

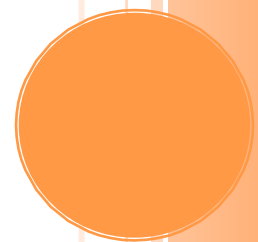
# MOBILIZING THE LIBRARY

*The further reach*

This report gives an overview of our proposal for the iDesign competition organized by University of Michigan Library. It summarizes the key aspects, the research and methodologies and a brief explanation of the functionality and working principles of our design idea.

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## INTRODUCTION

As part of the iDesign competition organized by University of Michigan Library, we have come up with a design idea which, to a certain extent, brings the library into the hands of the users. The focus of our idea is to contextualize the library resources in such a way that the users have the provision to access them anywhere, anytime. Without doubt, a mobile phone is one of the most accessible piece of technology which people use to remain connected with the outside world. With the changing trends in technology and the emphasis to access information on-the-go, people value the ability of technology to provide them resources specific to their needs.

## PROBLEM

Currently, there seems to be a lack of flexibility in the ways by which people access the library resources. From a student's perspective, there are only specific instances in which he/she would want to access the library resources. These instances might include renting a book, reading journals and online articles which might be related to the courses or the program the student is currently enrolled in or some other fields or topics which the student might be interested in. This limits the number of ways in which a library can reach out to the users and hence prevents it from realizing its full potential. The users would also sometimes would need to know more information about a place or event they've just heard about from someone. The first impulse for anyone in this situation is to just search for the required information on Google. Instead on solely relying on one resource, people should be able to access the required information from resources through which they can connect to the most and which is relevant in their day-to-day life. Through our design idea, we want to change the way in which people think about accessing library resources. We are interested specifically in making the library resources contextualized and relevant for the user in a particular situation. The users would benefit from the knowledge and information gained from this process by accessing the content which they really need to know in a particular place or situation.

## SOLUTION

As part of the solution, we propose to include the geo-tagging feature in the library's current mobile application. This would enable the user to know about current events or history of places in and around a 0.5 mile radius. Based on the current location of the user, this feature would generate a list of current events happening at places

around the user's current location and would also enable the user to view the history of that place. The detailed information about the events or the history of those places would be fetched from the library resources. Our design solution would provide a platform for the user to connect to the library and view the resources relevant to those events and the history of those places.

## METHODOLOGY

Since the theme of this competition focused on mobilizing the library, we brainstormed ideas by which the user could access information in the library resources anytime anywhere. We thought about having the library resources always in the hands of the users. The best way to achieve this would obviously be through a mobile application in a smartphone. Having features included in the library's current mobile application seemed to be the best way to integrate our solution. To assess the users' needs, goals and values, we conducted a few interviews to gauge what the users expect to achieve out of the library system and what was their opinion about the features we were thinking to incorporate through our design idea. Based on the responses we received, we generated a few scenarios and personas from our target population. We segregated these findings into separate categories and sought to find core themes and patterns inside them. These patterns helped us have an in depth understanding of our design process and gave us some insight into the expectations of the users with respect to our system. This helped us in visualizing our design from the users' perspective and we made amendments to the initial design we had sought to implement.

Also, we had a meeting with our mentor and discussed about the feasibility of our design. The feedback from our mentor was extremely helpful and led us into thinking about our design from a new perspective. We also went to the Clark library to discuss about the geo-tagging feature we were thinking to implement in our design solution. After completing all the above mentioned methods along with the meeting with our mentor and the discussion with Clark library, we began formulating our idea. We sketched as many solutions as we could think about for our problem. From those sketches we discarded those which were difficult to implement or were not very relevant to our design idea. We then translated those ideas into wireframes. Out of the wireframes we had, we chose the one which was most closely associated with our design idea and was comparatively feasible to implement from the others. We then designed a storyboard based on the wireframe and visualized how the user would behave if he/she had to go through all the steps in the process. Once we were satisfied, we generated digital versions of our wireframes and created prototypes and storyboards to illustrate the entire process.

