

IAM Alumni Network



ACTIONABLE BUILD PLAN

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Introduction

Columbia College Chicago's Interactive Arts and Media department plans to develop a department-centric professional alumni network, the Columbia IAM Alumni Network (tentative title). This network intends to draw current students, faculty, and alumni towards building a professional community; offering users the ability to connect, collaborate, and discover professional opportunities.

Through this network users will find the opportunity to engage with their peers both professionally and in collaborative aspects. This may include finding job and internship opportunities as well as developing independent projects. Further, users will be able to share their own work and keep updated with the IAM department. The IAM Squad plans to produce design and development solutions that will make these goals possible. Through collaborative and iterative processes, the team has collected the essential research on system development as well as comprising a build plan for implementation of the network.

Our Process

- Implemented agile and scrum team research methods
- Developed creative brief outlining the details of the system and its goals
- Created user personas as a means to envision network user types
- Completed wireframes and user flows documenting the site outline
- Built interactive low-fidelity network prototype
- Ran tests on prototype with target audience using applicable testing scripts
- Researched the means necessary to implement a fully functional and high-fidelity network using Wordpress and Buddypress platforms

Who's it for?

- IAM Students - For students, especially ones nearing their graduation, looking to promote their work, make valuable connections and leads to job opportunities, and stay connected with academic peers.
- IAM Alumni - Alumni can use this network to promote their work, make valuable connections that lead to job opportunities, stay connected with friends and faculty.
- Faculty - Faculty can see what their past students are up to and how they've progressed, help alumni and students with projects.

Audience Personas

The team categorized their target audience appropriately. Personas were then made to embody each of the unique user groups. Those personas are: current IAM student, IAM staff and faculty, employed and unemployed alumni.

- IAM Student includes all current IAM students.
- IAM staff and faculty includes all the IAM staff and faculty members.
- Employed IAM alumni includes all of the department alumni who are employed.
- Unemployed IAM alumni includes all of the unemployed department alumni.

Example

Persona Name

BACKGROUND:

- Basic details about persona's role
- Key information about the persona's company
- Relevant background info, like education or hobbies

DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Gender
- Age Range
- HH Income (Consider a spouse's income, if relevant)
- Urbanicity (Is your persona urban, suburban, or rural?)

IDENTIFIERS:

- Buzz words
- Mannerisms



Sandra is a senior Mobile Programming Major in the Interactive Arts and Media department. She commutes to classes Mondays and Wednesdays from her apartment in Evanston where she lives with two roommates her age.

Motivators

Skills

AUDIENCE PERSONAS



Michael Faraday

IAM Staff & Faculty

Michael Faraday is a 28 Year old programming teacher at Columbia College Chicago. He lives and work the city of Chicago and travels via train daily for his job.

Besides being a professor at Columbia College Chicago, he is also a front end developer at his own company and is constantly looking for young poeple to add to his team. Faraday wants and needs his students to succeed in the classrooms and out in their careers. He encourages all students in every class he teaches to network and make connections even if they pursue an entrepreneurial career path.

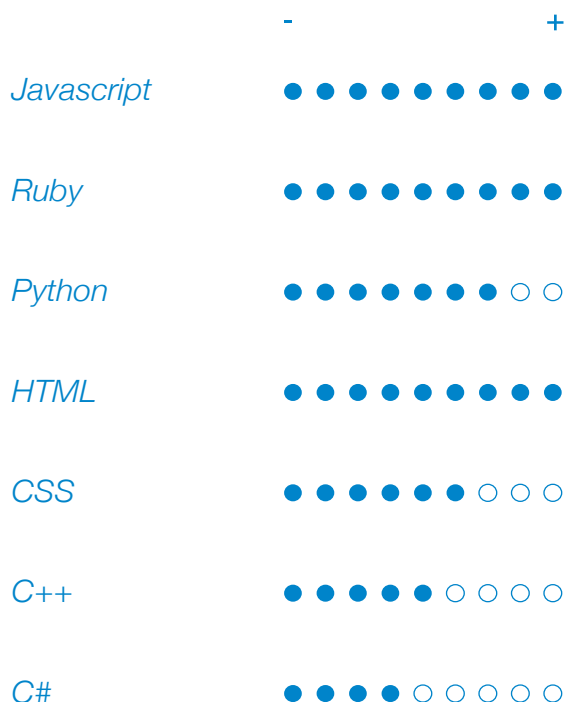
Motivators

Faraday needs students to seize opportunity and wants them to succeed. He knows how competitive searching for a great internship and position could be. He also knows that there are some great job opportunities out there.

