Design Decisions

1. No icons for buttons

In the final implementation, our Fritter app does not use icons for some of the main functionalities of upvote, refreet, follow, accept/reject follow request, etc. We decided to go with this option because it removes extra levels of consistency that needs to be followed that seemed unnecessary (i.e. using an icon for one meant we would need one for all of them). The limitation is that people who may not know what an upvote or refreet means may not be able to get additional context by identifying the logo that might usually be associated with that action on other platforms.

Alternatives Considered: In A4, the initial design was to have a corresponding icon for each primary button. For example, upvote would have up arrow icon but we chose not to go for this for simplicity's sake.

2. Separating different actions into tabs instead of SPA

Our implementation separates certain actions and concepts into different tabs that a user can switch to in order to complete different actions within Fritter. Some of these tabs handle more content than others (feed only has freets). This separation breaks down the concepts we've employed to create Fritter and their associated actions into modular, restricted pages. This made for a clearer and more concise design that allows users to associate their given expectations for a set of things on a page with a clear label. For example, a user wanting to change username would probably check "Settings" or "Profile" first rather than "Feed".

Alternatives Considered: One alternative to having several different actions would have been to create an SPA, which could have concatenated our different concepts into a singular page for handling them all. This implementation could have been more engaging to the user by allowing them to only focus on the part of the page they want to look at, but our decision to include tabs has created what's effectively a roadmap for users to follow as they navigate our site.

3. Notifying users about actions using a snackbar

Whenever a user performs an action like following a user, refreeting a freet, or removing a follower, it may be helpful for the user to see that the action completed successfully. We achieve this by using a snackbar which is a small, non-intrusive popup at the top of the user's screen that simply tells the user whether the action completed or failed. It disappears from the screen after about 4 seconds, but the user can also close it before that if he wishes. This allows more flexibility for informing the user, but the limitation is that notifications may have to be limited to smaller phrases in order to fit inside the small snack box dialog.

Alternatives Considered: The main alternative was to just leave notifications the way they were originally in the template with the text slightly below the action, but for certain pages, it disrupts the flow of information and just doesn't fit in well so it would result in different formats/layouts on different pages. Snackbars make notifications more uniform.

4. Labelling refreets in the freet itself

In order to distinguish a freet as a refreet, we decided to include the original author as a label underneath the timestamp for the new freet. We decided to use a label text as a good middle ground between appealing and feasible to implement. One reason people refreet is to spread content, and by having a sort of textual buffer between the new author and the content that clearly depicts the original author, we're effectively able to clearly give credit to the original author.

Alternatives Considered: A few other alternatives included putting text within the actual content body of the freet, or adding something more graphical like quotation marks around the text content of the freet. Both of these options seemed to disrupt the natural flow of the "normal" freets and made refreets look like a different object. In order to maintain consistency between Freets and Refreets, the subtlety of the subtitle label was employed to keep the content visually the same.

Ethical / Social Reflection

Following the reflections from A4, there were a few decisions informed by what we saw in the wireframes. First, I (Ben) was a big fan of Calvin's tabular arrangement of

different actions in Fritter, because I felt like it gave a more organized view of the app and users wouldn't be overwhelmed with information all being on a single page. I think many designs were quite conserved across both of our wireframes, and I personally think that the core tenets of these design decisions were kept the same as a result of the time and resources needed to fully implement and test them.

One particular idea that we didn't implement was the ability for users to see who has upvoted their freet. One ethical reason we chose to avoid this feature comes from our restrictive 'following' concept that only allows users access to one another's Freets if they both mutually agree to follow each other. This may bar our users from some of the traditional reward-providing concepts of social media (particularly amassing tons of followers and keeping track of likes). However, one possibly negative ethical implication is that a bad actor could create hundreds of accounts that serve as upvote farming bots that could upvote user posts anonymously. This does pose a threat, but mutual acceptance of following users makes this less likely.

All in all, some of our design decisions put a bit of a leash on what Fritter could really become. No users will probably follow more than a few hundred users in their lifetime on the app, so we likely will never see influencers with millions of followers. This might mean a limit to the potential growth of our app, but just from the nature of how we designed the app, it does not lend itself very well to become a Twitter competitor.