

A TACTICAL GUIDE FOR TRANSITIONING
TO USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN

by

Alexis Du Mond Puchek, B.S.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
with a Major in Communication Design
December 2018

Committee Members:

Grayson Lawrence, Chair

Jeffrey G. Davis

Tonya Browning

COPYRIGHT

by

Alexis Du Mond Puchek

2018

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Alexis Du Mond Puchek, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my incredible wife, Marie Nicole Du Mond, who has provided nothing but encouragement, strength, and patience as I continued my education in pursuing my Master's degree. Thank you, I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I have to thank my thesis chair, Grayson Lawrence, for dedicating so much time encouraging me and helping me through the thesis process. It's our similarities that drove me towards asking you to be my chair, but it's your passion for the discipline that solidified you as the right choice. You've been patient and diligent—and I couldn't be more appreciative. Thanks Grayson. Jeff and Tonya, you've been an essential thesis committee with watchful eyes and incredible recommendations. Thank you for your time, energy, and efforts.

To all the students, practitioners, and recruiters who participated in my research, thank you so much for your valuable time. Without your willingness to answer openly, honestly, and thoroughly (to many, many questions) we wouldn't be here today.

Mom and Dad, thank you for your continued love and guidance. You are wonderful parents and your enthusiasm for my achievements keeps me looking forward.

Finally, I must thank Dr. Tonya Browning and the late Dr. John Slatin. Their influence on my education and support in my career development have been instrumental. Without their help, expertise, and instruction, I might never have found my path in and passion for User Experience Design.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER	1
I. INTRODUCTION TO USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN.....	1
UX Design	2
Interaction Design	5
Information Architecture	6
Systemic Thinking.....	6
User Interface Design.....	7
Statement of the Problem	8
Thesis Organization.....	9
II. THE BENEFITS OF UX PRACTITIONERS	10
User-Centered Design Practices.....	10
Empathetic Approaches.....	10
Design Thinking Methodology	11
Customer Experience vs Business Goals.....	12
Accessibility Concerns and Accommodations.....	12
III. SKILLS FROM ADJACENT DISCIPLINES SHARED BY UX DESIGN ..	14
Visual Design Skills Shared by UX Design	14
Web Design Skills Shared by UX Design.....	15
Industrial Design Skills Shared by UX Design.....	16
Architecture Skills Shared by UX Design.....	17

How Other Auxiliary Disciplines Share UX Design Traits.....	18
IV. CURRENT STATE OF UX EDUCATION.....	21
Traditional Higher Education and Graduate Degrees	21
Immersive Programs.....	22
Certification Courses	23
Self-Taught / Experience on the Job	24
V. RESEARCH	25
Competitive Audit.....	25
Hypothesis	28
Methodology	29
Results of Survey and Interviews.....	34
Outlining the Tactical Guide.....	42
VI. TESTING	47
Validation Testing.....	47
Methodology	47
Results of Book Query Validation Testing.....	52
Results of Book Concept Validation Testing	55
VII. CONCLUSION	60
Future Research.....	61
APPENDIX SECTION.....	62
BIBLIOGRAPHY	81

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Screenshot of the process of anonymizing data (from student surveys)	32
2. Screenshot of how the findings formulated chapters	43
3. Screenshot of received responses (from book concept Validation Testing).....	56

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Screenshot of a Quora thread about finding a UX job	1
2. The Disciplines of User Experience Design (Saffer, 2008).....	4
3. Photograph of externalization	33
4. Photography of affinity diagramming	34
5. Photograph of student pain points	36
6. Photograph of practitioner and recruiter advice.....	39
7. Screenshot of an example email request for book query Validation Testing	49
8. Screenshot of the Google Form for book concept Validation Testing	51
9. Screenshot of a received response from the book query Validation Testing.....	53

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
UX	User Experience
UXD	User Experience Design
IXD	Interaction Design
IA	Information Architecture
ST	Systemic Thinking
UI	User Interface
UCD	User-Centered Design
VD	Visual Design
ID	Industrial Design
WD	Web Design
HCI	Human-Computer Interaction
S##	Student Respondent Number
P##	Practitioner Respondent Number
R##	Recruiter Respondent Number
BQV##	Book Query Respondent Number
BCV##	Book Concept Respondent Number

ABSTRACT

It has been ten years since we have lived in a world that has not included social media, smart phones, and mobile applications. Over the last decade, User Experience design has been infused into these digital products and services, with companies like Google and Apple creating in-depth design language systems for their platforms that can be used extensively as an open-source framework. With this growing breadth of experience in digital platforms, User Experience designers have been able to focus on the bigger user-centered needs and not reinvent the wheel with some of the more commonplace solutions. "...because designers are deeply committed to advocating for user needs/wants/desires in the face of corporate inertia..." User Experience design has been an important discipline for designers to enter and be the true voice for the user (e.g. user-centered design) as they create new products and experiences (Fabricant, 2014).

Over the course of three months, more than sixty-five prospective User Experience designers, current User Experience practitioners, and current recruiters for the User Experience discipline participated in tailored surveys for each of their roles (see Appendix D). These results have culminated in the final outcome for this thesis, a book concept consisting of a chapter outline and introductory chapter, and a book query that pitches the idea of a book (*Making the Switch: A Career Transition Guide Into UX*) for how designers from an auxiliary discipline can make a successful transition to User Experience design.

This book query was sent to forty-one individuals who had indicated that they were interested in entering into the User Experience design discipline, as well as current practitioners in the field for Validation Testing and feedback. The result was a reinforcement of the hypothesis and proposed solution, with 90% of the participants in the book query Validation Testing confirming that the book proposal had a unique perspective and would be a useful publication that they would consider purchasing.

After successful endorsement of the proposed solution of a book by the participants in the book query Validation Testing, an outline of the book and first chapter were written. The purpose of these two artifacts was to articulate the results from this thesis in an organized manner that orchestrated how the book, *Making the Switch: A Career Transition Guide Into UX*, would solve the needs and struggles of prospective designers and provide an example of the language, tone, and writing style that the book would take. Twenty-two individuals responded to this final round of book concept Validation Testing, ranging from prospective designers, to current practitioners, to educators in the discipline of User Experience design. Overwhelmingly, the responses acquired 100% positive support and demand for this book to be written and introduced into the arena of User Experience design publishing.

This thesis outlines the methodologies and results that concluded in a successful validation of the hypothesis that practitioners in Visual Design, Web Design, Industrial Design, and Architecture (adjacent disciplines to User Experience design) are making the transition from their current discipline to that of User Experience design with varying

levels of success. These prospective practitioners require a step-by-step, tactical guide—one that is founded in research and recommendations by industry practitioners, recruiters, and hiring managers—to teach them how to successfully make the transition into User Experience design.

I. INTRODUCTION TO USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN

New and junior designers are finding ways to learn about User Experience (UX) design, whether self-taught, online, via instructional courses, or through higher-level education. Although a smattering of resources already exists to teach these prospective designers the design methodology, the consistent obstacle identified was transitioning from non-practitioner with foundational skills in UX design (that they have either learned from an educational institution or through self-taught experience), to actually getting a job (See Figure 1).