Trigger Points

There are several online social networks that are used to communicate and network with students. There are several difficulties with using these networks with not being specific to the IAM Department which makes it complicated to keep track of the students. The new IAM network will provide the necessary tools to meet these requirements.

Skills





Tom Baker

Employed Alumni

Tom Baker is a full-time senior web developer at a startup in Chicago. In 2005, Tom graduated from the interactive arts and media department with a degree in IAM. During his time at Columbia he made a few good friends and spent his free time tutoring.

Tom would love to see what other alumni and students are doing, especially those he knew. He'd like to see who's close by and what they are up to these days. Even though he has a full-time job, he wouldn't mind squeezing in time to see former classmates.

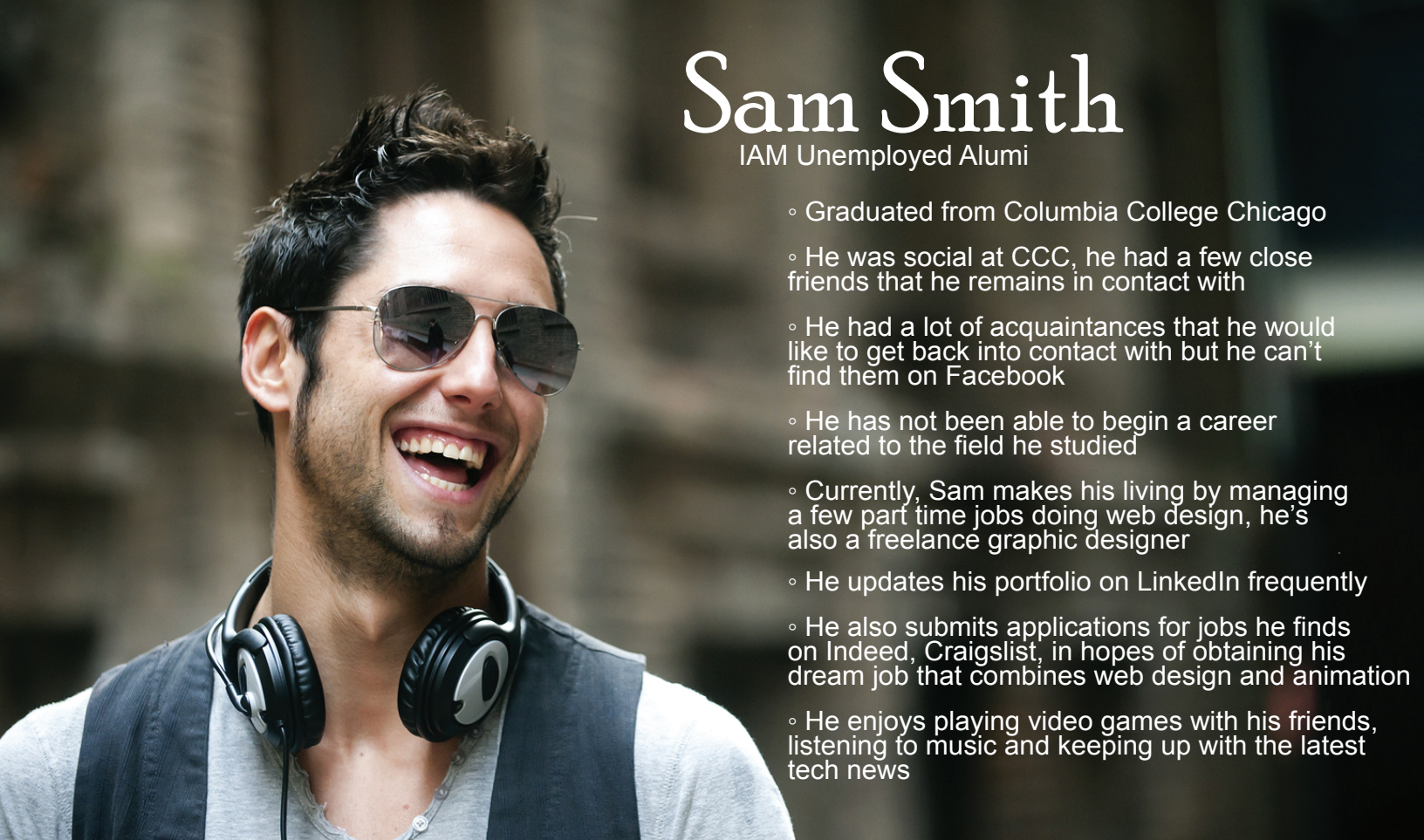
Motivators

Finding reputable interns that can hard in a very saturated market. Craigslist ad's don't cut it anymore and he needs extra help and possible freelancers. Also, Tom would be able to find and collaborate with people in the same background.

