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Tidy Guide – A Beginner’s Guide to an Organized Home

Katie Hollenbeck

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Tidy Guide – A Beginner’s Guide to an Organized Home

By Katie Hollenbeck

December 19, 2014
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MFA Thesis Documentation

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Abstract

Search for “how to organize” on the web, and you will be inundated with endless resources. Organizing information is everywhere, making the task seem intimidating. For my thesis project, I sought out to create an interactive, instructional, web-based application that would coach users on how to organize objects within a specific space. My goal was to create a unique, visual, creative solution – one that did not already exist on the web, and one that would become an important tool for users who were seeking organizing assistance and advice.

Not only did I intend the application to be unique, visual, and creative, it had to function seamlessly in all major browsers using the most current HTML5, CSS3, and JavaScript technologies. I also aimed to implement the project, Tidy Guide, using conventional processes, starting with user experience research, moving into user interface design, and finally ending with development and user testing. My end goal was to produce a modular structure that could be continuously built upon as more rooms and spaces were added to the application over time. The project’s research, design, and implementation were dramatically altered during its development over the course of two years, but the objective remained unchanged. Visit the website at www.katiecreative.com/tidyguide.

Keywords: organization; organize; space; rooms; interactive; instructional; web-based application; Tidy Guide; user experience design; user interface design
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Introduction

Tidy Guide is an interactive, instructional, web-based application that coaches users on how to organize objects within a specific space through a unique visual means. The project was planned and created with four objectives in mind. First, it needed to be interactive – involve users in the process and respond to the user’s input. Second, it needed to be instructional – offer organizing solutions and inspiration, as well as educate users on how to carry out organizing tasks. Third, it needed to be visual – demonstrate organizing techniques using images and infographics, instead of lecturing the user with paragraphs of text. Lastly, it needed to exist on the web, built with the latest HTML5, CSS3, and JavaScript technologies, as an easily accessible and fully functional website.

Tidy Guide’s target audience is women, ages 25 to 54, who may be classified as professionals, college-educated, homeowners, mothers, and wives and who have a discretionary income and high standards. These women are constantly looking for ways to make life easier, and because of their busy lifestyle, they need easy-to-obtain instructions and quick, efficient solutions. They do not want to spend a lot of time reading organizing blogs, websites, how-tos, and step-by-step directions, and then commit even more time to planning out and preparing the space for organization.

In one sole accessible tool built on a single web page, Tidy Guide offers the user inspiration and advice, and provides product recommendations based on the rooms and objects to be organized. The aim of Tidy Guide is not to teach users why organizing is important, but to offer organizing solutions when needed. It demonstrates effective information design, and the influence of interactivity and visuals when combined with an instructional environment.
Review of Literature

Because the project was developed over the course of two years, there were two phases of literature review completed. The first, referred to as Phase 1, is documented in more detail in the Thesis Proposal (see Appendix, Fig. D). During the first phase of research, I focused on finding interactive sites and tools that involved the user in designing (not necessarily organizing) their own space. To start, I explored closet design websites, including the Easy Track Closet Design Tool (http://www.easytrack.com/easytrack/design-tool), Martha Stewart Living’s Design Your Own Closet (http://www.marthastewart-closets.com/closetLayout.aspx.), and Rubbermaid Closet Designer (http://www.rubbermaid.com/pages/closet-designer.aspx). These sites allow the user to interactively design and customize a closet and/or storage area.

Next, I sought out 3D floor planning websites, including Design Within Reach’s 3D Room Planner (http://www.dwr.com/display.do?ruleID=108816) and MyDeco’s 3D Home Planner (http://mydeco.com/3d-planner/). These sites serve as examples of how interactivity can be used to customize multiple spaces in a 3D environment. The user chooses a room and can then customize anything from the dimensions and layout to paint colors, furniture, cabinets, appliances, or doors and windows.

Lastly, I observed videos of users interacting with 3D rooms using multi-touch capabilities, a feature sometimes present in the gaming world. For example, in Unity3D’s Interactive 3D Room (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTIPEKu-ae0) and NavTech3D’s Interactive 3D Operating Room (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHmQJZ7TUys), users can manipulate the 3D environment for participatory learning and instructional purposes. These spaces are unalterable, but the user can select specific areas within the room to obtain further information.

Phase 1 of research was essential in developing my thesis as it redirected the goals of the project. As can be seen in the documentation of my process in the following section, I
initially intended on having the user create their own space before they organized it. I believed this would enable the user to receive more specific advice or recommendations based on the layout of their space or room. However, in having the user customize their space, it deviated from my thesis problem statement. The project was intended to be an instructional application that involved the user in the organizing process. Subjecting them to the more difficult process of creating their own space beforehand would distract the user from the main objective which was educating them on how to organize a space.