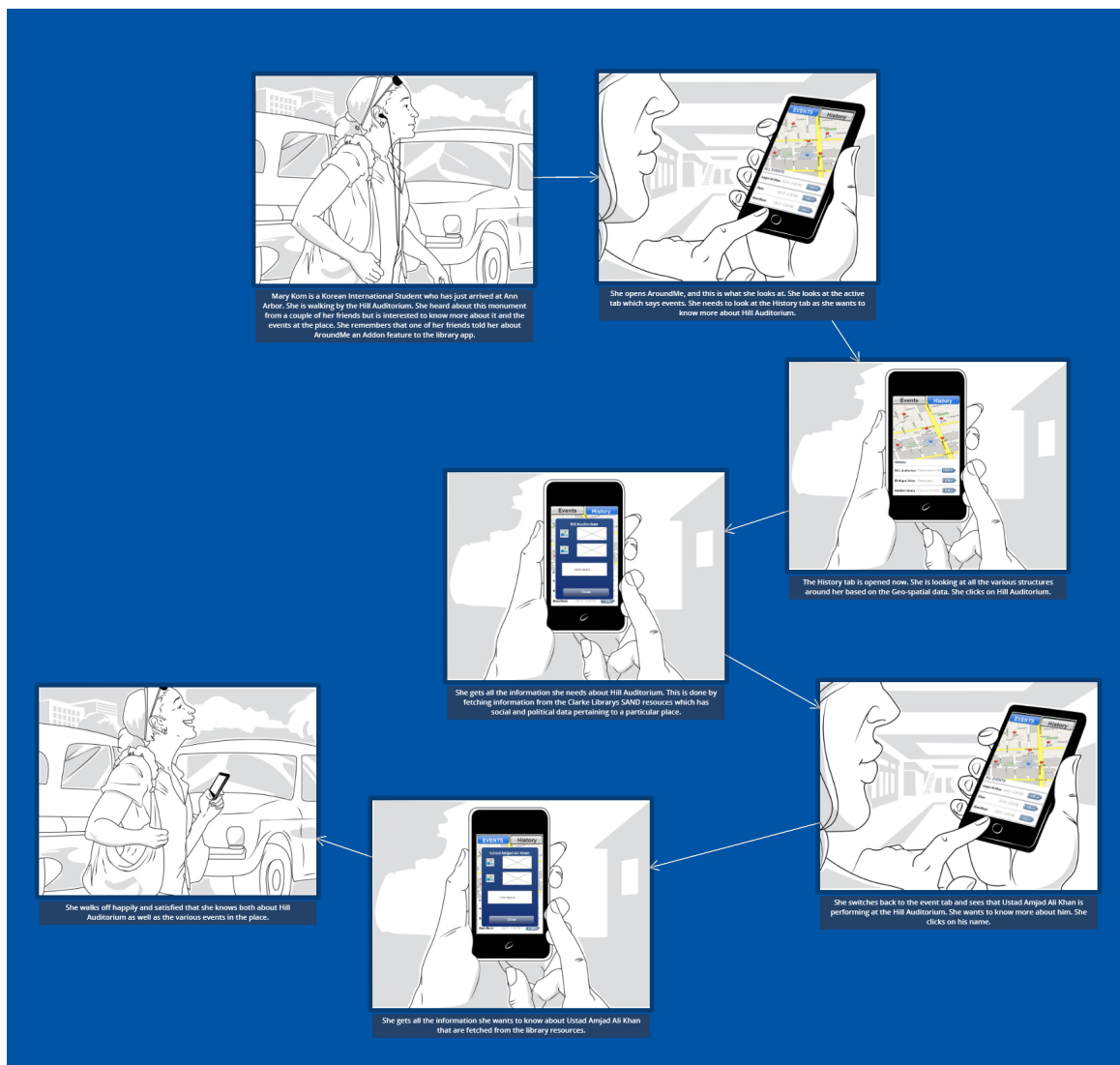
## PROCESS (STORYBOARDING AND WIREFRAMING)

The steps for the process pertaining only to storyboarding and wireframing are outlined below:

For a person to leverage this system he/she has to be fairly new to the University.

Considering the thousands of students that come in every year we felt that it would be apt to consider the case of a student who has come from a far off place to pursue her further studies at University of Michigan. Storyboarding helped us get a sight of how a person would react to what he/she sees in the app on the move.

A detailed wireframe helped us pace out the interactions of the user with the app. We constructed a interactive wireframe using Axure so that we could get a real feel of the app and cover all the various interactions that the user would have with the app. Below is the Scenario that we considered to build the story board using screenshots from the wireframe:



## DISCUSSION

Although our study was based on detailed analysis of user interviews within the University of Michigan, it is possible that the perspectives of users' from other universities might have been different. The library technology system is different across most universities in US, so the needs and goals of the users would vary depending on what the library systems currently offer and what they would like to get out of it. This limitation might have biased our study towards University of Michigan Library. Second, our study and design solutions were conducted and implemented during the course of this semester. This would have affected the amount of time and energy we could afford to spend on this project considering that we are full time graduate students enrolled in School of Information. Due to this our prototypes might also not be as detailed and as interactive as they could have been. In addition to this, since offering incentives to the interviewees as a token of appreciation for their time was a part of our process to conduct interviews, the budget constraints could also have affected the extent to which we could gather data from our study.

## CONCLUSION

We are extremely grateful to the University of Michigan Library for giving us the opportunity to work on this project. Not only has this been a great learning experience, it has broadened our thinking about how technology could be made more accessible and intuitive for users. "Mobilizing the library" theme was a great a great choice for this competition. Abreast with today's trends and technologies this theme was apt and made us think analytically as well as creatively in that direction. We really want the library resources to be utilized to their fullest potential, so we'll be extremely happy if the library decides to use our prototypes and implement our design idea. Rather, we would be happy to assist and collaborate with the library and help convert it into a fully functional prototype ready to be implemented into the library's technology system.

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