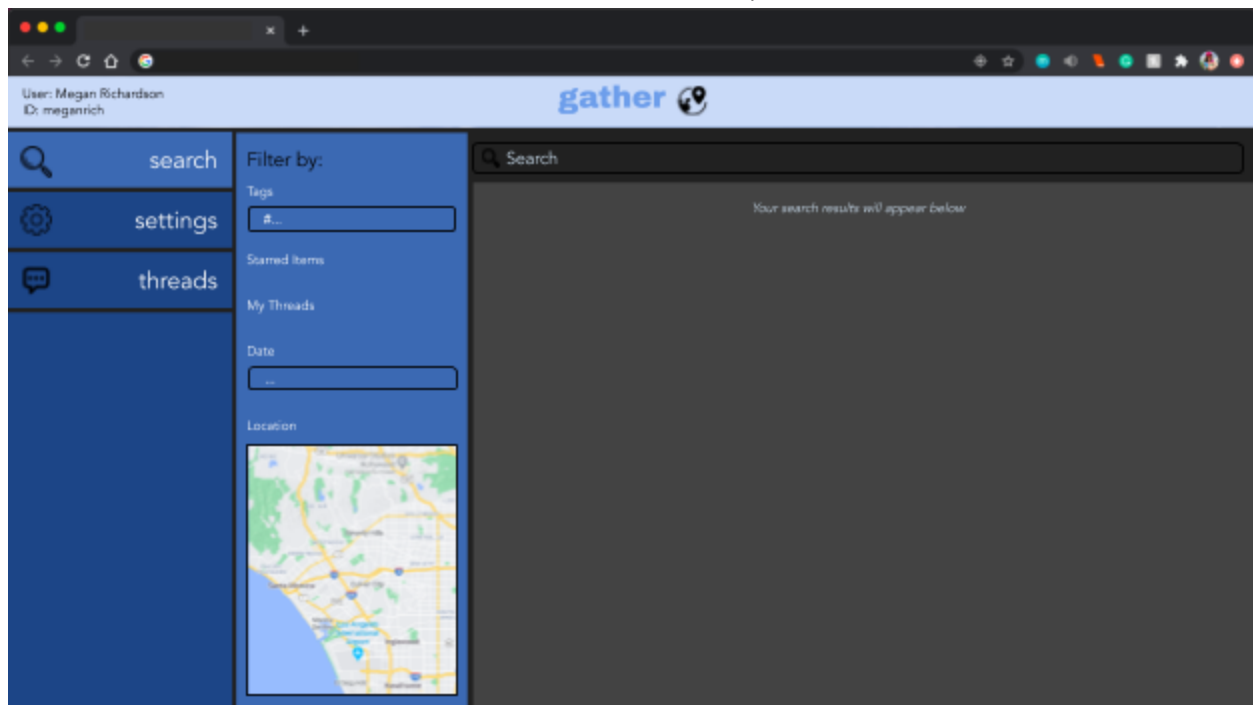
Settings Page:

This page allows the user to access and change their own profile. Changes include: community tags, profile picture, username, public/private, etc... Each setting section (i.e. Preferences, Analytics, etc...) can be clicked on to expand and see the options. The user can also personalize the appearance of the interface. For example, they can switch between Dark Mode and Light Mode depending on personal preference. The goal of the settings page is to allow the user to customize their own experience with gather and make it more enjoyable.



Search Page:

This page allows the user to discover new threads, communities, and events happening. They can filter their search in order to make the results more specific. These filter options are shown to the left of the search bar. A user can filter by tags, whether or not the user has starred/favorited the item, the date, the location (with a specified radius), etc...



This design focuses on the conversation thread aspect of the application. It is similar to other existing chat applications, such as Slack or Discord, since it displays all the different conversations (in the threads page) and allows the user to converse privately or publicly with any number of users.

Strengths:

- The design is straightforward and has a small learning curve since it is very similar to other chat applications.
- The user is always presented with all of their options on the page. This is the benefit of having a design for a computer screen, which is a larger screen than a phone.
- It focuses on the chat / thread aspect of the design, which is important since our main goal is to connect people.
- This design utilizes the map feature which adds a visual option that the other designs do not have.

Weaknesses:

- This design is less “fun” to use in comparison to a more standard social media application (i.e. Design 2).
- It does not exclusively include an event maker option, like Design 1. Instead, it is implied that users can casually share events inside community threads.
- It might have a design that is fundamentally too simple. Thus, it may not hold the user's attention as well.
- The design could be too similar to Slack or Discord, since the user interfaces are alike.

REFLECTION

Before we started designing, we met up to agree on the basic design of gather and how we could create three fundamentally different versions of the same application. Our designs evolved from the initial to final stages through our meetings and physically drawing out our ideas before recreating them on the computer. Those initial drawings were extremely simple and used to inspire our current design options. We met up throughout the design process to ensure that all team members were on the same page and that the visuals were not too similar, but not too contrasting where they look like completely separate applications.

The main similarities between the different variations of design are the core design features that we would like to be the main focus of our design. In general, we want an easily navigable overall design, with a focus on an informative homepage, expressive profile, and diverse search functionalities. Regardless of how we move forward in the design process, our design will include a simple login page (not diagramed above).

The key difference between each design is the platform that we would like to implement our design. This means a web versus mobile application with our designs being respectively focused on either type of application (or both types). Our different designs also fundamentally differ in what they focus on. Design 1 highlights the event aspect, Design 2 focuses on the interactive community features, and Design 3 emphasizes the chat thread and communication part of our interface.

At this stage in the design process, we are focusing on Design 2, since we want our application to be more appealing and fun for our target users. This typical social media “scroll” feature, that Design 2 utilizes, is common and well received for popular social media apps. This design achieves our goal of providing a safe space for people in underrepresented groups to communicate, while also being visually captivating and engaging.