In Phase 2 of research, I studied websites and blogs where the main purpose was to instruct users on how to organize. The Internet sites that exist are countless, but in these cases, interactivity, creativity, and (sometimes) visual imagery were lacking. The sites I reviewed included Real Simple (http://www.realsimple.com/beauty-fashion/makeup/how-to-organize-beauty-products), Martha Stewart (http://www.marthastewart.com/267999/organizing-the-laundry-room), HGTV (http://www.hgtv.com/design/decorating/clean-and-organize/quick-tips-for-organizing-bathrooms), Organizing Junkie (http://orgjunkie.com/2014/05/how-to-part-with-stuff-you-are-emotionally-invested-with.html), iheartorganizing (http://iheartorganizing.blogspot.com/2014/05/reader-space-home-office-to-heart.html), and Pinterest (https://www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=organization&term_meta[]=organization|typed). With the exception of Pinterest, these sites relied mostly on textual descriptions and instructions along with occasional photographs to demonstrate the organizing process. Pinterest is an imagery-heavy, visual application, but lacked the user interactivity I was interested in and seeking.

Ironically, and despite the fact that these blogs and articles existed to assist users in organizing, the content was so buried in a sea of advertisements and pop-ups, that the experience became frustrating, difficult, and relatively useless. Within minutes of discovering an article of interest, I was so irritated with the pop-ups and advertisements that I resorted to scanning the content quickly, and then closing the browser window.
This is opposite of the experience that I intended my users to have. These how-to organize blogs and articles supplied useful information, tips, and tutorials, but also demonstrated how I did not want Tidy Guide to function or visually appear.

**Process**

*Flow Charts, Sketches, and Wireframes*

Over the course of two years, there were several stages of flowchart, sketch, and wireframe development. My initial flow chart (Fig. 1), developed during Phase 1, was relatively simple and included basic user tasks. In summary, upon entering the website, the user would encounter an instructional animation, which they would be able to skip, and then begin by choosing the room they would like to work with. The user would then be given an interactive 3D room (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, etc.), where they could hover over specific areas (pantry, under the sink, cupboard, etc.) and click to receive more information. The 3D detailed view would consist of step-by-step how-tos, interactive or visual tips, and product recommendations for the user. Finally, the user would be able to save, print, or share their results. After creating the flow chart, I roughly sketched the layout (Fig. 2) and built the wireframes (Fig. 3) of the proposed project, both which closely followed the original plan.

![Figure 1: Phase 1 Flow Chart](image-url)
Figure 2: Phase 1 Sketches
Following wireframe development, I began planning the interface design by gathering color palette and typography samples, and developing a design methodology, which is explained in further detail in the Thesis Proposal (see Appendix, Fig. D).

In Phase 2 of development, I revisited my original sketches and wireframes and concluded that the solution I was proposing was not addressing my thesis problem statement. Although it was instructional and followed the technological guidelines, it lacked the interactivity I desired to create for the user. The application would respond to user input, but did not involve the user in the organizing process, which was one of the four main objectives of the site.

While re-sketching and wireframing, I eliminated the 3D approach because of time constraints, and because I wanted to simplify the process for the user. I sketched several different iterations of the flow chart (Fig. 4) while struggling to design a more user-friendly

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**Figure 3: Phase 1 Wireframes**
solution and process. The Phase 2 wireframes (Fig. 5) resulted from reducing an incredibly complex 3D application to a more simplified website that invited users into a room and instructed them on how to organize it. And although I was content with the progress on the homepage design, I was still fighting to accomplish the goal of involving users in the organizing process once they entered a chosen room. Again, I returned to the drawing board and developed new sketches (Fig. 6) for the remaining web pages.

Figure 4: Phase 2 Flow Charts
Somewhat simultaneous to the design of the wireframes, I began collecting content for the style guide. To begin, I explored existing websites and print pieces in order to draw inspiration and create a moodboard that would reflect a style for the project. I researched typography, patterns, logos, icons, and website designs having a retro or vintage feel. For examples, visit http://www.atticuspetdesign.com, http://www.i-avion.com, or http://www.sleepstreet.be. Taking inspiration from the moodboards, I experimented with typography and color palettes, finally choosing Black Jack as my main decorative font, and Open Sans as my sans serif, plain text font for its simplicity, variations, and availability as both a desktop and web font (Fig. 6). From trials in Adobe Color CC (https://color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel/), I chose my color palette (Fig. 7).
Figure 6: Phase 2 Sketches
I chose the retro/vintage look for the project for several reasons. First, retro designs tend to appeal to people’s sense of nostalgia for simpler times. In today’s age, my target audience – women ages 25 to 54 – are expected to work full-time as well as manage a busy household. A nostalgic design could bring the user back to childhood and/or a time when they were not so overwhelmed with daily tasks. Second, retro designs are trendy and timeless. People associate the colors and styles with positive emotions, and retro designs have remained prevalent since the 1950s and 1960s.