The screenshot shows a Quora page with the following elements:

- Header:** Quora logo, a search bar with the text "Search for questions, people, and topics", and buttons for "Ask New Question" and "Sign In".
- Navigation:** A row of tags including "Mobile UI Design", "Job Interview Advice", "Career Advice and Job Interviews", "User Interfaces", "User Experience", "Interviews", "Job Interviews", "Career Advice", and "Personal Question".
- Question:** "Why am I not getting any job interviews as a UX designer?" with a link to "http://nata.codes".
- Advertisement:** An ad for Toptal titled "Toptal: Hire the top 10 UX/UI and web designers." with the text "Let Toptal match you with the top 3% of UX/UI and web designers for your next project. No-risk trial." and a link to "Start now at toptal.com".
- Answers:** A section titled "8 Answers". The first answer is by John Athayde, VP Design/CargoSense, Owner/Meticulous, Creative Technologist, permaculturist. It was answered on Mar 31, 2017, and has 326 answers and 358.7k answer views. The text of the answer is: "I can't see your LinkedIn, so I'm not sure what that looks like. It may be lacking in experience, especially if you're not already in the bay area." Below this, another part of the answer says: "First, Your portfolio, while it looks nice, doesn't tell me the story of the problem the design was created to solve. There's some interesting bullet points, but UX is a".
- Related Questions:** A list of related questions on the right side, including "Why am I not getting any UX interview calls?", "How do I get a UX Designer job?", "How do I get a UX design job with apple?", "I've applied for many jobs without getting a single interview. What am I doing wrong?", "How does one prepare for a UX Manager job interview?", "Why am I not getting interview calls?", "How do I get UI/UX designer job in Canada?", "How should I prepare for getting a UX Design intern job interview?", "Why am I not getting a job interview in Chennai?", and "I recently gave an interview and was asked 'How many red colored Swift cars are there in Delhi?' How to approach this problem?".
- Footer:** A button labeled "+ Ask New Question".

Figure 1. Screenshot of a Quora thread about finding a UX job.

As demonstrated in Figure 1, individuals are struggling to find a job in the UX design market. These individuals attempt to find resources with tactical answers and turn to the internet, where online services like Quora (a question and answer site) only provide unvetted, open-source responses (“About,” n.d., para. 2).

New and junior designer portfolios look unpolished, homogeneous, and overly conventional, which does not present them in a compelling manner that recruiters and hiring managers have come to expect. These prospective designers endeavor to emphasize a UX design methodology and communicate their rationale, point of view, and design process.

In order to understand why and how individuals from other disciplines transition into UX design, the breadth of this discipline must first be uncovered to see where these individuals' skillsets can best be suited.

UX Design

UX design is fundamentally centered around creating solutions that provide meaningful and personally relevant experiences ("User Experience (UX) Design," n.d.). An historical observation of UX design reveals that job families prior to UX centered specifically around Web Design or Human-Computer Interaction from a product-first approach, rather than a human-centered approach (Brown, 2009, p. 13). These previous job families focused on designing experiences from the perspective of a business need, whereas UX takes into consideration the needs of the business while working directly with the end-users to make sure the solution solves a problem or need for the user and is not just a business output (Boag, 2017, p. 244).

As Garrett (2011) alluded, it is important to note that UX does not just apply to digital spaces such as websites or applications; but is a much broader field that can encompass other forms of design: from daily actions within an individual's life, to relationships with a particular product or service, to interactions between human and

computer (p. 8). Additionally, Garrett (2011) clarified that UX is not just about the inner workings of a product or service, but that UX also identifies how a product or service works on the outside, when or where a person might come in contact with it from an end-to-end perspective (p. 6).

While UX design can be seen as an individual area of expertise, it also serves as an umbrella discipline within the industry that encompasses four pillars in an effort to provide an approach to problem solving through design solutions that are centered on user needs (Saffer, 2010, p. 21). These four pillars of UX design include Interaction Design, Information Architecture, Systemic Thinking, and User Interface Design. To view an example of the UX umbrella and see how it connects to other disciplines, see Figure 2.

The Disciplines of User Experience Design

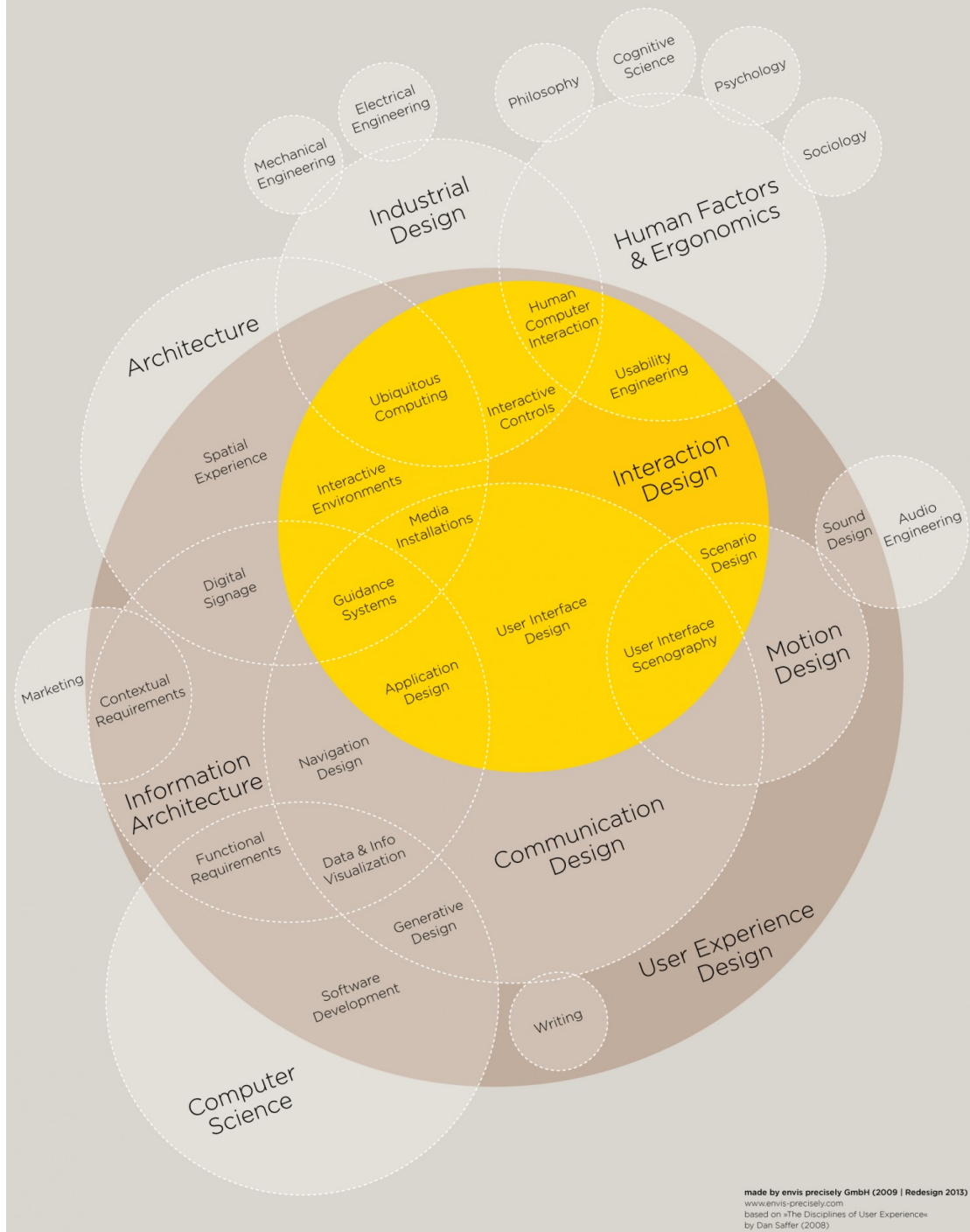


Figure 2. The Disciplines of User Experience Design (Saffer, 2008).

With practitioners in the UX design discipline having the potential to work in such a broad spectrum, from designing an interface on a screen, to the physical buttons and interactions of a product, to the way that users find context in a physical space, correlations to other auxiliary design disciplines begin to become apparent (Norman, 1988, p. 146).

To understand how these different disciplines such as Visual Design, Web Design, Industrial Design, Architecture, and other auxiliary disciplines might extend their existing skillset into UX design, each of the specific pillars underneath the UX umbrella must first be outlined and understood.

