To: Executive Committee

From: John Laskowski

RE: Final Report - University Library Innovation and Seed Funds Proposal -Digital User Experience Lab

Date: January 4, 2021

**Overview of Request**

In December 2019 the University Library Executive Committee approved my request for $6,000 to establish a user experience lab in my office. While the general goal for the lab was to increase our engagement with users, a more specific goal was to implement sophisticated prototyping testing into our design process thereby allowing the gathering and implementation of user feedback before transmitting new projects to the Web Team for development. This goal proposed the dual outcomes of increasing the success with which we meet the needs of our users through our websites and decreasing the turnaround time for projects to be developed by the Web Team.

**Funds and Allocation**

The $6,000 request was to be spent on the following:

* Sketch prototyping software: $99/year’s license
* Stark software suite: $20/year
* Invision prototype testing application: $300/year
* TobiiPro Eye Tracker VT3 Mini: $3,000
* Standard desktop PC with public-facing imaging: Approximately $1,000
* Two data drops into my office: $600
* Lenovo 27” wall-mounted monitor: $350
* Mounting arm and installation for monitor: Approximately $500

The initial request for $6,000 involved two assumptions: First, that I would continue to work from Room 444 in the Main Library; and second, we would not face a worldwide pandemic in 2020. After conferring with IT staff on the costs/savings of keeping me in Room 444 versus taking advantage of existing technology in empty Library space, it was decided I would be moved into Room 426 which would save $1,400 in equipment and data connections. COVID-19 forced me to start working from home in March 2020, removed the possibility of working face-to-face with our users, and while Library IT was very responsive in ordering the necessary applications and hardware, the delivery channels were greatly slowed by the increased global pressure on shipping and distribution channels.

Additionally, due to the COVID-19 restrictions on the building, the eye tracking hardware was never purchased. However, after some additional research and conversation with Chris Prom, we diverted $300 of that money to purchase an annual license to Anima, a plugin for Sketch that enhances the function of prototypes.

Taking into account the various changes, the actual output of funds from the grant amounted to roughly $1,750.

* Sketch prototyping software: $99/year’s license
* Stark software suite: $20/year
* Invision prototype testing application: $300/year
* Anima plugin for Sketch: $300/year
* Standard desktop PC with public-facing imaging: Approximately $1,000

**Outcomes**

There have been no UX tests using the new hardware and applications with Library users as of December 2020. However, the prototyping applications have been implemented into the design process for websites including the new site for the Archives and Special Collections building project and the ALA Archives redesign. I have been working with the Web Working Group to plan a complete overhaul of the Staff site and we have used these prototypes to create a new concept. Later this month we will be asking all employees of the Library to interact with the new prototype and provide feedback.

I am currently learning more about the best practices for using these different application and although they aren’t specifically designed for use in studying physical spaces, I’m exploring their potential for testing Library spaces and services adjacencies.

**Proposal**

There are roughly $4,250 of the grant unspent. This includes the funds originally allocated for technological upgrades to Room 444 and the majority of the $3,000 originally earmarked for the eye tracking software. It is difficult to assess when it will be possible to safely engage in face-to-face UX testing again. At the same time, I’m exploring other aspects of UX testing that can be successful in a completely digital environment. I would like to request a hold on the remaining funds until the end of the Spring semester at which time I can report back to EC with an updated proposal that EC could agree to fund or reallocate those funds to other Library expenses outside my unit.