**Logo Design**

After establishing a look and feel to the website, I began brainstorming names and sketching logo concepts. I collected synonyms of related words, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organized</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
<th>Messy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tidy</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Spaces</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightened</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Areas</td>
<td>Sloppy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranged</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>Places</td>
<td>Untidy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordered</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Spot</td>
<td>Disordered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neat</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Locations</td>
<td>Disorganized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipshape</td>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Zone</td>
<td>Cluttered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorted</td>
<td>Guide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spick and span</td>
<td>Helper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From this list, I created the website name, Tidy Guide, and commenced logo design. I experimented with some of the retro patterns and typefaces I had collected, aiming to design a logo that would appeal to my target audience (Fig. 8). Initially, I included a female character in the logo, first dressed as a 1950’s housewife, and then transformed into a more contemporary version, representative of the modern working woman. Feedback from peers suggested that the woman character may offend modern feminists by insinuating that organizing is a woman’s job. Because I did not want to introduce issues of political correctness, I designed two more logos – one that omitted the character completely (Fig. 9), and one that incorporated a gender-neutral character (Fig. 10). Informal surveys of peers indicated that omitting the character depersonalized the site. The logo introducing the pig achieved an overwhelming positive response due to its fun nature.
User Interface Design

With the logo designed and the style guide completed, I began transforming the wireframes into a stylized user interface. My initial user interface designs (Fig. 11) were built upon the original wireframes, but I was dissatisfied. The resulting designs demonstrated “in-the-box” thinking; I had not stepped out of my comfort zone. The site structure appeared very similar to many websites that existed on the Internet during that time. Through simplifying the design, I had also lost some of the interactivity from my original proposal that made the project appeal to my users. In order to bring some of that interactivity back, I introduced an interactive house profile, which also went through several complete redesigns to achieve the desired retro look and feel (Fig. 12). The resulting and final homepage, including the introductory animation, house profile, about section, and contact form, are shown on page 15 (Fig. 15).

While redesigning the homepage, I completed the artwork for the succeeding pages that assisted users in organizing their space. The early drafts of the interface design (Fig. 13) demonstrate my initial struggles to involve the user in the organizing process – only providing buttons, checklists, and paragraphs of text. The sketches on page 9 (Fig. 6) reveal the results of a new brainstorming session. What ensued was a final design that
Figure 11: User interface design drafts

Figure 12: Interactive house drafts
allowed the user to choose a room in the house, choose a space in the room, answer a series of questions to discover their main issue, and finally allow the user to interact with the space in order to find the best organizing solution (Figs. 15, 16).

**Storyboard and Animation**

Once the process was established, I storyboarded (Fig. 14) and animated an introductory message to welcome users, introduce them to Tidy the Pig, and briefly instruct them on how to use the site. It was illustrated in Adobe Illustrator, animated in Adobe Flash HTML Canvas, and exported as an SWF file, which was then embedded into the homepage.
Figure 15: Final user interface design
Development and Coding

My final task, before user testing, was to develop the Tidy Guide website in code and implement it on the Internet. I developed the site according to my original plan – using HTML5, CSS3, and JavaScript, and assured that it functioned in all of the major browsers, including Firefox, Chrome, Safari, and Internet Explorer. In the development stages, my aim was to prevent the user from having to leave the web page when moving through the process. Instead, each user selection would trigger a page transition, similar to a slideshow. This visual effect would make the process appear seamless and effortless and would keep the user from straying or getting distracted from other navigation choices.

The largest technical hurdle involved using and learning JavaScript and JQuery in place
of Flash for animation purposes, due to the fact that Flash is less commonly supported on user operating systems. Using several resources such as Codrops (http://tympanus.net/codrops), CSS-Tricks (http://css-tricks.com), jQuery UI (http://jqueryui.com), and GitHub (https://github.com), I was able to overcome the steep learning curve, and use CSS3 and JavaScript for the animation-heavy effects, while also keeping usability at the forefront of my objectives. Specific coding examples are shown in the Appendix (Fig. A).

**Summary**

In general, audience feedback was obtained throughout the entire course of completing the project, but here, I will refer solely to the feedback that was obtained through usability testing during the final stages of development. Through observing users at Imagine RIT on May 3, 2014, it was concluded that Tidy Guide successfully attracted its target audience. The majority of interested users consisted of women, mothers (accompanied by children), and wives (accompanied by significant others), who commented on the humorous nature of the Tidy the Pig, and responded:

- “Would this be something up on the web at a later time? I see it as very useful.”
- “From what I see, I think it’s a good idea.”
- “What a good concept. I would buy Tidy Guide.”

A ten-question survey was given at Imagine RIT (powered by SurveyMonkey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6nj2zf.), see Appendix, Fig. B) in order to obtain more information on the average user and their opinions on Tidy Guide. Only one male responded, aged 55 to 64, who commented on the good graphics and gender neutrality, and thought it would be useful because of his organization issues. Further surveys were issued in later stages of development through e-mail, user observation, and verbal question and answer sessions.
E-mail questions included:

**Design:** How do you feel overall about the design? Is the design engaging? Do you connect with it? Do you have and suggestion for improvement?

**Navigation:** Is it easy or hard to navigate? Do you get stuck anywhere? Does anything seem confusing or annoying?

**Content:** Do you find the content relevant and useful?

Users commented:

“Overall, I like the look. It’s friendly and I like the different font treatment and balance of text to graphics... I found it engaging and entertaining at the same time with the pig (I loved it!) and the use of color and balance of graphics.”