Interaction Design

Interaction Design (IXD) defines the structure and behavior of interactive systems, tools, and physical objects. IXD centers around creating meaningful relationships between people, the products and services that they use, and the micro interactions individuals experience throughout (Saffer, 2010, p. 3). Furthermore, Kuniavsky (2003) defined IXD's as the individuals that control the immediate user experience. An IXD constructs the navigation of information architecture, determines the appropriate focus on the elements a user needs to see, and reinforces the correct pieces of content and data are presented in the clearest way possible with the appropriate amount of emphasis (p. 48).

Moggridge asserted that typically IXD's will focus on and identify how individual elements, features, or functions interact with the user and vice versa. They do so by understanding the relationship between user actions and system actions and articulate

how they influence each other (p. xvi). Morville & Rosenfeld (2006) brought to light that Interaction designers commonly have a background in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and often focus on helping users achieve goals and complete tasks successfully (p. 10). It is important for IxD's to create experiences that users can rely upon through expected and consistent interactions.

Information Architecture

The focus of Information Architecture (IA) is to articulate how websites, products, and services are structurally defined and how the content is organized in order to help users find information and complete tasks. Similar to wayfinding, it facilitates the user's journey through the product (Morville & Rosenfeld, 2007, p. 4). As Vinh (2011) conveyed, as designer determining the IA, it is important to have a clear understanding of how disparate areas within a system come together in a cohesive manner through navigation and sitemaps, and to articulate a point of view on why the prioritization of information exists; this is achieved by understanding all individual pieces in a singular space and their representation hierarchically (p. 15). Kuniavsky (2003), described IA as the means to determine the best path through terrain, whereas IxD's would be the individuals who place the signs and draw the maps (p. 48).

Systemic Thinking

Systemic Thinking (ST) is tasked with understanding and creating the overarching set of design rules that maintains harmony across this ecosystem of parts and products (Kumar, 2013, p. 131). This harmonic ecosystem is necessary as the users of products

and services have diverse behaviors and characteristics; thus, the context in which our innovations need to function is incredibly complex because it is a dense network of interconnected parts (Kumar, 2013, p. 130). This design method is achieved by understanding how the existing system works and how all areas of the experience come together to achieve a goal. UX designers may demonstrate ST by providing a logical framework that establishes guideposts that help designers and developers when considering design solutions (Lidwell, Holden, & Butler, 2003, p. 250). Fundamentally, ST is thinking beyond topical solutions and considering how decisions will be applied in different contexts within the product. When reviewing the majority of successful innovation efforts, one of the core principles is the ability to think in terms of systems (Kumar, 2013, p. 131).

User Interface Design

User Interface (UI) design centers around selecting the right interface elements for the task the user is trying to accomplish and positioning them on the screen in a way that will be readily understood and easily used (Garrett, 2011, p. 136). The goal of the UI designer is to lessen the amount of thinking the user has to do to achieve their goal (Krug, 2006, p. 11). For example, in a data-reporting tool, UI design would eliminate unnecessary borders and other visual clutter from a table of figures, color code important points, provide rich visual feedback when the user clicks on data elements, and so on (Cooper, 2004, p. 23). Additionally, UI designers might establish the look and feel of interactive elements, controls and components across a design system, and tie in Content Strategy for an accurate representation of content block sizing, placement, and hierarchy

on the page (Cooper, Reimann, & Cronin, 2007, p. 290). This design method is tasked with clearly identifying the proper (and cohesive) feature set that should be used: from input controls, to navigational and informational components, to containers.

Having a foundational understanding of UX design surfaces the breadth of what the discipline can cover and what practitioners are expected to have expertise in. As UX design is a discipline that spans many areas of expertise, practitioners from sister disciplines are prime candidates to transition because of their shared skills and values.

Statement of the Problem

As Baker (2017) asserted, interest in user-centered design continues to grow and become a mandate in many corporations, organizations, and institutions of higher learning, as job postings and salaries for UX practitioners continue to rise in 2018 (para. 4). Because of this, individuals have begun to make the switch from other disciplines (e.g., Visual Design, Web Design, Industrial Design, Architecture) to the field of UX design to fulfill the gap in a user-centered approach to design and design thinking (Faller, 2017). This thesis will uncover the motivations and needs of individuals looking to transition from their current discipline, to that of UX design, leveraging the expertise of designers who have made the transition to the UX discipline and recruiters who help find the best candidates.

The need for this thesis is three-fold: 1) there are design practitioners who want to have a UX career (or make the switch to UX) that could use guidance in making that transition, 2) there are individuals who work in UX that came from an adjacent discipline that could share their stories/advice, and 3) there are recruiters who can provide their

expertise on what they look for in qualified candidates.

Thesis Organization

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter defines User Experience design and the foundational pillars that make up the discipline, and identifies the problem in which this thesis is written to solve. Following chapters identify the benefits of UX practitioners, the skills from adjacent disciplines that are shared by UX design, and the current state of UX education. Chapter five outlines the competitive research that was conducted to understand the competitive market, reveals the hypothesis addressed by this thesis, and details the research methodology, results, and the outline for the proposed tactical guide. Chapter six uncovers the methodology and results from Validation Testing a book query designed to pitch the idea of how the book will help designers from any discipline make a successful transition to UX design, as well as Validation Testing an outline and first chapter of the book written. The final chapter concludes the thesis with next steps for the author and the appendix which contains documents and examples from the research and validation processes.

II. THE BENEFITS OF UX PRACTITIONERS

Understanding how UX design is beneficial to hiring managers is the first step in recognizing why individuals are making the transition from their current discipline to that of UX design. As the pillars of UX design were outlined in Chapter I; the philosophy, approach, and methodologies of UX design are captured here to demonstrate the demand and appeal of the discipline.

User-Centered Design Practices

Norman (1988), explained that User-Centered Design (UCD) is a philosophy that emphasizes making products usable and understandable by basing the execution on the needs and interest of the user (p. 188). Designers and practitioners alike should keep in mind the end-user for the product or service they are designing for. Ultimately, it is this end-user that will be affected by the product, therefore these solutions need to be intuitive, topical, and beneficial to the people using them. According to Norman (1988), “Design should make use of the natural properties of people and of the world: it should exploit natural relationships and natural constraints. As much as possible, it should operate without instructions or labels” (p. 188). UCD practices provide the underlying framework and philosophy for designers to reference back to when articulating the needs of a user.

Empathetic Approaches

Demonstrating an empathetic approach in design is an extension of UCD practices. For designers, it is important to put people at the center of all that they do. UX designers constantly push the boundaries of human-centered innovation and are always

listening to and researching with end-users, in order to involve them as active contributors in every phase of the work (Kuniavsky, 2003, p. 3). While many designers rely upon design research to build empathy, ultimately it is their job as a UX designer to build empathy through every available means and never lose sight of who is using the product. Having an empathetic approach to design means understanding context and talking to as many end-users as possible. If a designer is working on an existing service, it is important for them to use the service and understand what the user has to go through. Ultimately, an empathetic approach will help designers uncover the hurdles the user experiences and build a solution that alleviates the hurdles, not one that disguises them.

Design Thinking Methodology

The methodology behind design thinking is to continuously be iterating and speaking with users throughout the journey as the foray to problem solving. In turn, this means that design thinking is, fundamentally, an exploratory process that will invariably help designers and cross-functional teams make unexpected discoveries along the way (Brown, 2009, p. 16). This methodology ties in well with UX design as it is a way of thinking and process that can help inspire innovation and transform organizations. While UX designers are experts in their discipline, it often takes a collaborative team and united approach from all disciplines to make sure a problem is solved with the best solution. Design thinking does not transform individuals from other disciplines (e.g. engineering) into designers, but it opens their methodology and approach to the processes that designers use.

