SIMLab Internship – Fall 2019

I worked in the Social & Interactive Media Lab (SIMLab) during my last semester of college. This organization is dedicated in researching the social, communications, and cultural phenomena in technology. It invites students to talk about social issues within digital media like videogames, social media, and other technological services. While my primary duties were as a research assistant, I also was able to expand my skills as UX designer by creating flyers for events and remaking the “Who We Are” portion of the lab’s website.

I had various classes with the directors of SIMLab, Dr. Florence Chee. I was amazed at the various ethical and social issues she brought up in our classes like surveillance culture, privacy policies of social media, and social justice issues within videogames. But I was also amazed at the research process one had to go through to learn more about these topics. I learned a lot about research, how to analyze information, and put that evidence into context. I was able to expand on that knowledge at the SIMLab where I was given the opportunity to blog about topics that related to communication, social justice, and technology. I conducted research on topics that interested me, and I created blogs/essays that hopefully would inform the public about the issues.

In addition, to exploring my own individual research questions, I was also given the opportunity to familiarize myself with other topics that were outside of my interest by attending research talks done by professionals who also did heavy research on areas of communication and social justice. I took down notes in those presentations and then digested the information, did some further research on my own, and created a summary of the talk and my analysis of the topic.

You can read some of my work here!

Since I also had an interest in planning and digital design, I was also given the chance to create flyers for upcoming research speakers, and I was also assigned to direct the promotion and live broadcast of such events. Below is an example of a speaker, Brett Ashleign, who came in from Canada to talk about how Siri has design flaws in which it does not serve the general public.

When I was tasked to do this job, my first thoughts were thinking about color, typography, and layout. I wanted to stick with colors that were solid and related to tech (i.e. blue, gray/silver, white, etc.). Once I got an idea of the theme, I also knew that I needed to include the photo of the speaker, title of the talk, a summary of the talk, and information regarding the organization hosting it (in this case SIMLab). This is all to say that there was a lot of information that I needed to take into account and with so little space to account for, it was quite a challenge figuring out the layout and organization of the content. The first three images were prototypes that I presented to the director and worked through which style would best fit the scenario and if further improvements needed to be made. The last image is the last version and it has the layout with all of the information that needed to be added.

My supervisor also wanted me to help her out with remaking the “About” section of the lab’s site. The website had an odd layout as you can observe in the before images. I approached this issue by doing research on how other websites usually designed an about page. I did a bunch of sketches, worked with the supervisor in outlining missions and design desires, and created wireframes and drafts for the supervisor to look over. The final product shows a much cleaner layout with the names of the current members and links to their bio with images. Below you will find alumni of the lab with links to their bios, work in the lab, and other outside projects they worked on.