“Overall, I love the design and think the content is useful (my summer goal is to organize my house, so I especially love the connection to the Pinterest page with more tips / information)... This is fun to play around with. I really like the pig concept.”

“This is the cutest thing ever. Very informational as well, and while I was looking for something here at my cube, I thought of the statistics. It shows great design as well as that you have done your research... The design is very clean and chic in my opinion, and while you have a lot of rooms and areas within, it is very organized and easily able to navigate through.”

“Love the overall design. Very simple. The purpose is really neat too.”

Through user testing and observation, several minor technical / coding issues were identified and addressed. For example, in Google Chrome, the questions page was not functioning accordingly. Regardless of what main issue users selected, the site took them to the same page. Also, the contact form allowed users to submit without validating inputs. Users also suggested usability, navigation, and animation improvements, including:

- Adjusting the speed of the animated walking pig in order to improve realism
- Adding keyboard functionality (i.e., hitting the ‘enter’ key to close dialogue boxes) in order to reduce excessive mouse movement by the user
• Adding transparency to buttons that could no longer be selected by the user (i.e., graying out the right arrow after the user had scrolled completely left)
• Ensuring selectable and unfinished rooms (i.e., bathroom vs. playroom) appeared as such by changing color and depth of graphics
• Adjusting the speed of the parallax scroll in the vanity front-view

In all instances, code was added and graphics were enhanced to remedy the issues.

Conclusion

Through planning, design, and development of Tidy Guide, I learned valuable lessons and gained knowledge relevant to the field of visual communications and computer graphics design. Much of the CSS3 (i.e., animation, transforms, and transitions), JavaScript, and jQuery (i.e., effects and events) was self-taught, and required persistent trial and error to achieve the desired outcome. I also had not been familiar with Flash HTML Canvas before animating Tidy the Pig in the welcome message.

Other than assisting in gaining technical knowledge, the project stressed the importance of user experience and testing. It required several iterations of the user interface design to discover that, with the allotted time and resources, it would be impossible to design a perfect, one-size-fits-all approach. No user or user home is similar to another; therefore I would have to generalize when illustrating the home and rooms, and when providing organizing solutions. Also, user testing was an incredibly crucial step throughout the development process. Even the most minor usability issues that were discovered by users and subsequently addressed contributed to improving the overall user experience and interaction.

With more resources, technical knowledge, and time, I would improve the responsiveness of the site. Currently, the site functions responsively in all common browsers on computers by adjusting to both the browser width and height. The site does
not appear correctly on the iPad tablet or smartphones, and navigation buttons are hidden on browser screens smaller than 600 pixels in height. I would also add slight animated movements to Tidy the Pig in all situations where he appears, along with appropriate audio.

With more time, I would also continue to develop additional rooms, including the playroom, bedroom, office, living room, kitchen, garage, laundry room, and basement. Within each of these rooms, I would add the spaces to be organized. For example, for the bedroom, I would instruct users on how to organize dressers, a nightstand, under the bed, an armoire, the closet, and a storage bench. Because Tidy Guide was built as a modular structure, each room could be built upon over time. Sketches illustrating this concept and an additional space are shown in the Appendix (Fig C.).

Tidy Guide was a sizable undertaking – a project that, in a typical agency or firm, would be implemented by a team of illustrators, user experience designers, user interface designers, and developers. Because I took on each of these roles, I was able to gain insight into and understand the amount of time and effort needed for each phase of a website or application project. I resolve that the end product met my objective to create an interactive, instructional, web-based application that coaches users on how to organize objects within a specific space through a unique visual means.

Visit the final website at www.katiecreative.com/tidyguide.
Bibliography


APPENDIX

A. Code Examples
B. Survey
C. Modular Sketches
D. Thesis Proposal
E. Thesis Defense Presentation
F. Thesis Show Poster
A. Code Examples

Using CSS3 Transitions and Transforms to Animate House

```html
<!-- MAIN CONTENT / HOUSE / PAGE 1 -->
<div id="maincontent">
  <div class="page page-1">
    <div class="inner">
      <div id="homecontainer">
        <div id="roof"></div>
        <img src="images/start.png" alt="Start"> <p>Which room would you like to tidy up?</p>
        <img src="images/house/leftwindow.png" alt="window">
        <div class="view"><img src="images/house/playroom.png" alt="playroom"><button class="mask fromleft id="playroom" data-animation="1" data-goto="2">playroom</button></div>
        <div class="view"><img src="images/house/bathroom.png" alt="bathroom"><button class="mask fromtop id="bathroom" data-animation="1" data-goto="3">bathroom</button></div>
      </div>
    </div>
  </div>
</div>

/* Hovers */

.mask {
  position: absolute;
  top: 0;
  left: 8;
  opacity: 0;
  border: none;
  transition: transform 0.4s, opacity 0.1s 0.3s;
  -o-transition: -o-transform 0.4s, opacity 0.1s 0.3s;
  -moz-transition: -moz-transform 0.4s, opacity 0.1s 0.3s;
  -webkit-transition: -webkit-transform 0.4s, opacity 0.1s 0.3s;
  cursor: pointer;
}

.mask.fromleft {
  transform: translateX(-100%);
  -webkit-transform: translateX(-100%);
  -ms-transform: translateX(-100%);
}

Using CSS3 Animations and JavaScript for Page Transitions