Customer Experience vs Business Goals

As Roelofs (2017) outlined, Customer Experience (CX) expands upon the end-to-end experience that a UX designer solves for, encompassing the broadest scope of any interaction a user might have with a brand such as advertising, customer service, or pricing (para. 2). As designers, it is imperative to effectively balance the needs and goals of the business with the appropriate customer experience. Sometimes these two business drivers may seem like they are not aligned, but without an active, engaged user, the business goals will most likely not be met. In relation to Web Design, Phyo (2003), posited that content can create a user experience that keeps drawing visitors back to a site; which may prompt them to recommend it to their colleagues, friends, and family. This critical focus on a customer experience can help great content achieve the site's high-level business goals (p. 78). Regardless of a web UI, a physical product, or a service, if UCD practices are not paired with business goals, there is the possibility for misalignment with either the end-user or stakeholders in the project. UX designers must delicately balance these two needs for a successful outcome.

Accessibility Concerns and Accommodations

When considering the breadth in diversity and ability of individuals that products and services are designed for, UX design becomes an ever-important element to the design process. These individuals have different needs, cognitive abilities, vision and auditory capabilities, and physical abilities (to name a few differences). Taking all of these needs and differences into consideration, it is clear that the UX design discipline is a necessary one: a discipline that is focused on the end-user, making sure that the solution

is appropriate for the correct audience, and that the design is not accessible to just one type of person. With over 600 million people around the world with disabilities, the usability, and the capability to access and interact with a solution is imperative (Slatin & Rush, 2003, p. xxiii).

The benefits of skilled UX practitioners to an organization are highly valued (as of November 26, 2017, UX practitioners account for 85% of job openings on LinkedIn and Indeed) and a competitive paycheck comes with that demand (Baker, 2017, para. 4). These skills of UCD, empathy, design thinking, customer experience, and accessibility practices allow UX practitioners to not only solve business goals, but to do so while focusing on the user's needs, as mentioned by Phyo above.

III. SKILLS FROM ADJACENT DESIGN DISCIPLINES SHARED BY UX DESIGN

Having outlined the fundamentals of UX design and how UX practitioners are beneficial in the design industry, this chapter will detail the correlations between other disciplines' skillsets that can overlap with the requirements needed within the UX practice.

Visual Design Skills Shared by UX Design

Practitioners of Visual Design (VD) have a strong understanding of visual principles (e.g. shape, size, value, hue, orientation, texture, position), similar to Graphic Designers, but they also possess an understanding of key concepts surrounding software interaction and behavior in order to match the visual structure of the interface to the mental models of the user and the structure of the program's behaviors (Cooper, Reimann, & Cronin, 2007, p. 289). While VD's are typically pixel-focused and UX designers are typically user-focused, individuals coming from a VD background share a number of commonalities with UX designers: emotional design, design thinking, and prototyping methods (Cooper, Reimann, & Cronin, 2007, p. 136). Emotional design can surface itself through typography and visual elements, but also through the process of identifying the tone of the content and the IA of the solution (Lidwell, Holden, & Butler, 2003, p. 20). Design thinking may manifest itself in VD through adherence to expected conventions while also maintaining originality – this creative thinking can be applied to solving problems for user needs and knowing when conventional solutions are not always the appropriate ones (Krug, 2006, p. 128). Lastly, prototyping (an early concept or release of a product that is tested to gain insight from users), comes in many forms and is a

mechanism to receive feedback on a design (Kumar, 2013, p. 235). VD's are familiar with this practice, as they often share work in progress with stakeholders for alignment and end-users for feedback prior to delivering the final product. UX designers use prototyping in a similar vein—testing early stages of a solution with users in order to gain insight (Siang, n.d., para. 10). As the similarities to UX design are inherently related, VD's may also be referred to as VXD's or Visual Experience Designers (vxdlab, n.d.).

Web Design Skills Shared by UX Design

Web Design (WD) can have multiple definitions and the skillset required for it can be largely dependent on the needs of the company or organization. The foundational explanation of WD is the process of designing for the World Wide Web. In some organizations, a Web Designer is expected to have a multitude of skillsets, from VD, to IxD, to development. Additionally, depending on the hiring organization, WD can also be renamed as Front-End Design, to help differentiate its core skills from UI designers (Beaird, 2007, p. 4). The skills of a Web Designer translate well into the UX design discipline. As detailed in Chapter I, UX design focuses on personal experiences, IxD focuses on behaviors, IA focuses on hierarchy, ST focuses on the rules and structure, and UI focuses on the visual elements of the product. The understanding of hierarchy and layout for a UI, the ability to organize content and visuals to emphasize the right amount of focus at the right time, and the cross-disciplinary knowledge and interactions with coding contribute to a highly parallel skillset (Phyo, 2003, p. 3).

While UX has many shared traits with digital practitioners, designing a product or service may encompass physical places and spaces as well. Because the discipline is so

broad in nature, practitioners in more traditional or non-digital spaces such as Industrial Design or Architecture also have shared traits.

Industrial Design Skills Shared by UX Design

According to the Industrial Design Society of America (n.d.), the Industrial Design (ID) discipline is known for creating systems and products that optimize function, value, and appearance to meet the goals of the stakeholders involved (para. 3). Kravis & Sparke (2018) posited that primarily, individuals that practice ID are focusing on physical products and systems whereas UX designers may interact with digital, physical, auditory, and other systems (p. 12). Shedroff & Noessel (2012), defined an interface as all parts of a design execution or physical object that enables its use, which helps draw the parallels between ID and UX design (p. 3). Cooper (2004), reinforced this idea by stating that ID's are trained in the foundational skills to create buttons, knobs, and controls that are easy to feel, manipulate, and see within the objects they create, all while articulating how the interface between people and high-technology artifacts functions (p. 213). Designing the framework to a product is a key element of ID, which typically requires a collaboration between UX designer and Industrial designer (Cooper, Reimann, & Cronin, 2007, 139). As an ID is already used to this collaborative experience and the work that goes into it, there is inherent knowledge and skill an ID already has when making the transition to UX design. Additionally, Cooper (2004) affirmed, ID's also create the interface between the user and the technology product, which is why it can be easy to see why ID's are mistaken for UX designers (p. 213). With the shared traits with UX designers as mentioned in Chapter II such as behavioral IxD of buttons and knobs, ST in how the

product should be constructed, and UI design in how the system should look, an ID can effortlessly make the connection with their past experience to that of UX design.

Architecture Skills Shared by UX Design

Architecture is the act, art, and science of building physical structures. Typically, an architect is methodical and systemic in their approach to design—having to consider all aspects of the building (e.g. capacity, wind, soil, materials) in order to make a safe, structurally sound construction for the environment or individuals surrounding it (Alexander, Ishikawa, Silverstein, Jacobson, Fiksdahl-King, & Angel, 1977; Ching, 2015). With this initial understanding of Architecture, a parallel to UCD and the need to always keep the end-user in mind becomes apparent. Furthermore, architects have a number of additional skills that may be seen as complementary to that of a UX designer. The foundational requirements in Architecture such as drafting and three-dimensional modeling tie closely to sketching and wireframing in UX. Ching (2015) articulated that primary elements, form, space, organization, circulation, proportion and scale, and principles are the foundations that architects must draw upon to be successful in their work (p. vii). In understanding what these elements are, a correlation surfaces between these elements and the skills required in UX design. As Ching (2015) outlined the specifics of form, including regular and irregular forms and how they can be interweaved with or transformed into other elements, the architectural application has many similarities to the programmatic and organizational approach of ST in UX (p. 50). Additionally, Ching continued to explain organization, which details space and how it can stand alone by itself, or envelop and contain a smaller space; the consideration of

which has similarity to the planning and mapping of IA. While construction of large-scale physical structures may have its inherent differences between it and UX design, the foundational principles between the two disciplines have similarities in which practitioners of architecture can repurpose when making the transition to UX design.