Columbia Alumni Website Trigger Point: Tom could make use of the Columbia Alumni Network for finding interns to gain additional help for projects and the students would benefit from the learning experience and gain résumé

Skills

Javascript	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Ruby	● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Python	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○
HTML	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
CSS	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
C++	● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○



Sam Smith

IAM Unemployed Alumni

- Graduated from Columbia College Chicago
- He was social at CCC, he had a few close friends that he remains in contact with
- He had a lot of acquaintances that he would like to get back into contact with but he can't find them on Facebook
- He has not been able to begin a career related to the field he studied
- Currently, Sam makes his living by managing a few part time jobs doing web design, he's also a freelance graphic designer
- He updates his portfolio on LinkedIn frequently
- He also submits applications for jobs he finds on Indeed, Craigslist, in hopes of obtaining his dream job that combines web design and animation
- He enjoys playing video games with his friends, listening to music and keeping up with the latest tech news

Motivators

- Seeking a job that will jump start his career
- Starting to feel like using LinkedIn and Craigslist will not result in a career
- Thinks it's a job in itself to find a job
- He's been looking for ways to make the job hunt a little easier on himself
- Seeking people with commonality to begin career related to field of study
- Also would like to find some of his college peers that he lost contact with

Skills

Web Dev. ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○

Graphic Design ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○

Web Design ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○

Coding ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Social ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○

User Stories

A user story is a tool used within Agile development. It's intended to provide insight into a user's perspective when interacting with the product. It describes the user, their needs and wants as well as an explanation for why. The story is a simple, concise requirement for the product.

As a faculty, I want to be able to...

- Search through alumni according to different categories, ie. location, graduation year, business association, major, job title, age
- Connect students with alumni
- Post events to engage alumni and students
- Post internship, job or freelance opportunities
- Send messages to individual alumni and/or groups of alumni

As a student, I want to be able to...

- Connect to alumni to get a job
- View job, internship, freelance listings in one place
- Message IAM alumni and current students
- View current events happening within the department
- Share recent work
- Share resume
- Follow/view other users/organizations
- Join/create/follow groups and pages
- Create posts/comments
- Modify my privacy settings

As an alumni, I want to be able to...