```javascript
.js .page-current, .no-js .page {
  visibility: visible;
  z-index: 1;
}
.js body {
  overflow: auto;
}
.page-onTop {
  z-index: 999;
}
.page-moveToLeft {
  -webkit-animation: moveToLeft .6s ease both;
  -moz-animation: moveToLeft .6s ease both;
  animation: moveToLeft .6s ease both;
}
Using JavaScript/jQuery for Interaction and Animation Effects

Using Forms with PHP and JavaScript Validation
// CONTACT FORM
required = ['name', 'email', 'subject', 'detail'];
email = $('input[name=email]');
errornotice = $('div#error');

$('#theform').submit(function() {
  // Validate fields
  for (i=0; i<required.length; i++) {
    var input = $('input[name=required[i]]');
    if (input.val() == '') {
      input.addClass('error');
      errornotice.fadeIn(750);
    } else {
      input.removeClass('error');
    }
  }
  if ($('#name').val() == 'Name (required)') {
    errornotice.fadeIn(750);
  }
  if (!/^[a-zA-Z9-.]*@[a-zA-Z9-.]*\.[a-zA-Z]{2,4}\b/i.test(email.val())) {
    email.addClass('error');
    errornotice.fadeIn(750);
  }
  if ($('#detail').val() == 'What can I help you with?') {
    $('#detail').addClass('error');
    errornotice.fadeIn(750);
  }
  if (!$('#input').hasClass('error')) {
    return false;
  } else {
    errornotice.hide();
    return true;
  }
});

if ($mail_status) {
  alert('Thanks for the message! I will contact you shortly.');
  window.location = 'index.html';
} else {
  alert('Message failed. Please, send an email directly to tidyguide@katiecreative.com');
  window.location = 'index.html';
}
### B. Survey

#### Tidy Guide at Imagine RIT

1. **What is your gender?**
   - Female
   - Male

2. **What is your age?**
   - 17 or younger
   - 18 to 24
   - 25 to 34
   - 35 to 44
   - 45 to 64
   - 55 to 64
   - 65 to 74
   - 75 or older

3. **What is your approximate average household income?**
   - $0-$24,999
   - $25,000-$49,999
   - $50,000-$74,999
   - $75,000-$99,999
   - $100,000-$124,999
   - $125,000-$149,999
   - $150,000-$174,999
   - $175,000-$199,999
   - $200,000 and up

4. **Overall, how do you feel about the design of Tidy Guide? Please explain.**

5. **What do you think about the Tidy Guide logo and mascot (Tidy, the Pig)?**

6. **Does the website appear easy or hard to navigate? Why?**

7. **What improvements would you make to the design of the website?**

8. **Did you find the content provided relevant and useful? Why or why not?**

9. **What other features or content would make Tidy Guide more useful?**

10. **How likely are you to recommend Tidy Guide to others?**
    - Extremely likely
    - Quite likely
    - Moderately likely
    - Slightly likely
    - Not at all likely
C. Modular Sketches
organizing process
- use equal quadrants when dividing drawers
- Fold cotton tops, roll synthetic tees, tanks, and tights
- File t-shirts by color
- Remove everything
- organize clothes by color, categories, use, etc.
- Give away or recycle unwanted clothing
- Create a pile for “might-wear”
- Group similar items together
- Think of your “daily needs”
- Fold and file delicates, like underwear and bras in a woven or fabric bin. Lay bras in half.
- Next drawers should be tailored to your schedule (work, gym, etc.)
- Store rarely used items in the bottom drawer

Tips to keep it organized
- Use dresser-top tray to hold your daily use items (perimeter, watch, rings, etc.)
- Drape jewelry on sculptural figures or hang on upholstered bulletin board
- Use linen or mesh inserts or expandable drawer organizers
- Sort by style or color—whatever makes it easier to spot
- Pack pairs together so you can grab and go
- Use shallow drawers for garments (like ties) are only one layer deep—no digging required
- Every month, take everything out and refold
- Keep drawers smelling fresh with bags of soap or candles
Rochester Institute of Technology

A Thesis Proposal submitted to the Faculty of the College of Imaging Arts and Science in candidacy for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

Organize It – An Interactive Web Application
By Katie Hollenbeck
November 07, 2012
Organize It – An Interactive Web Application
By Katie Hollenbeck
November 07, 2012

Thesis Proposal

Committee Chair:
Chris Jackson, Associate Professor, College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
[Confirmed by email] 11/05/12

Signature of Committee Chair

Date

Committee Member:
Shaun Foster, Assistant Professor, College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
[Confirmed by email] 11/13/12

Signature of Committee Member

Date

Committee Member:
Dan Bogaard, Associate Professor, College of Computing and Information Sciences
[Confirmed by email] 11/07/12

Signature of Committee Member

Date
All -

Chris has agreed to chair the following committees:

1. Scott Howard
2. Shelley Kornatz
3. Alice Hallahan
4. Brandon Capp
5. Katie Hollenbeck
6. Irene Meyer
7. Jaiying Li
8. David Royka

I assume that he is willing to serve on the others but am awaiting confirmation. If you are not on this list and had hoped to have him chair your committee, please select another committee member as chair.

