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Javascript and User Interface Design: Tools and Ideas

For my research, I decided to search for good practices while using javascript and creating

user-designed interfaces. One of the principles of information design include making sure that

your content and information is written in a concise manner to allow the user to quickly

comprehend and immerse themselves into the information that one displays. According to

Smashing Magazine, it's vital for one's information to be able to stand on its own rather than rely

on the effects and animations of javascript. Javascript should enhance the information and allow

it to become interactive, but should be able to stand on its own if javascript is not supported by

the browser.[1] Furthermore, when hiding elements, one should add CSS rules to the document that

executes the hidden layers only if the browser does not support the javascript. That way one can

avoid missing vital information. An example is shown below:

```
HTML:
<h2>This is a heading</h2>
<p class="hide-me-first">
This is some information about the heading.
</p>

jQuery Javascript:
$(document).ready(function{
        jQuery.cssRule("p.hide-me-first", "display", "none");
});
```

Boxes and Arrows, a popular design blog, also provides good tips for creating good design

interfaces. For user interfaces, it's crucial for one to use icons that are universally understood for

accessability among various cultures and languages. In the article, "Optimizing UI Icons for Faster

Recognition", "placing icons that represent similar concepts close to each other–for example,

'tasks,' 'inbox,' 'notifications'–may slow down the recognition of each individual icon in the

group".[2] Furthermore, the shapes and style of the icons used should show how they relate to the interface or the concept of the design itself to further enhance the qualities and experience of that design.

I found an interest article advocating the importance of creativity over plain data, "Creativity Must Guide the Data-Driven Design Process" by Rameet Chawla. Chawla states that "data can't direct innovation" in which creativity can greatly influence if people care for a certain product or experience. He references Steve Jobs and states that "he didn't design devices and operating systems by polling users or hosting focus groups. He innovated and created, and once users saw what he and his team had produced, they fell in love with a product they hadn't even known they wanted".[3] This was interesting to me because most user-centered products advertise their countless hours of research and brainstorming. However, I do think creativity plays a large roll, but I wouldn't take out user-centered design completely. Chawla continues to state, "but the data won't tell you how to fix the problem. You have to innovate again, then test to see if you've finally fixed what was broken".

Nngroup.com has an interesting article called "The illusion of completeness and how to avoid it" by Kim Flaherty. This talks about the visual cues that some websites have that fail to encourage the user from continuing to scroll and discover more information. I was surprised to see some of the bad examples that she showed because I constantly see those elements being used even in overall well-designed websites.
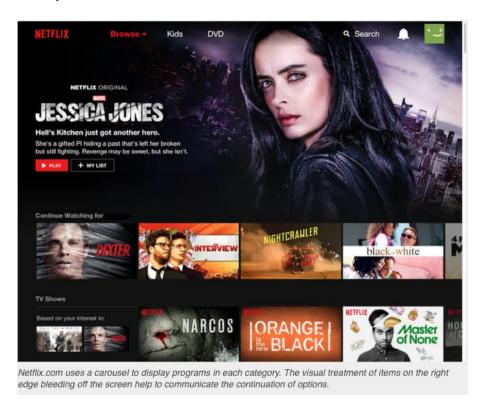
She also gives good practices to ensure the user keeps scrolling and navigating through the website by showing an example by netflix in which the next list of movies are indicated by showing part of the film with a roughly 50-60% transparency. This indicates that there are more movies to choose from and the scroll is a horizontal left/right.

Examples of good practices:

1. Indicating more information if there are page obstructions (example below):



2. Indicating more information by partially showing the next line of items (example: netflix)



Netflix.com uses a carousel to display programs in each category. The visual treatment of items on the right edge bleeding off the screen help to communicate the continuation of options.

Bibliography

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