Use of Iterative Design to improve the collection of User Feedback

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Background

The University of Waterloo Library engages in a variety of user experience assessment methods, including interviews, observations, surveys, usability tests, and focus groups. Consistent with a philosophy of continuous improvement, in Spring 2019 to Winter 2020 the User Experience team sought to improve the effectiveness of our user Feedback Sessions, which are short, in-person surveys. In order to do this, we engaged in a process of iterative design. Commonly seen in industry to create and improve products and digital services, the iterative design process was used here to rapidly test elements of the user feedback sessions and make minor adjustments for subsequent sessions. The following are the survey elements we adjusted:

- Equipment: Such as software used to create the survey and devices used to administer.
- Question Type: Different question types, such as closed or open ended questions, hotspots, or matrix tables
- Location: Where and when the survey was administered
- Distribution: How participants could access the survey, such as in person on our devices
- Method Type: How the survey is delivered, such as on paper or online
- Prizes: Various types of thank you gifts available for participants of the survey

Each feedback session informed the next, creating a cycle of continuous improvement. This poster will examine these design changes and lessons learnt in more detail.

Design Methodology

The User Experience team rapidly tested, analyzed and adjusted survey elements to create a cycle of continuous improvement.

1. First, the feedback session surveys are created by the User Experience team in Qualtrics.
2. Next, the surveys are then delivered in person by student staff at Library locations for a short period of time. As students enter the Library, they are asked if they would like to participate in the short survey. These surveys typically take 2-5 minutes to finish. Once the survey is completed, the user is given the choice of a thank-you prize.
3. Immediately after each session, student staff provide the User Experience team with feedback on their experience of administering the survey. The User Experience team then analyzed the amount and quality of survey responses and the feedback provided by staff who administered the survey. From their analysis, minor adjustments were made to survey elements and tested in the subsequent survey.

Findings

Equipment

The addition of Qualtrics to create, distribute and analyze surveys, as well as the addition of two tablets to administer the surveys, was a foundational change for the User Feedback sessions. It was found that the combination of QR codes for users to access the survey on their own devices, as well as the tablets, allowed for the highest number of users to participate in the survey.

Question Type

A successful survey has to balance a few factors, including the number of questions asked, the use of open-ended questions versus closed questions, and the choice of using divergent question paths. Regardless of the above factors, for this method of

gathering user feedback, a successful survey takes no more than approximately three minutes to finish and requires a precise, overall research question.

Location

As feedback sessions became more frequent, it was determined that varied times, alternating locations, and different weekdays contributed to the reduction of user-reported survey burnout.

Distribution

The ability of Qualtrics to distribute electronic surveys in multiple ways has dramatically increased the amount of user feedback collected. In particular, the best combination used so far are the two tablets (web browser) and printed QR codes (personal devices).

Method Type

The majority of user data was collected through surveys. The method progressed from paper surveys to surveys administered on tablets through Qualtrics. Later, surveys were also distributed through QR codes. While feedback sessions use surveys, in the Winter 2020 term, the use of Observation studies complemented the data gathered from user feedback sessions.

Prizes

Based on user comments, student staff feedback, and the popularity of prize types, the prizes offered were adjusted throughout the terms. It was found that substantive consumable goods, such as full-sized, brand-named chocolate bars is the most popular prize for our users.

Key Takeaways

The iterative design process was used to critically examine and adjust methods of gathering feedback from our users without requiring an increase in budget,

especially in light of the budget constraints experienced by Ontario universities in this time frame.

In Spring 2019, a total of 192 individuals were surveyed over five feedback sessions, or 38.4 individuals surveyed per session. For Fall 2019, a total of 642 individuals were surveyed over nine feedback sessions, or 71.33 per session. For the Winter 2020 term, this upwards trend of increased user feedback has continued yet again with a total of 595 individuals surveyed over five feedback sessions, or 119 per session. From the start of this process, this is an increase of 209.9% for user feedback gathered per feedback session.

USER FEEDBACK FROM SPRING 2019 - WINTER 2020
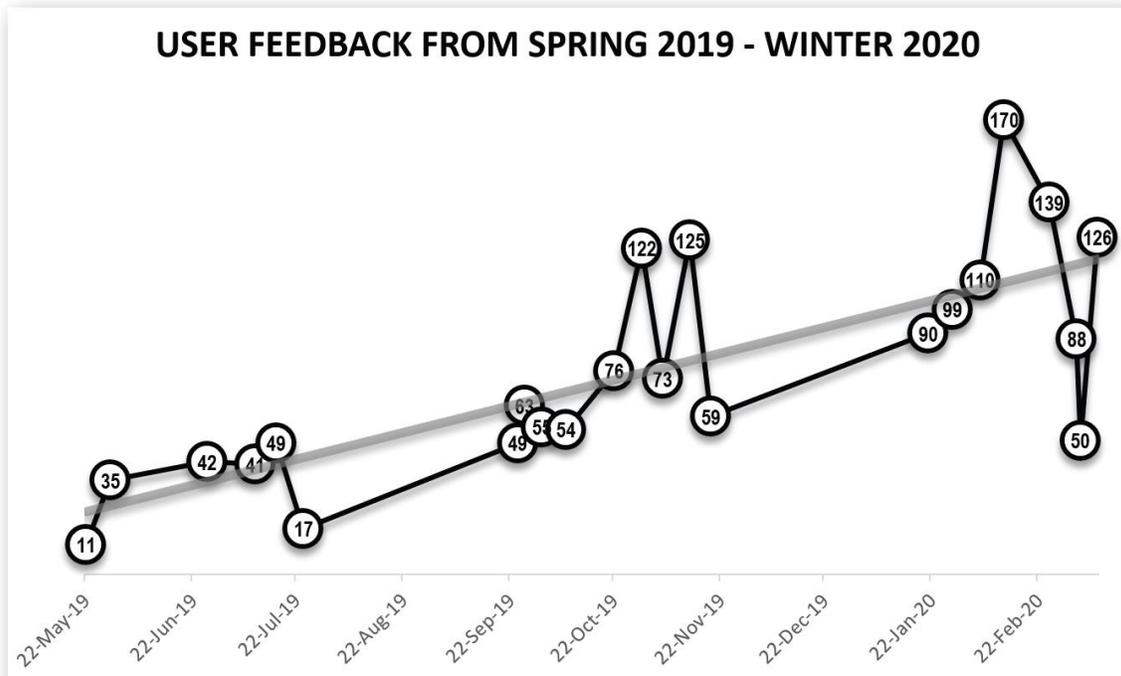
In an examination of the user feedback sessions at the University of Waterloo Libraries, the use of iterative design has improved the quantity of feedback gathered from our users. The numerous adjustments to the survey design increased the number of responses and quality of feedback received.

The iterative design process can be used to critically examine and adjust methods of gathering feedback that best fits user preferences and institutional constraints.