- Marla
Hi Katie this Shaun - you may use this email to confirm that I am on your thesis committee. I will give you my signature when I see you next.

As I mentioned previously I would recommend getting a content specialist from interior design for your project as well.

Shaun Foster
KATIE HOLLENBECK <krh9506@g.rit.edu>

Thesis Proposal

Dan Bogaard <dsbics@rit.edu>
To: "KATIE HOLLENBECK (RIT Student)" <krh9506@mail.rit.edu>

Katie -

You can use this email as my 'signature' to be on your thesis committee.

Dan

__________________________
Daniel Bogaard
Associate Professor
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Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences
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From: "KATIE HOLLENBECK (RIT Student)" <krh9506@rit.edu>
Date: Wednesday, November 7, 2012 8:00 AM
To: Dan Bogaard <dsbics@rit.edu>
Subject: Thesis Proposal

[Quoted text hidden]
Abstract

I am proposing the development of a new instructional, interactive, web-based application, which will coach users on how to organize objects within a specific space through a unique visual means. Because an interactive application similar in nature does not exist on the web at this current time, this project aims to become an important tool to users who are seeking organizing assistance and advice.

Thesis Blog: www.katiehollenbeck.com

Problem Statement

The success of the application rests on how well it solves users’ organizing issues through its interactive functions. The application targets mostly women, ages 25 to 54, who may be classified as professionals, affluent, college educated, homeowners, and mothers and who have a discretionary income and high standards. These women are constantly looking for ways to make life easier, and because of their busy lifestyle, they need easy-to-obtain instructions and quick, efficient solutions. The goal of the application is not to teach users why organizing is important, but to offer organizing solutions when needed.

The user does not want to spend a lot of time reading organizing blogs, websites, how-to’s, and step-by-step directions, and then commit even more time to planning out and preparing the space for organization. In one sole accessible tool built on a single web page, the application will offer the user inspiration and advice, and provide product recommendations based on the objects to be organized. Using functions built with HTML5 and JavaScript, the
application will demonstrate effective information design, and the influence of interactivity and visuals when combined with an instructional environment.

Survey of Literature

INTERACTIVE ORGANIZATION

*Easy Track Closet Design Tool*
http://www.easytrack.com/easytrack/design-tool/

*Martha Stewart Living: Design Your Closet*
http://www.marthastewartclosets.com/closetLayout.aspx

*Rubbermaid Closet Designer*

The sole interactive organization tools that can be found on the web specialize in closet design. Easy Track, Martha Stewart Living, and Rubbermaid provide interactive design tools to customize a closet and/or storage area. Easy Track is a 3D design tool, which allows the user to 1) draw or choose a floor plan; 2) add details such as doors or corner shelves; 3) design walls using Easy Track products; 4) add islands; 5) view the design in 3D; 6) order the chosen products; and 7) save the design. Easy Track has a simple interface and a considerably user-friendly navigation and design process. The application provides instructions, as well as a “help” link throughout the process, though the help feature sends the user to a Flash video, which is not user-controlled. The application requires Flash Player and the user must refresh the browser if they wish to restart.

*Martha Stewart Living* allows users to design a closet by 1) choosing the type of closet; 2) adjusting measurements; 3) customizing a recommended design (by colors and accessories);
4) providing a list of kits needed; and 4) saving the design and purchasing the products. The interface is relatively simple, but navigation is not user friendly. I found that when designing a closet, instructions were not present and it was not apparent that the user had to right-click on the closet to change the accessories. The “undo” button did not work, and once I wanted to “save my design,” I could not return back to the closet I was designing. The only help provided for the application was a phone number. The application was built using HTML and JavaScript.

Upon entering Rubbermaid’s Closet Designer, they provide an instructional video, which the user can choose to skip. Their application allows users to 1) choose the type of Rubbermaid product; 2) customize the closet shape and size (even by which room the closet is in); 3) design the closet using a drag and drop feature; and 4) save, print, and share the design, as well as see the purchase list from their associated retailer. After the short introduction, Rubbermaid walks the user through the process with step-by-step animated cues. The user interface is simple, but the closet design preview is too small. Rubbermaid only focuses on space, not specific objects, and requires Adobe Flash Player to function. They have a “support center” for the entire website, but no help feature for the Closet Designer application.

