CSC420

Navigation

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Clear Entry Points

- Present the user with very few entry points. Make them clear and descriptive
- Good for:
  - Task-oriented interfaces
  - Newbie users
- Good because:
  - Instant gratification
  - Makes the app more self-explanatory
- Examples

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Global Navigation

- Using a small part of every page/window, show global links to important application sections
- Good for large applications and media where you can afford to spend that screen space
- Good because:
  - Is familiar (browser)
  - Gives users an overview of the UI
  - Facilitates exploration and easy movement
- Examples
  - Browser
  - PDA (hardware form – obvious buttons)

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Hub and Spoke (Star connectivity)

- Divide the app into sub-apps where each has one entry and one exit point
- Good for:
  - Obviously, apps which can follow that division
  - Apps that must be distinguished from each other
  - Restricting workflow (finish this, and only then pick another one)
  - Small screen sizes
- Good because:
  - Reduces clutter (by a lot)
  - You have very tight control over the user experience
  - Makes it very clear to the user what to do
- Examples

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Pyramid

- Main page with links; each link leads to a sequence (which has back/next/up links)
- Good for:
  - Tutorials and the like
  - Similar but semantically unrelated sequences
- Good because:
  - Reduces the number of clicks to get around
  - Essentially, a wizard with an "up" link; keeps (most of) the advantages of wizards, while doing away with their major drawback
- Examples

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Modal Panel

- Show only one page that the user can't get out of without solving the immediate problem
- Good for cases where the app cannot proceed without user input
- Good/bad because it forces the user to think, disrupts the user workflow, etc
- Examples

Sequence Map

- On each page in a sequence, show a map and a "You are here" sign

- Use for linear sequences of pages

- Good because being lost is not fun (people with map memory)

- Can also serve as a navigational device (make it clickable)

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Breadcrumbs

- Sequence Map for a hierarchy
- Shows a linear slice of the navigational tree
- Use when the map is too complex to be shown in its entirety

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Annotated Scrollbar

- Make a scrollbar also serve as a map/signpost
- Use in large virtual screens that don't fit on a physical one, and have interesting landmarks
  - Ebooks would profit a lot from this
- Put it on the scrollbar (or at least close to it) because a lost user will typically scroll around (and pay attention to the scrollbar region)

Color-Coded Sections

- Change the background color (not too much!) to indicate belonging to a section

- Use for large (full-screen) pages with lots of content

- Good because:
    - Signposting: gives a user a clue
    - Makes boundaries clear
    - Analysis on the page (this part does this, that one does that) helps user understanding
    - Works visually (less cognitive load than reading "this is the menu section")
    - Can make the interface more pleasing to the eyes (know what is pleasing to your users' eyes)

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Escape Hatch

- On a page with limited navigation, put an obvious button that gets people to a known place

- Use when it is possible to reach a page inside a Wizard (or some such) out of context

- Also helps with safe exploration (let's see what this wizard asks...)

- Always make the target of the button a page that unambiguously says what the application is about and has a full clickable map, etc. Having to follow a sequence of escape hatches is bad!

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