CMSI 370-01
INTERACTION DESIGN
Fall 2012

Assignment 1129 Feedback

Chris Whiting

1a — Your intended mental model, and the way your design aims to communicate that model to the user, is clearly stated. (**+**)

1c — There are no explicit mentions of any guidelines, principles, and theories in your user interface description. A review of the ones we have looked at, with selections that pertain to your design decisions, will help strengthen your writeup and also address some clear gaps. Your rationale section would definitely benefit from some explicit mention of these concepts. (**/**)

1d — Your interaction style choice is clearly stated, and your rationale for this choice shows that you understand (mostly) its strengths and weaknesses. (**+**)

1e — You address affordances explicitly, picking some key concepts and terms, but I found the connections to be somewhat forced. I'll admit that I don't associate an "event" necessarily with a tent, much less a "report" with a building. The basic knowledge and terminology are there, but I think they can be applied better to your design decisions. (**|**)

2a — You list a couple of creation use cases with a description of how your interface communicates mental models, although, as mentioned in *1e* I will admit that a tent does not say "event" to me (my first image when I think of "event" is a calendar, actually). But then that is more of an individualized preference. At greater issue is that I think you miss some key scenarios for *search* and *edit*. You have pieces of these in other sections; they would be more clearly illustrated in the same scenario section as your create cases. Finally, you should spend more time stating what you *intend* for the user to perceive in the various steps and components of these scenarios. That's what the whole mental model connection is about after all. (**/**)

2c — Your overall set of interaction design decisions for this user interface is generally well-founded, bringing usability metrics, interaction styles, and affordances into play. The one gap lies in guidelines, principles, and theories—as seen in *1c*, good choices in this area will help round out your user interface quite a bit. (**|**)

4d — Your rationale and terminology speak to some foundation with the resources and documentation available to you, but you should cite them explicitly. You mention Roller Coaster Tycoon and Xbox 360 avatars; these should be mentioned in the references section. The sources for many of your concepts should also be cited (Norman for affordances; potentially Nielsen for the metrics; etc.). You never know, by revisiting these references, you might also get additional ideas and a better handle on how these influence your design. (**|**)

4e — Your work phasing looks good and your commit messages are descriptive. (**+**)

4f — Submitted on time. (**+**)

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(updated feedback based on your commits as of 12/14/2012; only re-evaluated proficiencies are included)

1c — You make some explicit mentions of some guidelines and principles in your design rationale. This is better than nothing, and certainly an improvement, but you're still missing some key aspects of how to go about expressing a design and communicating how this design is based on established prior knowledge:

- Your chosen guidelines and principles come out as being cherry-picked to serve a design that you already predetermined, and not the other way around. For example, you talk about the guideline for using appropriate menu types, sequential vs. simultaneous, depending on the current context and/or task. Your connection of this guideline to your design is the student menu; the writeup comes out saying "this guideline's description of simultaneous menus matches what I envisioned for this menu, so I'll say that I followed this guideline." And yet, that is not what the guideline is about at all—it is about proper selection of menu style for the correct task. Are there points in your design where a *sequential* menu would be more appropriate? What general tasks in Headmaster are more sequential in nature rather than simultaneous? That is the level of discussion which demonstrates proper understanding and use of guidelines and principles. Further, is that the *only* guideline you're using? That reinforces the cherry-picked impression. There needs to be a more wholistic approach to these guidelines documents, so that they inform your design in a manner consistent with their overall intent. Your writeup sounds a lot like, "One of the rules of driving is to stop at a red light; so I do that." What about all of the other rules, and their overall intent? That is missing from your paper.

- Your use of Nielsen's usability heuristics is a little better, but your design for preventing errors shows some misunderstanding of this principle. First, the notion of a "helper" or "guide" avatar addresses *learnability* and *memorability* more than errors, because they provide information for helping the user figure out how to use the system. They would address errors if, say, they spontaneously appear when the user performs an inapplicable action or warn them of possible dangerous results (e.g., deleting data). But your design does not state this. Remember that errors in this context are *unintended consequences* of some user action, due to misunderstanding the user interface. What happens when the user makes a mistake? How can they correct them? How do they avoid them? Your use of the errors principle misses these. The mention of large buttons and icons is perhaps the closest thing to proper use, and even then you do not state what errors these prevent and why you chose this as one of the design elements to mention for addressing the prevention of errors.

Overall, although you are able to communicate *what you have in mind* for the user, this vision remains very strongly rooted in your personal preferences ("this is what *I* think," "this is how things should work, from *my* point of view") rather than interaction design guidelines, principles, and theories. There is certainly a place for personal preference, but this should come out in the big picture of your design choices, and not individual, cherry-picked elements. The added information is certainly noted and is a step in the right direction, but it still misses the point of putting together an effective design rationale. (**/**)

1e — You added a little more material on affordances, but it feels tacked on and somewhat forced. You keep repeating "what we're used to," but never get specific about it. And in one case, I find the discussion actually contradictory—we are *not* used to moving buildings around a location! The very implication that this might be initially confusing, but that the user will eventually figure it out, is contrary to the very reason affordances should be understood and used well in a design. No proficiency improvement seen here. (**|**)

2a — You fill in a few more scenarios, and you do mention your intent with them ("the user must have fun"), but admittedly there is nothing in the scenarios that clearly illustrates this. There are clicks on buildings, but really that is nothing more than a menu item with a different look. Avatars perhaps come closest

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to a "fun" element, but it really is not clear how making this aspect more fun lines up with a user's intent or need for this functionality.

You also have a few oversights that show how this section needs a lot more review and work—for example, you don't describe your search scenario at all, instead copying the "create event" bullets but missing out on editing them. And, creating students is done with "Create Door" while creating events is done with "Create Event?" Again, probably an unintended typo, but overall these detract from the content significantly. (**/**)

2c — You have certainly made additional mentions of further guidelines and principles to your design, but as mentioned previously, they are not integrated well and feel tacked-on. The net result feels like *added* information, but not *well-integrated* or *well-purposed* information. (**|**)

4d — Your citations are a touch better, but you miss out on referencing *usability.gov*, Shneiderman, and Tognazzini. This awareness still needs to be exercised more, and done more thoroughly. Focus on the content and see what the content references, rather than thinking of the sources and finding where you mention those sources. (**|**)