3D FLOOR PLANNING

Design Within Reach 3D Room Planner
http://www.dwr.com/display.do?ruleID=108816

MyDeco 3D Home Planner
http://mydeco.com/3d-planner/

I have also identified several floor-planning websites, which serve as examples of how companies use interactivity to allow users to customize a space in a 3D environment. In most
cases, the user will choose a room (i.e., kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, etc.), customize the dimensions, design the room’s paint colors, wood, furniture, cabinets, appliances, doors, windows, and layout, and then have the ability to save, print, and share the design, as well as purchase the chosen products.

The content ranges from photos of designed rooms and illustrations of room plans to 3D illustrations or line drawings. Some begin with a pre-designed space; others allow the users to start from scratch. In most cases, the applications function with Adobe Flash Player, and in some cases they are built with HTML and JavaScript. Each website has a distinct, branded user interface, navigation technique, and instruction and help system. Each website may be used as reference for the organization application for their design method and implementation.

3D INTERACTIVE ROOMS

Unity3D Interactive 3D Room
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTlPEKa-ae0

NavTech3D Interactive 3D Operating Room
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHmQJZ7TUys

I have identified two videos of interactive 3D rooms, which are relatively common in the gaming world. In Unity3D’s video, they demonstrate how a user would interact with the environment using multi-touch capabilities. NavTech3D’s video is a good example of how a user can interact with a 3D environment for participatory learning and instructional purposes. The proposed application will differ – the 3D rooms would be static, but the user can interact with specific areas within the room to obtain further information on organization.
“HOW TO ORGANIZE” WEB SITES

The number of text-based “how to organize” web sites and blogs are countless, but their lack of visual imagery and interactivity are what set them apart from the proposed application. These sites will be indicated in the references of the thesis documentation for use of their instructional value and content.

Design Concepts

DESIGN IDEATION

The proposed application will be developed with interactive user functions and a well-thought out and planned user experience and interface – incorporating features that are not present in the described closet, room planning, 3D, and how-to websites. The proposed application will go beyond closet planning or room layout, and seeks to assist users in organizing specific objects within several different spaces using interactive tools and unique visual prompts.

Using subtle, relaxing, earth-toned colors, simple shapes, lines, and textures, clean, uncomplicated typography, and a crisp, consistent, organized layout, the design will entice its audience by creating the organized environment of which they are seeking for their home. Images, illustrations, and renderings will convey simplicity and organization. The user will never have to leave the website to seek instructions or help, and they will be able to seamlessly undo their actions or start over. Navigation will occur effortlessly and the web application will be clearly branded with an applicable name and logo.

In summary, upon entering the website, the user will encounter an instructional animation, which they will be able to skip, and then begin by choosing the room they would like
to work with. The user will then be given an interactive 3D room (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, etc.), where they can hover over specific areas (pantry, under the sink, cupboard, etc.) and click to receive more information. The 3D detailed view will consist of step-by-step how-tos, interactive and visual tips and tricks, and product recommendations for the user. A more detailed flow chart and series of wireframes are provided below.

**Application Flow Chart**

```
Start: Animated Introduction -> Choose Room -> Interactive 3D Room View

Interactive 3D Detailed View -> Tips, Tricks, and Product Recommendations -> Save, Print, Share
```

**Application Wireframes**

![Image of the animated introduction](image-url)

1. **Step 1**: Animated Introduction
2. **Step 2**: Instructions
3. **Step 3**: Interactive 3D View
4. **Step 4**: Save, Print, Share
METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

“Organize It” (working title) will be delivered as a web-based application, accessible through a web browser, and will consist of the following assets:

- Animated introduction: step-by-step instructional walk through animation; ability to be skipped; roughly 10-30 seconds
- One to three 3D room models (basement, bathroom, bedroom, garage, kitchen, laundry room, living room, mud room, or office); PNG or JPG output
- 3D detailed model views, depending on room chosen; PNG or JPG output
- Hyperlinked images / photography of products; linked to Google Shopping or Amazon
• Color Palette Samples:

![Color Palette Samples]

• Typography Samples:

Gill Sans Light
Myriad Pro
Junicode

• Interactive and responsive user feedback: navigation, buttons, links, icons, and tooltips

• Social media icons and pages

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The application will be implemented using HTML5, CSS, and JavaScript, and built to fit in a standard web browser (1024 x 768 pixels), with a maximum width of 900 pixels. Although the application will be built primarily for the web, it may be compatible with the iPad at that size, and possibly take advantage of multi-touch capability. I anticipate using Adobe Dreamweaver or a text-based editor for programming, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, and Adobe Illustrator for any image editing or vector development, as well as Cinema 4D for the 3D renderings.
I currently have a technical foundation and background in HTML5 and CSS, and only some knowledge of JavaScript. During the following quarters and semesters, I plan on enrolling in programming classes (currently enrolled in Client-Side Programming in the Winter 2012 quarter) as electives to strengthen my background in JavaScript programming. I have experience with Cinema 4D for 3D model rendering, and if applicable courses are offered to increase my skillset in that software, I will take advantage of that opportunity.