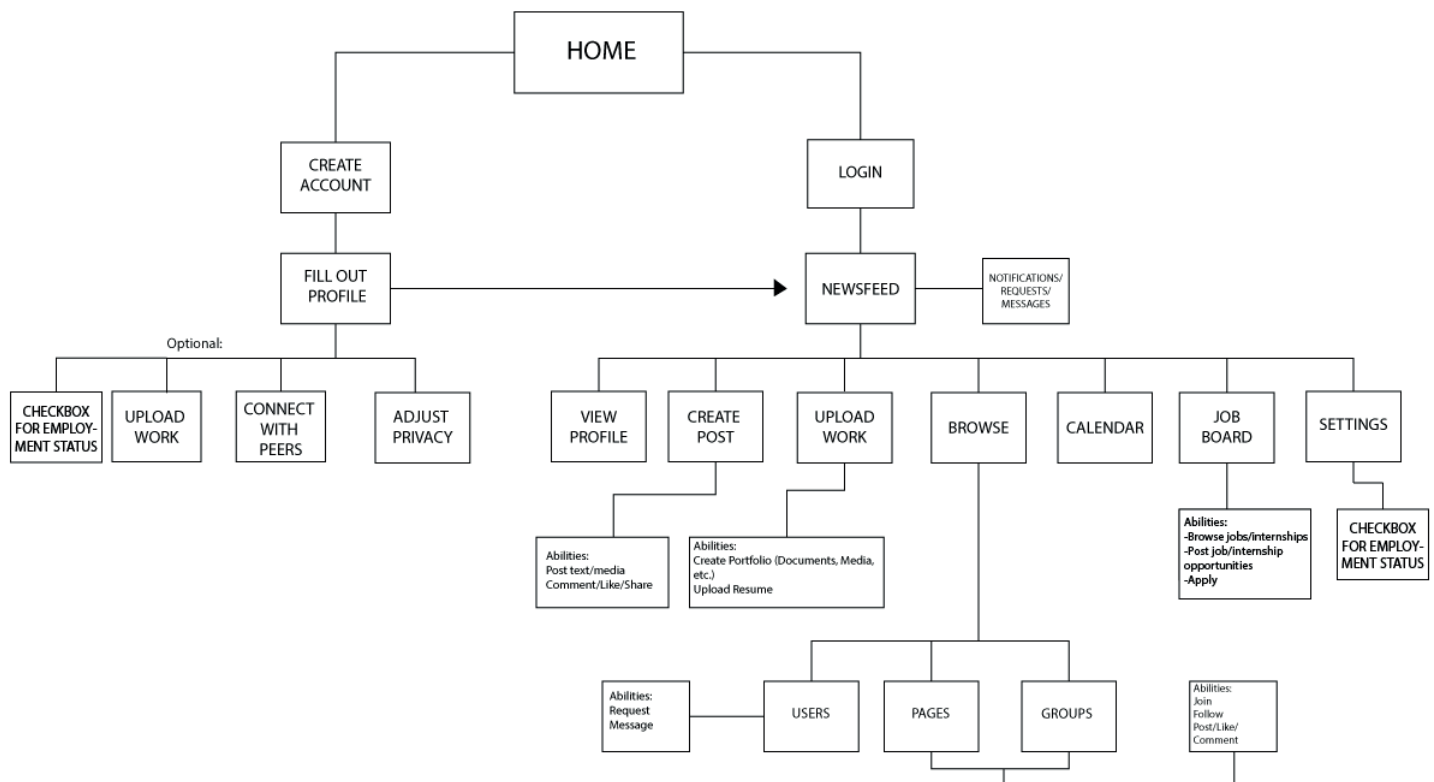
- Connect to employed alumni to get a job
- Checkbox for employment status
- Search through job listings within categories ie. Field, location, business
- Post job/internship opportunities
- Show my work
- Modify my privacy settings

As an admin, I want to be able to...

- Apply and change the roles of users
- Invite new users
- Remove users
- Moderate edit post & comments
- Install plugins and themes
- Approve of job postings before publishing/posting
- The ability to establish and have access to directory of site's users using search queries
- Receive incident reports and errors

User Flows

User flows are another tool utilized in the development process. They are simple diagrams of possible paths that the user can take when navigating through the system. Through these, developers are able to view how the system handles specific interactions.

