"How do I get back to my Homescreen?": Education on Tablet Usage for Senior Citizens

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Abstract
In this position paper, we describe the lesson plans and feedback we recieved after conducting a set of three courses on iPad use at the Holiday Park Senior Center located in Silver Spring, Maryland. Through the feedback we recieved from the adult learners in these courses, we demonstrate that there is a dearth in HCI education for populations with special needs like the elderly. We outline the importance of courses within communities that teach the elderly how to interact with their iPads, and the incapability of new modes of teaching like Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to fulfill the conditions required in order to effectively teach individuals with special needs about interaction with technology and computers.

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HCI education, accessibility

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H.5.m [Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI)]: Miscellaneous.

Introduction
Last year, we were informed that a local senior center was in need of instructors for introductory iPad Courses. Thinking the task to be simple, we, three graduate students in Human Computer Interaction, decided to give

back to the community through our knowledge of HCI. We were told that we would be teaching three courses to senior citizens about how to interact with their iPads. In the United States, people are living longer [3]. Senior citizens who are living longer are embracing new technologies [4]. Studies show that tablets are usable to Senior Citizens [5]. New technologies and especially new interfaces bring new, diverse audiences with varied needs. The venues which people can get educated about these new technologies are limited. Beyond institutionalized education, users must seek help within the communities that they live to understand iPads better.

Class Format and Syllabus

As a team, we initially brainstormed on the types of tasks that the Senior Center senior citizens would be interested in accomplishing on their iPads. We had several correspondences with the administrators at the center who reiterated that the several people from the Apple store had attempted to teach a class at the senior center and it was a "complete disaster" because they were throwing around technological terms that the students did not understand. Given this information, we decided to start our courses with the very basics of the iPad. We divided our three classes into three groups: The Physical Components of a Tablet, Essential Applications, and Non-Essential Applications. Furthermore, we based this decision on the findings from a case study on teaching adult learners information literacy by Gust [2]. The findings of this study reveal that we should focus on "keeping it simple", provide engaging class exersizes, and teach in a slow-paced environment.

Class 1: The Physical Components of a Tablet
In this first class, we covered the various physical components of the iPad: the "home" button, the volume button on the sides, the headphone jack. We decided to follow the recommendations based on the findings by Gust et al. by keeping it simple, but in the first few minutes of class we forgot to maintain a slow-paced environment, when someone yelled from among the students, "You are talking way too fast. You need to slow down". We also did some hands on exersizes by instructing students to click on the icons. Several times, some students yelled out, "How do I get back to the home screen!?". We then instructed the students to click the button on the front in order to navigate back to the home screen.

Class 2: Essential Applications
We define "essential applications" on the iPad as applications that serve to facilitate communication. These include: Email, Messaging, Facetime, and Skype. One common problem that we came across while teaching this particular course, was that alot of the students had forgotten their passwords. They did not know where they had recorded their password. In some cases, we were not able to recover their old accounts and had to help the students create new passwords.

Class 3: Non-Essential Applications
In this class, we covered "non-essential" applications, applications that were meant for entertainment purposes. These applications include: Photos, Kindle, and Facebook. The most touching moment of this experience was an exchange we had with a senior woman at the center. She asked if we could help her setup the "Facebook software" on her iPad. Since, this was a unique request, we helped her do so after class. After class, we helped setup her Facebook account and helped her send friend requests to her family members. She asked how to post a status and we guided her through the different options available on the ipad Facebook application. We asked her what her

first post would be on her Facebook and she held back tears as she began to tell us that her husband had passed away recently and she wanted to share the obituary with her grand children on Facebook.

MOOCs: The End to Traditional Education Systems?

There have been many advocates of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the education area [1]. MOOCs were even hailed as "the right extreme limit of the evolution of the open education, which have resulted in a rupture with the traditional educational system, even could make disappear in a mid term the brick-and-mortar institutions as how are actually known [1]. However, one must pose the question, are MOOCs really capable of replacing the " brick-and-mortar institutions"? The student who required me to slow down in my introduction of the physical aspects of the course could not make the same request of an online video giving similar instructions. It would be difficult for an online isntructor to demonstrate physically to the student who did not know how to navigate back to the homescreen how to do so. Furthermore, a MOOC would be unable to help the student who was frustrated because she could not remember her password. And lastly, the elder woman who wanted to set up her facebook and send friend requests to all of her family, so that she could share her husband's obituary would be unable to seek help in a MOOC. These iPad courses were a testament to the necessity of "brick and mortar institutions" in providing accessible education.

Conclusion

The three courses that we taught at the Holiday Park Senior Center and the resulting feedback informed our teaching methods. In order to effectively teach students from diverse backgrounds with varying capabilities, we stress the importance of a "living HCI curriculum". Courses that aim to teach students about how to interact with technology must be diverse in resource and not rely overly on the promise of transitioning education to an online space.

Acknowledgements

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