How Other Auxiliary Disciplines Share UX Design Traits

Similar to the disciplines outlined above, other creative and development disciplines may also fit in well within the realm of UX design. Having a diverse background and perspective are crucial elements of UX design—so that the solutions being created are thoughtful and intentional, and do not come from a singular perspective (Xiao, 2016, para. 2). Individuals from other creative and development disciplines will undoubtedly have skillsets, perspectives, practical experience, and lessons learned that could be applied to a role as a UX designer. Additionally, coming from another discipline provides empathy as individuals have experienced the deliverables, deadlines, and expectations that other discipline practitioners have to adhere to (Xiao, 2016, para. 4). This background can help with cross-functional communication and collaboration processes.

A hybrid designer is a practitioner that has the skillset of two or more disciplines. Hybrid designers can be seen two ways in the industry: either as a skilled practitioner who is capable of wearing different hats, or as a generalist who has not fully developed adequate skills in any single discipline (McKnight, 2004, para. 1). True hybrid designers, the ones that are skillful practitioners, can be incredibly valuable to any organization. These designers have the talents from multiple disciplines. This can be useful in UX

design as these individuals are able to have empathy, knowledge, and practical skills to execute on whatever task is needed. For instance, an organization might staff a hybrid designer with both VD and IxD skillsets as the singular design resource because that individual can complete all of the tasks which make the project a success (McKnight, 2004, para. 6).

Individuals from differing backgrounds can provide useful skills, practices, and mental models that would be beneficial in the UX design discipline. A mental model is an explanation of someone's thought process about how something works in the real world. As Cooper, Reimann, & Cronin explained with an analogy (2007), "many moviegoers have little idea how the projector actually works, or how this differs from the way a television works. The viewer imagines that the projector merely throws a picture that moves onto the big screen. This is called the user's mental model" (p. 28). With each individual coming from a differing background and educational experience, their unique mental models bring a different perspective that can create opportunity for the ideal solution in UX design. This is not to say that these auxiliary disciplines or hybrid designers will be the focus of the guide, but rather, to highlight that there are overlapping skills from disciplines that might not have been specified by name above, and that the proposed solution of this thesis may still be beneficial to those individuals looking to make a transition into UX.

With a foundational understanding of UX in place, and how auxiliary disciplines have shared skillsets in common that can translate to the UX practice, the subsequent chapters will provide insight into the current state of UX education outlining how these disciplines may bolster their readiness for the UX discipline, and will uncover the

research methodologies and results to showcase the proposed solution for helping these practitioners transition into UX design.

IV. CURRENT STATE OF UX EDUCATION

UX design education offers those interested in the discipline the ability to gain an understanding of the methodology and the foundational skills to put to practice. There are a multitude of options, from traditional, higher education and graduate degrees, to immersive programs and certification courses, to self-learning and on the job training. This chapter uncovers the current state of UX education, as well as the gaps that exist in these avenues in properly aligning students toward job placement.

Traditional Higher Education and Graduate Degrees

Like any undergraduate or graduate program, those looking to transition from one design discipline to UX design need to do their research to discover what universities might offer in terms of UCD practices and what applicable experience those programs may provide. While UX design is not a new practice, with Don Norman coining the term and becoming the first UX professional in 1993, its incorporation into traditional higher education degree programs has been limited (UX Design: Humanizing Interaction, n.d., para. 2). Institutions like Carnegie Mellon offer HCI undergraduate and graduate courses which teach the principles of UX design—though strictly from a computer-based perspective (Carnegie Mellon, n.d. para. 1). The first and only of its kind—Center Centre—is a two-year, full-time program in UX design, located in Chattanooga, Tennessee. While interest in UX design is growing, as demonstrated by the continued growth of educational programs for the practice, degree programs in the discipline are still up-and-coming (Center Centre, n.d. para. 1).

Immersive Programs

Fulfilling a gap in traditional higher education and graduate degrees, as well as offering a faster option to obtaining expertise in UX design, immersive programs are becoming more popular, as demonstrated by General Assembly which raised \$119.5 million in funding for their programming (Crunchbase, n.d., para. 3). Furthermore, General Assembly, has been operating since 2011 and has 20 campuses globally. Their courses adapt to the market, and create educational experiences based on the popularity of the discipline and market needs (“General Assembly”, n.d., para. 1). This ‘classroom-to-career’ immersive program approach from General Assembly is supported by employers, with a \$412.5 million acquisition by the world’s largest recruitment and staffing firm, Adecco Group, and nearly half of part-time students receiving tuition assistance from employers (Howard, 2018, para. 1). Another immersive program is the University of Texas at Austin’s 24-Week UX/UI Boot Camp, which does not require acceptance into the state school as an undergraduate or graduate student and the program enables individuals to plunge themselves in this singular discipline (UT Austin, n.d., para. 2). The General Assembly 10-Week Immersive Program for UX design is billed as a career accelerator and teaches fundamentals of UX, while offering students the chance to work with real companies on real problem areas and provides career support as students look for jobs (General Assembly, n.d., para. 1). Immersive programs have an appealing offer: the ability for interested individuals to learn the foundational skills of UX design end-to-end in a relatively short amount of time. Where these programs can be detrimental to its students, is when they do not articulate how students can distinguish themselves from one another in their portfolios, and if they set expectations too high and

convince students that they will be high-performing practitioners of the discipline, without any actual experience needed (Maccarone & Doody, 2016, para. 8).

Certification Courses

Online offerings from companies like Coursera or Udemy deliver courses from wide range of subjects (including UX design). While all subjects on Coursera are taught by top instructors from the world's best universities and educational institutions such as Johns Hopkins University, Stanford University, and Duke University, Udemy does not design their own training, but rather, enables individual course creators to sell their content on the platform (Coursera, n.d., para. 1). Both offer a certification upon completion of a course. Certifications do not inherently add credibility to a graduate of the course—they are typically added into a resume or LinkedIn profile, and allow prospective UX designers to emphasize some formality in education in the discipline—however, certification courses are relatively unregulated in terms of quality of content (McIntyre, 2015, para. 4, 5). Individual course certifications are typically seen as surface-level achievements by employers, as a certificate does not necessarily imply that a student of the course has gone through the course assessment, nor learned anything at all (McIntyre, 2015, para. 4, 4). Where opinions may differentiate, are in the instances when a suite of courses are curated for specialization programming that are designed to provide the student with a mastery in the field, such as Coursera's Data Science specialization by Johns Hopkins University that consists of nine courses (McIntyre, 2015, para. 4, 7). Similar to traditional educational institutions, certification courses may or may not have

accreditation – a primary factor that human resources and employers consider when evaluating applicants’ educational references (Sea, 2018, para. 2).

Self-Taught / Experience on the Job

Practical experience and time spent on the job provides an invaluable education that is difficult to achieve from any educational institution or certificate program. Experience on the job allows individuals to learn and create a process based on real-world experiences, problems, and timelines. Every interaction becomes a learning lesson for the next task ahead. Practical experience infuses foundations of the discipline with client or stakeholder needs and cross-disciplinary collaboration and problem solving. It removes the theoretical aspect of UX design and moves individuals into application, though not everyone is afforded the ability to be a self-taught practitioner (Maccarone & Doody, 2016, para. 1). Gaining experience on the job proves to be a difficult task, as most employers are looking for foundational skills before they hire an individual.

Self-taught and on the job training in sister disciplines may offer the most viable strategy to employ for those wishing to transition from one discipline to that of UX. As uncovered in Chapter III, there are a number of skills shared by these sister disciplines that could be leveraged in order to make that transition. The following chapter outlines the research that uncovers the struggles that prospective designers face when making the transition to UX, and the recommendations that practitioners and recruiters in UX offer to ease this difficulty.

