CSE 440: Introduction to HCI
User Interface Design, Prototyping, and Evaluation

Lecture 04: Critique

Tuesday / Thursday
12:00 to 1:20

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Functional Fixedness

Functional Fixedness

Duncker's (1945) Candle Problem: The subjects are asked to attach a candle to the wall and are given a box of tacks, candles, and matches, as shown in panel A. The solution is shown in panel B.

$5 Challenge

Teams of students “funded” with $5

- Allowed several days to plan
- After they open the envelope, allowed two hours
- Make as much money as possible

https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/creativityrulz/200908/the-5-challenge
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Lottery tickets, car washes

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Lottery tickets, car washes
Line waiting service, bicycle tire pressure check

Evolved with experience (e.g., pagers, donations)

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Winner made $650…

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Why Critique?

Critique helps evaluate early, often, and cheaply

Applicable to artifacts of many types
Compare to other expert inspection methods

You are not your own worst critic

We collectively know more than any one of us
It is hard to see past your own decisions
Design requires getting past our own infatuation

A design can feel like our love, our baby...
Learning to Give and Receive Critique

You will learn to both give and receive critique
   Each is important
   Each is a skill developed through practice

Many activities will consist of group critiques
   Each group will present an artifact
   Other class members and staff will offer critique

Starting today with critique of
Assignment 2b: Design Research Plan
Why Critique?

Critique is not just for design

   It applies to many artifacts and domains

Examples?
Why Critique?

Critique is not just for design. It applies to many artifacts and domains.

Examples?

visual art, writing, design, code (i.e., code review)

Over time, you should gather people who can give you high-quality critique in everything you do. You may meet some of those people in this class.

We do not insist on deploying flawed code...
Critique is About Improvement

http://alistapart.com/article/design-criticism-creative-process
What is Critique?

Critique is a method for feedback

It is not just a list of complaints

1. Presenters sit down with critics
2. Quickly explain their artifacts
   (e.g., less than 2 minutes)
3. Critics give feedback, ask questions
4. Presenters respond,
   take notes on what is discussed
Critique is Neither Criticism nor Design

Seriously, not just a list of complaints

Critics offer honest feedback

Both positive and negative

Presenters should be able to learn
what works well and
what is problematic about their artifact

It is then presenter’s responsibility to sort through feedback, decide what is important, how to act

You must take notes for later review
Tips for Presenters

Critique can be hard, especially at first

Try to avoid being defensive

  You are not your work, separate yourself

Remember the expertise you bring

  Even if “the room” knows more about design, you know more about your problem / artifact and your rationale for the current design
Tips for Presenters

Taking advice is not giving up authorship

- You still make the final decisions
- A half-baked suggestion does not contain all the details of a finished solution

Design your critique

- What you show invites different forms of feedback
- Verbally indicate what kind of feedback you want, but also provide an artifact of appropriate form

This course will guide you in a variety of forms
Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

1) establish clear roles

Presenter: presenting, not convincing

Audience: understand problem and context, ask lots of questions

Facilitator: watch schedule, stay on agenda, take notes to help presenter, ask key steps for moving forward

https://medium.com/facebook-design/critique-is-an-important-part-of-any-design-process-whether-you-work-as-part-of-a-team-or-solo-ef3dcb299ce3
Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

2) ensure agreement on the problem

State the problem and context for feedback

I am showing [early/mid/late] work
Around [the problem]
Because [why it’s a problem]
And am looking for feedback around [specific focus for feedback]

State what is not the current focus

Ensure understanding and check for clarity

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Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:
3) focus on feedback, not criticism

Criticism
passes judgement
finds fault
is personal
is vague
tears down
is ego-centric
is adversarial
belittles the designer

Critique
poses questions
uncovers opportunity
is objective
is concrete
builds up
is altruistic
is cooperative
improves the design

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Tips for Presenters

Design your critique:

4) keep laptops and phones put away

Exception for the presenter, but prefer paper whenever possible

Exception for the facilitator / note taker

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Tips for Presenters

Keep an eye out for design rationale

You probably made some decisions without thinking through good reasons at the time.
Critique can help give a rationalization for past decisions as you explain the artifact to others.

Exploit failure

A “failed” artifact should teach you about the design space, what won’t work, and why.
The goal is to improve, this requires failure.
Tips for Critics

There are many strategies for giving critique

- Hamburger method
- I like, I wish, what if
- Socratic method

These provide ways to give critique that can help the conversation go smoothly

Can give you a question to ask when you do not have one, provide a way to ask that is productive and less likely to create defensive reaction
Tips for Critics: Hamburger Method

“Bun, meat, bun”

Bun:
- Something fluffy and nice

Meat:
- How to improve

Bun:
- Something fluffy and nice

Not a “shit sandwich”
Positives need to be genuine, enable learning from both positive and negative aspects of the artifact
Tips for Critics: I Like, I Wish, What If

I Like:
Lead with something nice

I Wish:
Often leading from what you like

What If:
An idea to spark further conversation, better than: “I think you should have…” or “Why didn’t you …”
Gives the presenter benefit of the doubt if they did already think of your idea, can present rationale
Tips for Critics: Socratic Method

Identify an aspect of the design and ask “Why?”

Can be good if unsure what else to say
Forces presenter to give, or develop, explanations for design decisions, which can help build up the design rationale
Not fundamentally negative, hard to get defensive
Tips for Critics

Limit your use of personal pronouns (e.g., “you”)

Critique is about the artifact, not the designer

A designer deserves honest feedback

Both positive and negative

Including clarity and rationale

Help with actionable suggestions

But it is not your design

Perhaps several possible ways of thinking
Summary

Fall out of love with the things you build
   Let others help you see past the infatuation
Get feedback early, often, and cheaply
Focus on improvement
   In brainstorming, we were not criticizing
   In critique, we are not defending
You will learn to both give and receive critique
   If you are having difficulty, please come talk to us
Design Research Plan Critique

With your group, find another group

- Decide which group will present first
- Swap half the audience group to another table

Present your Design Research Plan

- Decide who is taking notes
- Remind project context
- Present proposed methods
- Present details via design research artifact
Design Research Plan Critique

Some things to look for:

Are questions open enough, avoiding the presumption of a particular design?

Are questions specific enough, offering a potential to gain new insights?

Are there other participants to consider?

Are there other methods to consider?

Is the proposal feasible for 1 to 2 weeks?
Considering an Effective Critique

Is there a set agenda for work being shown?

Are there clearly defined roles in each session?

Has the facilitator kept conversation focused?

Have presenters accurately shared the scope of their problem?

Did everyone in the room understand the problem framework, enough where each person felt equipped to ask questions?

Was feedback provided in the form of questions or criticism?

Did the critique feel like a cooperated effort to improve a design, problem outline, or individual process?

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Resources

Guidelines for design research interviews

Structured in a format to use for critique of the interview process itself
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