ABSTRACT

The GID award and program are held under the Institute for Innovation and Global Engagement (IIG), directed by Dr. Divya McMullan, director of the Global Honors Program, along with Lan Allison, the GID administrative specialist and Global Honor Program advisor. We redesigned GID Lab’s webpage with our innovative design process in this design and research project. In the beginning, LJ Norman, another GID awardee, and I investigated the existing issues of GID Lab’s web pages. Then, through a series of surveys and testing with many stakeholders and users, and produced a more efficient, beautiful, and accessible webpage design. Our intended goal is to achieve our functional webpage published by the end of the quarter, but we created a semi-functional PowerPoint wireframe instead at the end of the quarter.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

With the development of the Internet, the design of web pages has become fancier nowadays. We can often see various web page designs in different places to attract people. It can easily make us aestheticallysatisfied when there are too many designs. According to my personal experience and some informal statistics, only a tiny portion of most web pages are actually valuable for viewers. However, the design of web pages is not just as simple as throwing all the necessary information on the page. It requires skills from various aspects to make people comfortable and convenient while the creator achieves his goals. For example, a web page that aims at younger generations should be designed rejuvenated, while a web page aimed at elders should be straightforward. In this research, me and my GID team member, LI Norman, researched redesigning the GID webpage to make it more effective and embellished. This web redesign project aims to improve the accessibility of the GID Lab webpage, increase our sponsors, better providing content that students need, and demonstrating GID Lab’s features and experiences. At the same time, this research can better provide ideas for future web design, and hopefully, we will be able to demonstrate our innovative process of redesigning a website.

METHOD

Step 1: Know who is using the page and understand their needs

As a college department website, its most significant stakeholder must be the department itself. Therefore, we contacted multiple faculties regarding their expectation of the webpage. Also, we learned the needs of the department sponsors from the GID Lab advisor. From our interviews with them, we know that this website is to introduce GID Lab better, encourage more students or community partners to participate in us, and attract more sponsors to support our department. Therefore, this became our redesign goal for the webpage.

Step 2: Completely understand the current page and point out the issue

In order to understand the current website, we completely visited GID Lab’s web page and organized the arrangement and content in each web page. We used “Mural” software to categorize and reform the content distribution. We also have listed information and pages on Mural that may be needed to enhance our webpage and arrange pages that we think they should be. And this process is also known as “card sorting”.

Step 3: Community survey and rough design model

Community surveys are an important part of web design because the site is for everyone, and not just our own minds. I invited three UW students to use the previous GID Lab web page, assigned them to find specific information, record their search paths and times, and record where they felt the content should be when they searched. Through the survey, we learned that most of the students’ needs for the GID Lab webpage concentrate on “minor information”, “scholarship”, and “community events”, and they are more inclined to find portals to these contents on the main page. Therefore, our next step is to make these portals more accessible.

Step 4: Wireframe and function implementation

Based on our previous survey and research, we understood how pages and information should be organized on the webpage, and we made a detailed wireframe for the web page. I choose PowerPoint to do my wireframe because I can move materials around in the PowerPoint canvas and assign button portals to the web server. Instead, LJ Norman and I were able to each complete a whole webpage mockup via PowerPoint before the quarter ended.

Step 5: User test and webpage publication

As with the last test, we found three more students to test our newly designed GID Lab webpage and followed the same test steps as last time, but this time we used PowerPoint instead of our own web page for the test. With some minor tweaks, we finally finished the design process of the new web page and were ready to migrate the design to the server.

In theory, our next step is to rebuild the GID Lab’s webpage on the server backend and conduct the next technical test and release. However, because LJ and I were not very familiar with the technology, and lack of communication with the web provider due to holidays and COVID-19, we were not able to make it implement to the webpage and publish our design. Therefore, our final design rest on the PowerPoint wireframe we designed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This design project was not finalized and stopped on the web implementation. Through this research, we learned that simple, obvious, and accurate content is better than wordy test. And because the needs of different people are different, we should identify the needs of each user as soon as possible and direct them to the appropriate place as soon as possible. Through the survey, we found that people prefer interactive web pages, especially pages with many pictures, graphics, colors, etc., than pages with rich text content. Also, people are doing better at identifying information on web pages with various designs than text. Therefore, my design recommendations for the GID Lab website are:

1. For the home page, in addition to the necessary text explanations and sponsored content, add as many portal buttons as possible, especially for pages that are frequently needed.
2. Sort pages content and portal base on user group. For example, we should group information targeted by students, and group information commonly used by community partners, instead of letting different people see the same large classification list.
3. Floating windows are a great way to increase content exposure since they keep content at the top or bottom of the page. Compared to pop-up windows, they are less annoying. Therefore, we should make our headers a floating window to make them more accessible. Also, we might be able to float sponsor content to gain them exposure.
4. Adding a search bar may be a good idea to help people look for their information.
5. Mobile client accessibility is important for the GID Lab webpage since many people use their phones to browse this page.

REFLECTION

First, as the first GID Award recipient in the Global Honor program, I am very grateful to H&E and GID Lab for a research opportunity and scholarship. I would also like to thank the faculty at GID Lab for all they have done for our students during these tough times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this program, I gain many skills in project planning, communication, and leadership that I believe will be of great importance to my future career. I plan to become an urban planner and designer in the future, and I hope the experiences and skillset will benefit me from being an outstanding person. Also, I would like to encourage more students to participate in the GID Lab program to enhance their college life and benefit their careers.

PROPOSED SOLUTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Webpage Innovation: Redesigning the GID webpage

Yingchong Zhen

Urban Study: Community Development & Planning

GID Website Card Sorting - LAN