The project will be implemented over a span of two years – November 2012 to May 2014, in which I will plan on scheduling the completion of the programming, web design, and 3D layout at separate points along the timeline. As a backup plan, in case divergence from the timeline occurs, I will scale the project back, develop only a portion of the proposed idea (either one room or less detailed objects), and can also consider using Adobe Flash for the interactive functions rather than JavaScript if needed.

Marketing Plan

DISSEMINATION

I will plan on delivering and distributing my thesis project for audience interaction at the final thesis show, and also advertising through word-of-mouth, social media, business cards, postcards, and/or website advertisements. Below is a list of conferences and interactive design competitions, which I may submit my thesis to in the 2013-2014 academic year:

- HOW Interactive Design Awards
- Interactive Media Awards
- Communication Arts Interactive Competition
• Webby Awards
• Adobe Design Achievement Awards
• IxDA Global Student Interaction Design Competition
• SIGGRAPH 2014

EVALUATION PLAN

In order to ensure the proposed application functions and meets user needs, I will employ usability testing with groups of students, peers, friends, and family. Based on the feedback and testing, I will implement changes where needed. The qualitative testing and/or questionnaire will ask questions such as:

• Could you find the application?
• Do you understand its purpose?
• Did you feel you lacked any type of skill needed to use the application?
• Was it easy to use?
• How much time did you spend on the site?
• Do you think it will make organizing objects more efficient?
• How many different rooms did you try?
• Is this project unique?
• What else do you think about this application?
• Did you use the help function?
• Did you watch the entire introduction?
• Were you interested in the recommended products?
Did this teach you anything new?

Did you try to access this on your tablet or smartphone?

**Pragmatic Considerations**

**BUDGET**

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<td>Competition Submission Costs</td>
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**TIMELINE**

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<table>
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References


MFA Thesis Defense
Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
Visual Communications Design

Katie Hollenbeck
Thursday, May 15, 2014
# Proposal

## Thesis Statement
An **interactive, instructional**, web-based application that will coach users on how to organize objects within a specific space through a unique **visual** means.

**Interactive:** Involve users in the organizing process  
**Instructional:** Offer solutions, inspiration, and advice  
**Visual:** Demonstrate instead of lecture

## Target Audience
Women, professionals, college-educated, homeowners, mothers, wives, age 25 to 54

## Functionality
- HTML5  
- CSS3  
- JavaScript / jQuery
## Process

### Research >

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HGTV.com</th>
<th>OrganizingJunkie.com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iheartorganizing.com</td>
<td>Pinterest.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>MarthaStewart.com</td>
<td>RealSimple.com</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Process

Flowcharts > Sketches > Wireframes >
Process

Moodboard > Style Guide >

Airstream
Black Jack
East Market
Lobster Two
Pacifico
Quigley Wiggly
Risque
Logo Design

Process
Process

UI/UX Design > Prototype > Code > Test > Re-code > Re-test...
Process

UI/UX Design > Prototype > Code > Test > Re-code > Re-test...
Modular Structure

**Conclusion**

- Use equal quadrants when dividing drawers.
- Fold cotton tops, roll synthetic tires, pants, and tights.
- File t-shirts by color.
- Remove everything.
- Organize clothes by sector, categories, use, etc.
- Give away or recycle unwanted clothing.
- Create a pile for “might-wear.”
- Group similar items together.
- Think of your “daily needs.”
- Fold and file delicates, like underwear, and bras in a wooden or fabric bin. Use has in half.
- Nest drawers should be tailored to your schedule (work, gym, etc).
- Store rarely used items in the bottom drawer.

**Tips to keep it organized**

- Use dresser top tray to hold your daily use items (gentle, wrist, rings, etc).
- Drape jewelry on sculptural figures or hang on upholstered bulletin board.
- Use linen or mesh inserts or expandable drawer organizers.
- Sort by style or color—whatever makes it easier to spot.
- Pack pairs together so you can grab and go.
- Use shallow drawers for garments (like ties) are only one layer deep—no digging required.
- Every month, toss everything out and refold.
- Deep drawers smell fresh with bags of soap or candles.
## Conclusion

### Lessons Learned

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>CSS3</strong></th>
<th>Animations, transforms, transitions, pseudo-classes, box sizing...</th>
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<td><strong>jQuery</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Concept</strong></td>
<td>No one-size-fits-all approach</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>User interaction</strong></td>
<td>Test, test, test...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you!

Thesis Committee
Chris Jackson
Shaun Foster
Dan Bogaard

MFA Thesis Defense
Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
Visual Communications Design

Katie Hollenbeck
Thursday, May 15, 2014
A beginner’s guide to an organized home

THESIS STATEMENT
An interactive, instructional, web-based application that will coach users on how to organize objects within a specific space through a unique visual means.

ABOUT TIDY GUIDE
Search for “how to organize” on the web, and you’ll be flooded with endless solutions. Organizing guides and how-to’s are everywhere, making the task seem overwhelming. Tidy Guide streamlines the process of organizing your home by breaking down the job into simple steps. Just answer a few initial questions and you’ll be on your way to a more organized home!

TRY IT OUT!
www.katiecreative.com/tidyguide