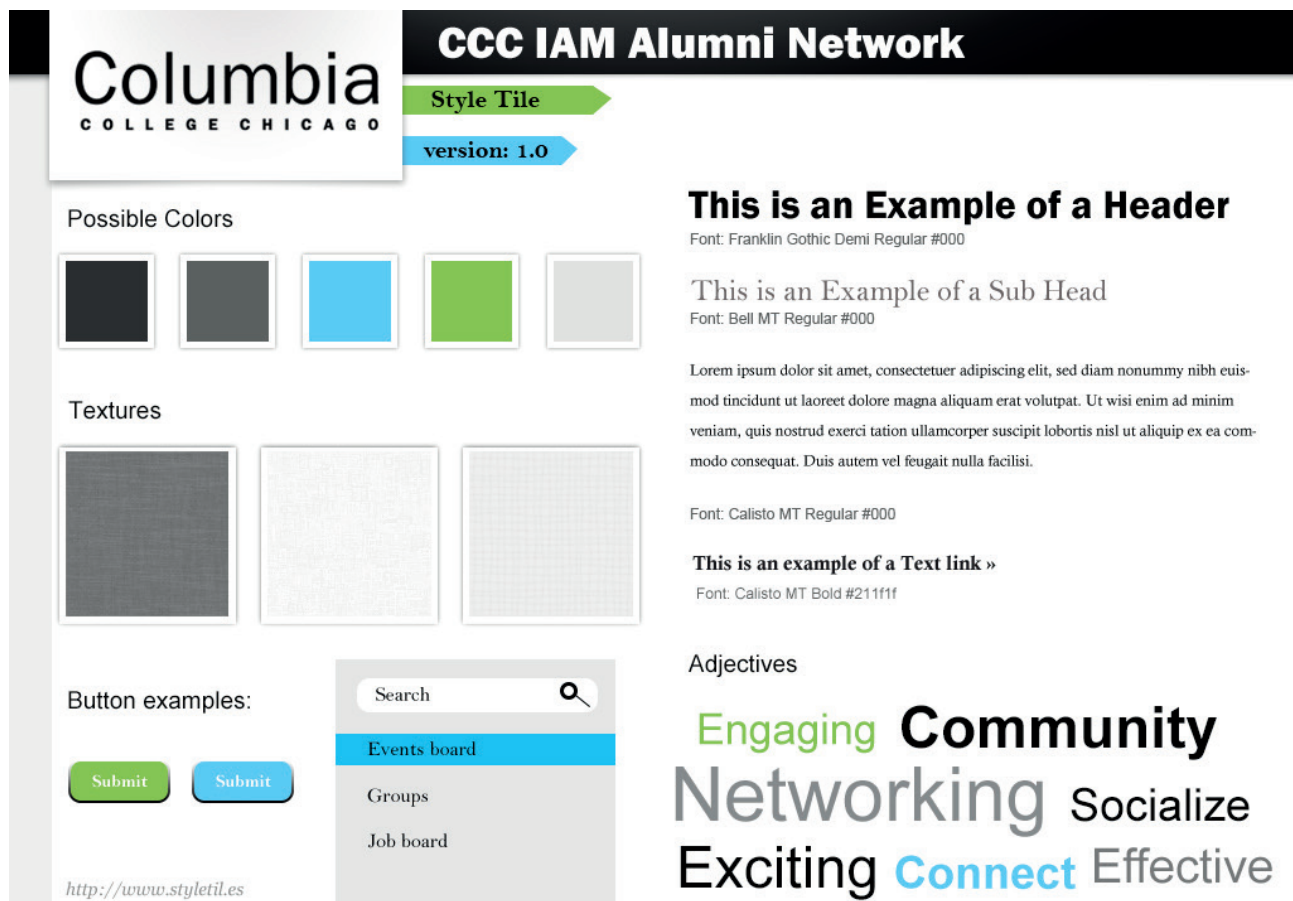


Prototypes

Our first complete low fidelity interactive prototype was created using Adobe Muse. It combines various features we considered during our team discussions and individual research. While not everything is complete and working in our prototype, the interactivity within it allows the testers to explore the key features available in the final build of the alumni network. These features include, the about section in the landing page, login and account creation, jobs board, groups page, events board, user profile page and user feed page.

