

Project Proposal

Due: Uploaded Before Class Tuesday, October 1, 2013

Overview

Your assignment is to propose an idea that could form the basis of a course project. Successful projects will observe the need for good human-centered design in interactive computer systems and analyze problems that you encounter. This proposal is an individual assignment.

Project Themes

The theme for this quarter is **personal informatics**. Your proposal should go beyond a simple webpage or phone application to think about how computing can fit into our lives day to day. You can do this in one or more ways:

Design for the many different forms of computing (e.g., phones, tablets, surfaces, wall displays, camera/projector pairings, mobile and environmental sensors).

Design for activities that are important to people (e.g., living a healthy life, staying in touch with family, managing time or finances effectively, learning new skills, achieving greater personal understanding, reducing environmental impact, enabling effective citizen participation in government, improving the lives of underserved populations).

Design for long-lived activities rather than concrete one-time tasks, which span many different social or technological contexts. For example, if you want to help people to manage their money, do not immediately propose a website that addresses one specific task, but think about other opportunities: computer stations in public spaces (like a bank), personal mobile devices, point of sale systems, and so on. Think also beyond the individual purchase decisions that people make, and think about how people plan and set goals, and think about the social aspects of money management. In other words, this first assignment is your opportunity to think very broadly about a solution to a problem; in subsequent assignments, there will be opportunities to focus on designing a specific technological solution to a specific set of tasks.

Focus on improving or creating a specific application or service that addresses the issues of an actual community. You must be able to design and evaluate a design within the timeframe of this course, so consider whether you can reasonably gain access to the necessary population.

We encourage you to think big, expanding upon your application to include new or different interaction techniques and technology platforms. Do not feel constrained by current devices or technology, but instead aim to explore an exciting design that could potentially motivate the development of new enabling technology.

Proposals selected for ‘sponsorship’ will be posted online as part of the group formation and project selection process. Your proposal is thus an effort to convince both us and your classmates that a problem is interesting, tractable, and worthy of design.

Deliverable

You will submit a proposal of no more than 2 pages of text, approximately 1000 words. Any images are free, so your actual document may be more than 2 pages in length. But it should contain only 2 pages of text. The points your essay should address are discussed next.

Your submission must be in PDF format.

When finished, upload it to Catalyst here: <https://catalyst.uw.edu/collectit/dropbox/medixon/28491>

Grading

Your proposal should follow this outline of four sections:

1. Problem or Idea (3 pts)

The problem description should be a single short paragraph listing the specific high-level goals of the project. It states what the problem is and why it is a problem or describes a new idea and why it will enhance an existing application or work practice. It should also hint at the proposed solution to the problem.

2. Analysis of Problem (3 pts)

The analysis section should give more background for the problem or new idea. It does not just focus on the negative aspects of the current situation, but also identifies some positive aspects that may be beneficial to retain. A few salient examples from existing systems or work practices should be used to support those claims.

3. Suggested Improvements (3 pts)

Here the proposal should propose specific changes to solve the problems or implement the new ideas described earlier, briefly explaining why you believe the suggested improvements will work. You have not yet done the fieldwork to discover and validate new approaches, but you should propose specific ideas that illustrate some potential for new solutions.

4. Scenario Walkthrough (3 pts)

Here the proposal should walk through a specific scenario where the application or service is used. It should highlight the problem that you are trying to solve, how the problem would currently be addressed, and how your application addresses the problem. Be sure to highlight the key features of your application or service.

You will additionally be graded on creativity and writing across the entire essay:

Creativity (3 pts)

The proposal should try to address a practical problem with a novel use of technology or present a new or enhanced practice enabled by technology. We are looking for proposals that use technology to somehow improve the human experience, which is certainly not limited to doing more things faster.

Writing (3 pts)

The writing must clearly present the important facts. It should be concise, as conveying your idea is more important than the nitty-gritty details. However, we expect enough detail to understand your problem and believe your solution. The organization should follow the outline, with the conclusions in each section leading into the next in a logical manner.