V. RESEARCH

Competitive Audit

The landscape of technical and design books is currently inundated with beginner's guides and how-to instructional approaches to UX design. For example, the traditionally published UX books such as *Don't Make Me Think, About Face: The Essentials of Interaction Design*, and *Universal Principles of Design* are incredibly thorough foundations-based books that teach the process and fundamentals of UX design. In addition, online resources such as Creative Bloq, UXPin, and UX Booth publish eBooks, whitepapers, and online articles that offer instructional advice for how to accomplish process-based UX design requirements and artifacts. While these resources are meaningful, what is lacking is a comprehensive approach that addresses an explicitly tactical way to transition to UX design. There are a handful of internet resources that offer advice in making the switch into UX design, such as Interaction Design Foundation, UX Beginner, and individuals' blog posts, though these resources tend to be superficial, outdated, and disparate. The content of these resources may be surface level as the industry continues to mature and evolve, as Babich (2017) stated, "the world around us is quickly becoming more sophisticated; technological innovation is reshaping the world faster than ever, and today we interact with dozens of devices and digital products on a regular basis" (para. 1). The creative outcome of the thesis is expected to provide an in-depth and timeless approach to advice.

The Interaction Design Foundation ("Get Your First Job as a UX or Interaction Designer") offers a course on getting a first job as a UX or Interaction designer, though in order to take the course, an individual either must pay for the course outright or become a

member of the Interaction Design Foundation (for \$156+ a year) in order to take any course for free. At a glance, this course appears to be the closest to what the proposed solution of this thesis is offering, but what one is expected to learn in the course includes the foundations of UX, what different disciplines of UX are, tips for getting an internship, how to create a portfolio, and how to find UX roles on job boards. The majority of this course relies on reiterating the basics of UX foundations and the lessons that do push into the career transition seem to only hit broad strokes while avoiding essential areas as discovered in thesis research (e.g. how to make connections, how to understand the needs of employers, how to articulate expertise, how to iterate, how to drop ego, and how to sell yourself). Additionally, this course has a participant cap and may fill up, so admittance is not guaranteed (n.d.).

UX Beginner (“How to Get a Job with No Professional UX Experience) focuses on five key instructional points in their succinct article. The authors make a baseline assumption that the individual reading the content has basic knowledge in UX design and points out that its main focus of the article is building a portfolio. Already, the advice for getting a job in UX begins to narrow in this perspective. The first point is to ‘shape your experience,’ which touches base on the focus of this thesis, individuals who want to transition to UX design. However, the only depth the article goes into, is to point out that as a transitional practitioner, one may have related experience or projects, but does not provide how to uncover those relations or what to do with them. The second point is to ‘fill in the gaps,’ which explains that one could create additional artifacts and UX examples within one’s portfolio projects to make them more well-rounded. This is sound piece of advice, one that this thesis will cover as well, though this article only provides

one high-level example of what “filling in a gap” looks like. The third point is to ‘finish that portfolio,’ which doesn’t go into any more detail than that— it succinctly states to make or finish a portfolio because it is needed in the application process. The fourth point encourages individuals to ‘apply and interview,’ advising that individuals need to experience interviews personally to learn from them (without instructing how to do so in any form). The fifth and final point from this article is ‘education and community,’ which follows suit with the rest of the advice and feedback previously noted. The minimal advice provided in the section states that an individual, if needed, should consider classes or getting involved in a community, but does not push beyond the surface in any manner. This example reiterates the need for this thesis and the proposed solution; prospective practitioners need a substantial, curated, and instructional guide to help them with job placement (n.d.).

Jeff Humble at UX Pin has a succinct, and familiar take on providing UX career advice. The answers to the eleven questions he crafted, come from his own experience, and yield one to three short paragraphs that include personal advice. Although a verbose instructional guide may not be necessary in order to be found resourceful, Humble’s article reiterates the surface level nature of the guides that exist today. The questions Jeff Humble answers are the most preliminary when thinking of applying for jobs, and range from ‘do I need a UX portfolio,’ to ‘what do I put in my cover letter,’ to ‘should I freelance or work full-time.’ While there is inherent value, the superficial answers to these basic questions do not put a critical, instructional perspective to help lead an individual through the hurdles that they will face in becoming a UX designer. This example reiterates the need for a more thorough, curated set of instructional advice for a

guide, founded in research from questions that are being asked today by prospective designers, and the gaps that current practitioners and recruiters see in their applicants (n.d.).

Given these examples, it may seem like there is a wide array of help available, but with repetitive, conflicting, or ambiguous content, one could surmise that it becomes more of a convoluted experience than a fruitful one when looking for career transition advice.

There are many avenues, both through formalized educational programs and through informal online experiences as outlined above and in Chapter IV, for individuals to learn the foundations of UX design. This thesis is not written to dispute the effectiveness of the learning environment that teaches the fundamentals. Instead, as demonstrated above through the competitive audit, there is no singular, comprehensive, tactical source that provides a clear and concise instructional pathway to transition into and land a job in the UX discipline. Rather, individuals must scour the internet to sift through personal opinions and glean meaning and instruction from vague or incomprehensive explanations.

Hypothesis

Design practitioners in Visual Design, Web Design, Industrial Design, and Architecture, adjacent disciplines to UX design, are making the transition from their current discipline to that of UX design with varying levels of success. These prospective practitioners require an instructional, step-by-step, tactical guide—one that is founded in

research and recommendations by industry practitioners, recruiters, and hiring managers—to teach them how to successfully make the transition into UX design.

A prototype of the tactical guide will be written, consisting of a book query, an initial book outline, and a first chapter of the book. The approach to the tactical guide will be constructed from the qualitative surveys that will be sent to two user segments: prospective UX designers to understand what their needs are when they look to make the transition into UX design, and current practitioners and recruiters in the UX discipline to uncover the gaps that they see in prospective designer skillsets and highlight their recommendations for how to successfully get a job in the discipline. The opportunities and insights synthesized from the research findings will make up the foundational elements of the guide. From this data, a book query will be written and Validation Tested with prospective UX designers and current practitioners in order to ensure the guide meets its intended purpose in structure and content. From the book query Validation Testing, a first chapter and outline for the book concept will be written and Validation Tested to further insure the tactical guide meets its intended purpose. The measurement of success will result in a validation of the need for this book as tactical guide, titled, *Making the Switch: A Career Transition Guide Into UX*.

Methodology

The primary methods for research were contextual inquiry by means of a practitioner interview and a series of quantitative surveys that were sent prospective UX designers, current UX design practitioners, and current recruiters in UX design. Kuniavsky (2003) writes, “the best tool to find out who your users are and what their

opinions are is the survey” (p. 303). He continues and explains that surveys are beneficial as they identify the characteristics of the individuals who would be interested in the proposed solution, as opposed to a more generalized audience. The individuals selected as the audience for the survey were chosen because of their proximity to the topic of the guide, either as prospective UX designers (the primary audience of the guide), or as practitioners and recruiters in the discipline (the experts with experience and advice that help set the foundation for the guide). The first step in the research methodology was to write the interview and survey questions and then publish and recruit for them in order to obtain input from participants.

As explained by Beyer & Holtzblatt (2003) using contextual inquiry in the form of a face-to-face interview allows the interviewer to become the apprentice, and make the interviewee the expert (p. 46). With this understanding of contextual inquiry, one-on-one interviews were written and requested of practitioners who have a working rapport with the author or who are well known in the industry, in order to have a more personalized conversation centered around their background in UX design, what they look for in potential UX employees, and what advice or lessons learned they might have for individuals looking to get into the field (See Appendix E).

Additionally, surveys were constructed and sent to students (or potential UX design candidates), UX practitioners, and UX recruiters. The sample demographics of all three sets for the survey were a mix of women and men, of any age group above 18 years old, from various backgrounds and professional/academic experiences.