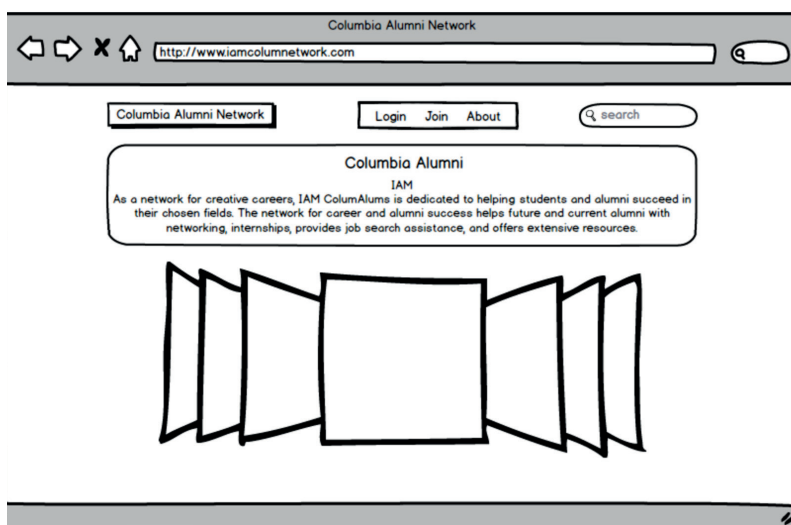
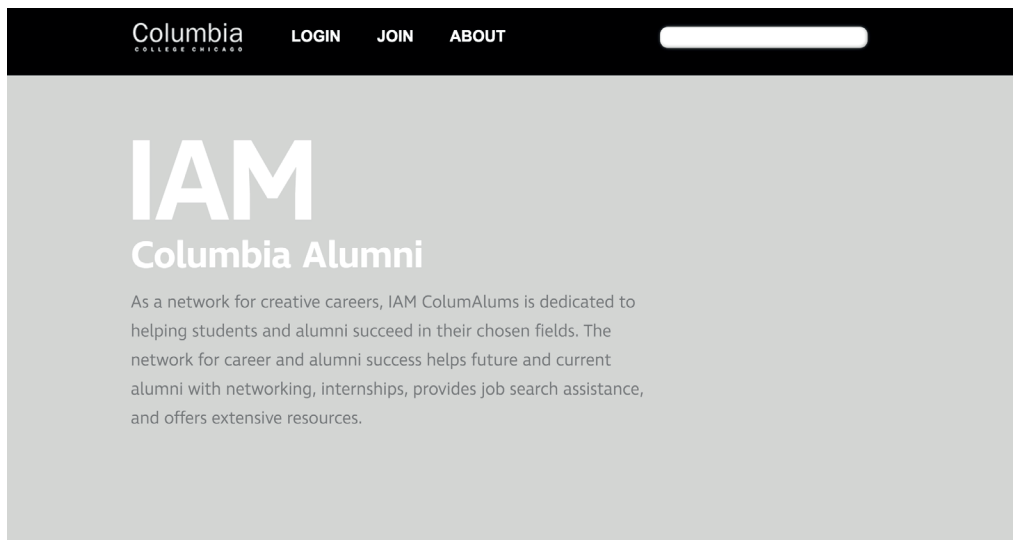
Style Tile

Style tiles are a visual reference to the design language of a website (or other design deliverable). They help tell a story through fonts, color and style collections, and when viewed in combination with wireframes, site-maps and other UI elements, they define that story in an accessible, client-friendly manner.



Prototypes

The second prototype that our team created involved **Balsamiq**. By using this tool, it allowed us to create a prototype that was low fidelity, but showed the functionalities of the website efficiently. We were also able to user test this prototype. This allowed us to critique the main interactivity of the website, without having our users focus too much on simple design flaws. Through user testing, we were able to make some important edits to the high fidelity Muse prototype. In hindsight, our team stated that we probably should have created the Balsamiq prototype first, but it still was a good way to figure out what needed to be changed.



Testing Script

The purpose of testing IAM Network by the chosen participants is to see the areas where the interface is strong and areas where improvement is slightly or heavily needed. Do not be afraid if you happen to click around and “break” a few things we will get you right back on track.

While you navigate the interface, feel free to make notations and comments (written or oral both are encouraged) as this will help bring forward the information needed to progress.

Whether the session is administered in a group setting or electronically (email, forum, etc.) you should not hesitate to ask questions at any time in this session. Questions are very welcome. In the event that participants are permitted to a group setting session there may be use of audio recording technology. This will be used to collect and review the feedback given by the participants if given the permission. In no way or fashion will this information be sold or distributed, malicious purposes/reasons, or to defame. A form will be provided given participants decide to attend a group setting session.

Tasks:

- Find out what the network is all about and how it can benefit you.
- Visit the FAQ page
- Create an account for the site.
- Explore the different pages on the network.
- Complete an action on the page you are on. (The action should relate to the available (Actions on the page, i.e. create an event, join a group, etc.)
-

Questions:

- Is there a certain section of the site that you are interested in?
- What aspects do you like about the site?
- Is there something that you feel is out of place or dislike based on the initial view? Please explain.
- What have you noticed about the consistency after navigating the site?
- What do you think of the transition between sections of the site? Does there happen to be any inconsistencies?
- Are there any functions that may seem to fault your interaction with the site at the moment?
- Is there anything you would change, add to, or suggest for this site?
- Now it's your turn to ask questions and leave some feedback

Testing Results

Summary: After testing the IAM Alumni Network website, we found that all participants browsed through the site with ease. Other than a few mismatched links, there was little confusion about the concept and content of the site. The users really enjoyed the job board and felt that it was beneficial to be able to receive job offers from professionals in their field. Another participant was interested by the groups page, and felt that it could really help her making connections within her concentration. Overall, participants agreed that the site would be beneficial for networking and building relationships with people in their majors.

Problem Areas: Even though users browsed through the prototype with ease, we found that there were common areas within the site that can be improved.

