

FAKING IT WIZARD-OF-OZ PROTOTYPING

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What if we could...

- Make an interactive application without (much) code
- Get feedback from people



Wizard-Of-Oz Prototyping...

...simulates machine behavior
with human operators

Wizard of Oz Technique

- Make an interactive application without (much) code
 - Front end interface
 - (Remote) wizard controls user interface
 - Makes sense when it's faster/cheaper/easier than making real thing
- Get feedback from users people
 - Hi-fidelity: users think it's more real
 - Low-fidelity: more license to suggest changes

Aardvark

“Why Start-Ups Must Pay Attention
To What’s Behind The Curtain”
Venture Capital Dispatch - WSJ

Making a Wizard-Powered Prototype

- Map out scenarios and application flow
 - what should happen in response to user behavior?
- Put together interface “skeletons”
- Develop “hooks” for wizard input
- Where and how the wizard will provide input
 - selecting the next screen, entering text, entering a zone, recognizing speech, etc.
 - remember that later you’ll need to replace with computer
- Rehearse wizard role with a colleague

Running Wizard-Powered Prototypes

- Practice with a friend first
- Once you're comfortable, recruit "users"
- Two roles: facilitator and wizard.
- **Facilitator** provides tasks (paper) and takes notes
- **Wizard** operates interface
(more authentic if hidden or remote)
- **User feedback can be...**
 - Think aloud (speak freely as performing tasks)
 - Retrospective (best when think aloud distracts)
 - Heuristic evaluation (works with experts too)
- **Debrief users** (reveal wizard if needed)

Lifalyze



Wizards Throughout Development

Advantages of Wizards

- Fast (faster) and thus, cheaper and more iterative prototypes
- Creating multiple variations is easy
- More “real” than paper prototyping
- Identifies bugs and problems with current design
- Places the user at the center of development
- Can envision challenging-to-build applications
- Designers learn by playing wizard

Disadvantages of Wizards

- Simulations may misrepresent otherwise imperfect tech
- May simulate technologies that do not exist (and may never)
- Wizards require training and can be inconsistent
- Playing the wizard can be exhausting
- Some features (and limitations) are difficult/impossible to simulate effectively
- May be inappropriate in some venues (e.g., home)

For more examples, see...

- speckyboy.com/2010/06/24/10-effective-video-examples-of-paper-prototyping
- Steven Dow, www.cs.cmu.edu/~spdw
- www.elsevierdirect.com/companion.jsp?ISBN=9780123740373