Survey questions for potential UX design candidates were primarily focused on their current career situation, whether they were still in school, training, or if they were

brand new to the industry and currently employed. Questions revolved around their interest in the field, what their lessons learned were from their educational experience, what were the gaps in their educational experience for the UX discipline, what their holistic job search has returned (from pain points to successes), and what would be or would have been valuable insights in securing a job (See Appendix A).

Survey questions for practitioners were similar to those from the interview guide for the more personalized conversations that will be conducted. Questions focused on background and experience, transition from one discipline to that of UX design (if applicable), what gaps in skills they were seeing from graduates, how UX design has evolved since they have been in the field, what expectations junior designers should have, and what advice or tips they might have to offer (See Appendix B).

Survey questions for recruiters focused on the hiring process and the characteristics recruiters look for in successful applicants. Questions touched on motivations, skills, and portfolios that drive them towards reaching out to potential candidates, what types of institutions or resources they look at when recruiting, and their biggest challenges when reviewing applicants (See Appendix C).

Table 1. Screenshot of the process of anonymizing data (from student surveys).

S01	11/7/2017 16:35:47	18 - 25	Female	Austin
S02	11/7/2017 18:43:58	26 - 35	Female	OKC
S03	11/8/2017 0:28:11	18 - 25	Female	Austin
S04	11/8/2017 3:24:47	26 - 35	Female	Pittsburgh
S05	11/9/2017 8:55:39	46 - 55	Female	Austin and previously in F
S06	11/9/2017 14:12:00	36 - 45	Female	Austin
S07	11/14/2017 14:47:47	26 - 35	Female	Gjøvik
S08	11/15/2017 18:49:34	36 - 45	Female	Memphis
S09	11/16/2017 1:30:40	26 - 35	Female	Toronto
S10	11/16/2017 6:30:55	18 - 25	Male	Most recently graduated i
S11	11/16/2017 13:44:30	18 - 25	Female	Barcelona
S12	11/16/2017 21:33:24	26 - 35	Male	sao paulo
S13	11/17/2017 4:27:25	26 - 35	Female	Vancouver
S14	11/17/2017 20:01:17	26 - 35	Female	San Marcos
S15	11/17/2017 21:38:44	46 - 55	Male	Austin
S16	11/18/2017 18:47:48	26 - 35	Female	Seattle
S17	11/20/2017 15:21:59	26 - 35	Female	San Marcos
S18	11/21/2017 12:44:17	26 - 35	Male	San Marcos
S19	11/27/2017 19:47:45	18 - 25	Female	San Marcos

In accordance with IRB practices, all responses submitted and logged were assigned participant codes and anonymized to protect any identifiable data that a participant might have submitted (See Table 1). However, each survey created had an optional section that would allow participants to include their identifiable name, contact information, and social media handles to be used for follow-up contact (See Appendix F).

After qualitative findings from interviews surveys were collected, they were then externalized onto sticky notes in order for the author to familiarize themselves with the findings, to see the breadth of observations captured, and to work in a medium that was flexible enough for organization and reorganization (See Figure 2). This is the first step in the process of affinity diagramming, which is an analysis technique for research synthesis that was introduced in the 1960s by anthropologist Jiro Kawakita—this process requires each observation to be captured on its own sticky note so that the design implication of each can be considered on its own (Hanington & Martin, 2012, p. 12).

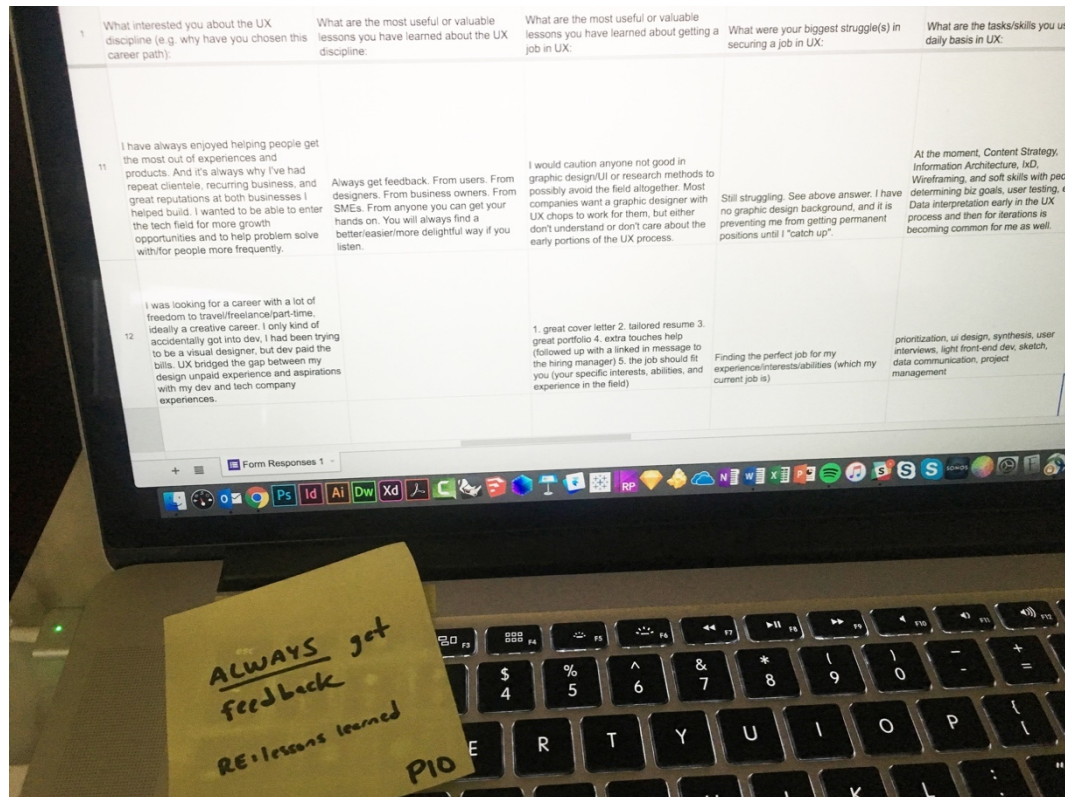


Figure 3. Photograph of externalization.

Once the observations were externalized, they were then affinity diagrammed in order to identify similar groupings, common themes, and areas of advice or gaps in education. This exercise enabled the author to see if and how practitioner and recruiter feedback aligned with prospective designer needs and gaps (See Figure 3). As Hanington & Martin (2012) describe, this process is used to meaningfully cluster observations and insights from research in order to keep design grounded in data; this is a key element to the UCD process (p. 12).