- Users felt that the navigation was off for some of the pages and was not consistent with the overall look of the site.
- Participants felt that the Join section of the page required too little from the user, it felt unsafe to be signed up with little information
- Another user explained how the connect page seemed static and could be more interactive. She felt that it was random to have a map with no functionality other than being visual.

Suggestions: Participants of the testing also had suggestions that could further improve the site.

- A user recommended to include a mentor program for the site; a platform for where alumni could offer advice to students or speak to them in classes.
- Another user suggested to have a sharing function throughout the site. For example, if there was a job on the jobs board, she could recommend it to a friend.
- A different user also felt that the “networking” aspect should be more prevalent throughout the site. The benefits of joining should be seen across the whole site, instead of on one page.
- Another user suggested to add a call to action button, for example: “Sign up, Learn more, Get Free Stuff, etc.”

Conclusion: Overall, we feel that the testing results show us that there is room for improvement in the layout and content of the site.

WordPress

Implementation

WordPress, from the documentation to the code itself, was created by and for the community. WordPress is an Open Source project, this means that there are numerous people all over the world working on it. It also means that people are free to use it for anything from your recipe site to a Fortune 500 web site without paying anyone a license fee and a number of other important freedoms.

WordPress has evolved to be used as full content management system and so much more through the thousands of plugins and widgets and themes, WordPress is limited only by your imagination. The plugin we will be focusing on is BuddyPress.

BuddyPress is a powerful plugin that takes your WordPress.org powered site beyond the blog with social-network features like user profiles, activity streams, user groups, and more. BuddyPress is ideal for our Alumni Network with endless options and ease of use.

Plug-ins to be used:

- BuddyPress Groups Extras - Groups
- Jetpack - Traffic growth, security, image performance, etc.
- WP Job Manager - Job listings
- Events Calendar
- Search & Filter
- BuddyPress Follow
- rtMedia for BuddyPress - Uploading work & galleries
- BuddyPress Activity Privacy
- BuddyPress Multilingual
- Voter Plugin
- BuddyPress Global Search
- Follow Us Badges
- Mass Messaging-- Faculty, etc.
- BuddyPress Like
- BuddyPress Message Attachment - Attach media to messages
- BuddyPress Avatar Bubble - Hover over someone's thumbnail and see their info
- Smooth Slider - Slides the pictures
- Document Gallery - Upload documents
- iFly Chat-- instant messaging
- BP Mutal Friends-- lists your mutual friends
- BP JM Resume-- Upload your resume

Marketing Plan

The IAM Alumni Network is a branch of the already notable Columbia College Chicago Alumni Association. We will be casting a wide net to capture our IAM Columbia community. Our goal is to not only increase the number of IAM alumni active in the Alumni network, but also instill a greater identification with the IAM Columbia department.

The IAM Alumni Network is vital because it illustrates a bond that alumni can form as members of the IAM department. In addition the word network is important to the brand because it embodies notions of interconnectedness, and shared knowledge between the IAM family.

The launch of the IAM Alumni Network will begin with our “Keeping IAM Creativity Alive” campaign. This campaign will urge IAM Alumni to recall specific moments and reminisce about their IAM Columbia career and share with us what connects them to the department. Their submissions from the prompt, “What was the most creative thing you did at Columbia?” will be shared on Columbia associated sites as well as the other various social media platforms to which Columbia is tied. With the hub of our information on Columbia's greater network, we will be able to boost awareness and draw in more members by reposting submissions on the other social media sites and direct them back to the IAM alumni site. From the submissions we expect to receive, we will sort through and pick out consistent submissions in order to create groups based on personal experiences. This is where our campaign idea will truly manifest, because, with these submissions we are breaking the traditional mold of Majors, as well as eliminating geographic barriers. IAM Columbia will instead harbor a new type of connection that hinges on personal experiences that define the myriad personalities and identities that make up our the IAM community.

Our current and expected new users will be delighted about finding people with like minds on the new site. After perusing our new IAM alumni groups, we will urge our users to “Make A Connection” with the sites connect capabilities. This application found on the IAM Alumni platform will eliminate scheduling delays, and facilitate Alumni events whether it is a more personal one-on-one connection or a larger group event. The schedule sharing capability will drastically increase the amount of personal connections and face-to-face meetings amongst alumni and students.

Our vision for the IAM Alumni Network is to have all members of the IAM community, past and present, contributing to our shared tradition. Although we don't want to have problems informal ways of students contacting our alumni, we see this as a minor hurdle. With the test groups, we will educate our students about the proper way to contact alumni. Additionally, student registration for the IAM Alumni Network will require an interactive tutorial where they will be taken through the steps about how to contact alumni. With the students included in the IAMAN, we will be able to optimize the amount of connections done through “Make a Connection” and ultimately the amount of users on our platform.

Marketing Plan

Once students and alumni have begun using “Make A Connection,” the feature will market itself not only through its ease of use and high functionality, but also through our “Successful Connections” highlights. A “Successful Connection” is anything deemed by The Alumni Connection to be a good example of ways in which alumni have connected to other alumni or where alumni have connected to students through the site where they would have not otherwise met. These highlights will be featured in Columbia's magazines and and monthly emails, as well various social media sites Columbia is on as well. “Successful Connections” is a great way to raise awareness about and encourage the use of IAM Alumni Site.

The IAM Alumni Network and the Keeping Creativity Alive campaign will give rise to alumni's nostalgic memories that not only shaped their time atColumbia, but also may have shaped their lives. Our campaign will facilitate a platform on which they can make numerous personal connections to those who have had similar experiences. Through our new groups connecting alumni with students, we can bring together those who started traditions with those who are carrying them on today. These groups will also function to acknowledge those that have kept creativity alive in the IAM community. With a IAM Alumni Network community that is so open and willing to share, IAM Columbia Connect will experience a large influx of eager alumni and students looking to explore the minds of IAM students through our institution's years.

Other Marketing Plans

- Ask all existing social medias (FB, twitter) to inform their followers of our network through their posts
- Send out emails to students
- Hashtag! #IAMAlumn
- Offer incentives for joining
- Make flyers, post them around the department
- Make current students sign up for the network (During the beginning of the semester spiel)
- Booth during manifest
- Booth/information session for IAM students with free food
- IAM Network Event
- Columbia Chronicle
- Alumni week (convention)- Have alumni come in and give series of talks for the week
- Video promo featured on the Columbia website
- Workshops that teach code to students by alumni or staff
- Offer perks (discounts on new softwares)
- Start a blog
- Introduce site at orientation
- Offer an alumni mentoring event (alumni that want to help students out can talk to students during this

event)

- First 100 alumni that sign up get something cool ie. gift cards
- If you sign up at Manifest, make a post, or advertise the site on Facebook, you get free stuff: food, pens, shirts, IAM flash drives, etc.
- Offer workshops targeted towards alumni that teach them about various things (how to market yourself via social media, up and coming technologies, etc.) if they're a part of the site
- Have a large launch event with lots of free food
- IAM Hackathon/Tournament /Competition
- Fundraiser to support Interactive Arts; Donors/Alumni pledge (donate or purchase gear, Tech and money goes toward mission and keeping the network alive), students receive scholarships/grants.
- Publish Interactive IAM/ IAM Alumni Network Magazine
- Browser ads
- Promoted at the beginning of each IAM course
- Develop IAM/IAM Alumni Mobile App to push and promote networking and connectivity (!?! MADE BY IAM - FOR IAM!?! WHAT!!!!)
- Once a lot of people join:
 - Alumni/Student networking events
 - Manifest specifically for IAM department
 - An IAM alumni event for the launch of the site.
 - An html email that is sent to a list of graduated IAM student that Columbia provides.
 - A branded marketing cam
 - A linkedin group for the site that only alumni can join
 - A linkedin page that only students can join

Once a lot of people join:

- Alumni/Student networking events
- Manifest specifically for IAM department

Trigger Point	Cost	Time	RIO
IAM Silly Putty	\$!	High
IAM Silly Putty	\$\$!	High
Paint a mural on the side of the 916 advertising CAN	\$\$!!	Low
Have a guy that does sign flipping tricks stand in front of the 916	\$!	Medium
"Check the CAN" campaign. Signs and posters over the school saying check the CAN, telling students to check the stalls. Some of the stalls will lead to prizes redeemable through our alumni network.	\$!!!	High
Advertise in chicago news papers	\$\$!	Medium
Booth at SXSW & send emails to alumni asking them to come.	\$\$!!	High
Feed graduating students into the network forcefully	Free	!	High