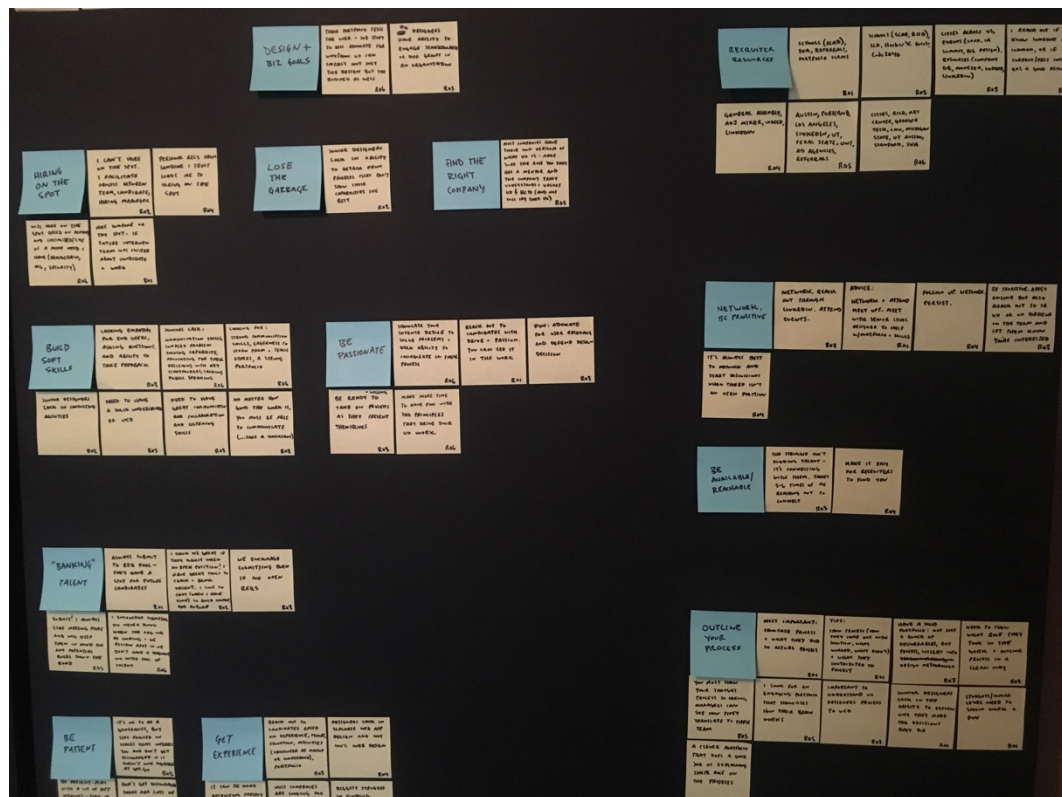


Figure 4. Photograph of affinity diagramming.

Results of Survey and Interviews

After synthesizing the data, the results indicated the need for a guide to be created that would help prospective designers move from non-practitioner to practitioner, by securing a job with an employer as a contributing member of a UX design team.

It was found that those who took the student survey (junior and prospective UX designers) were interested in UX design for three primary reasons: These individuals were excited and enthusiastic about a field that revolves around problem solving from a UCD approach. S01 succinctly put it, “I like working with real people to find impactful solutions to their every-day problems. I want to help ease their pain points so there is less friction between their goals and their abilities to complete them.” Secondly, these

prospective designers were intrigued by the notion that UX design is a flexible approach that allows for cross-disciplinary methodologies. As the individuals taking the survey were interested in or have backgrounds in Psychology, Development, Graphic Design, and Business—they articulated that UX design is an accommodating practice that can incorporate these skills effectively. S11 wrote, “I wanted to work at the intersection of design and technology.” Finally, these individuals were interested in UX design as a new discipline that they can transition into from a previous career or undergraduate background from a different discipline. While some individuals noted the rationale behind this transition was because of career opportunity: S02, “better opportunities than Graphic Design,” other individuals felt that a transition into UX design was a way to develop skills in another passion area: S03, “I have a tech background and UX is suitable for people like me who love design and want to transit career path.” These findings align directly with the hypothesis of the thesis, that individuals are looking to transition into UX design, as well as Chapters II and III, which outline why UX design is important and how skills from other disciplines translate well into UX. Confirming interest in the UX design discipline does not yet validate the need for the guide, but it does demonstrate that UX design is a favored discipline that prospective designers are looking to transition to.

The pain points surfaced by junior and prospective UX designers were varied, numerous, and begin to articulate the need for the guide to be written (See Figure 4).

IS CODING IMPORTANT? S09	WANT MORE ABOUT DIFFERENT PROGRAMS AND SOFTWARE S07	PROCESS AND DAY-TO-DAY WORKFLOW S10	I NEED MORE PRACTICE WITH DESIGN THINKING METHODS S23	I NEED MORE WITH MORE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE S22	BEST PRACTICES FOR UX DECISION MAKING S13	ONE CLASS ON RESEARCH AT THE VERY END S05	I NEED PROJECT EXPERIENCE S02
EVERY COMPANY SEEMS TO MAKE UP ITS OWN DEFINITION OF GRAPHIC/UI/UX/ UI DESIGN S02	I FEEL LIKE I NEED MORE PORTFOLIO/CASE STUDY PROJECTS S06	IS IT OK IF I DON'T CODE? S17	I NEED REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE S08	HOW DO I NOT MAKE AMATEURISH MISTAKES S19	MY PROGRAM IS BROAD RATHER THAN DEEP S04	HOW DO YOU CONVINCE PEOPLE OF THE VALUE OF UX S21	HOW DO I BELIEVE I AM CAPABLE S16
I NEED MORE EXPERIENCE PRESENTING S23	I NEED MORE PROJECTS FOCUSED ON HUMAN EXPERIENCE S18	I NEED HELP WITH PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION S09	I NEED PORTFOLIO CRITIQUES S08	I WISH THERE WERE MORE INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES S11	I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET A MENTOR S06	HOW DO I DECIDE THE BEST APPROACH S18	I WOULD LOVE TO CHALLENGE A UX DESIGNER/TEAM TO SEE WHAT THEIR DAY-TO-DAY IS LIKE S04
WHY IS THERE DEMAND FOR UX PRACTITIONERS YET IT'S STILL HARD TO GET A JOB S16	I NEED TEAM PROJECTS, REAL BUSINESS CONSTRAINTS, DEVELOPER HANDOFF S16	I WISH I COULD OBSERVE SOMEONE AT WORK AND GET MORE REAL LIFE PROJECT EXPERIENCE S07	THERE ARE SO MANY PAIN AREAS - IT'S OVERWHELMING S10	I FEEL LIKE I'M GETTING BUTTER WHEN I DON'T WORK ON A UX PROJECT S20	HOW DO I INTERPRET ANALYTICS TO MAKE THE BEST DECISION S13	I NEED TO MAKE MYSELF MORE COMFORTABLE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN INTERVIEWS S03	I AM MISSING SOLID PROOF OF MY UX ABILITY IN MY ONLINE PORTFOLIO S20
COMPANIES ARE CONCERNED WITH DELIVERABLES NOT WHAT THEY MEAN S06	AGEISM S06	I NEED TO GET AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THINGS WORK IN THE INDUSTRY - NOT JUST FROM BOOKS S09	I NEED TO FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE AND FAMILIAR WITH THE EXPERIENCE S19	I NEED MORE EXPERIENCE S22	I NEED THE HAND OF DEPTH YOU GET FROM BEING IN THE FIELD LONGER S04	I FEEL CONFIDENT IN MY ABILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO A TEAM, BUT I HAVE A HARD TIME GETTING INTERVIEWS S01	I NEED TIME TO ITERATE S14
I NEED REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE S11	I STRUGGLE WITH RESEARCH AND DATA S05	I NEED TO UNDERSTAND USER RESEARCH S12	WHAT SKILLS WILL HAVE LASTING POWER AS THE FIELD CHANGES S04	I NEED TO HAVE PROJECTS WHERE I LEARN FROM MY MISTAKES S19	I NEED A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORKFLOW/ BEST PRACTICES OF WORKING WITH DEVELOPERS S02	I HAVE NEVER WORKED WITH A DEVELOPMENT TEAM BEFORE S20	UX SCHOOL IS NOT DESIGN FOCUSED, IT'S MORE ABOUT THE RESEARCH S03

Figure 5. Photograph of student pain points.

While each individual had their own personal perspectives and reasons for their answers, after synthesizing the data, their responses were not unique. There were two main categories that surfaced from these pain points. The first, is a lack of actual design execution (primarily from educational institutions) in order to gain experience. As S04 illustrated, “the biggest thing is the kind of depth of practice that comes from having been in the field longer,” there is a need for designers to gain an understanding of the real world while simultaneously building up their process and experience. The second, is the inability to effectively create a unique and distinguished portfolio to secure an interview. From S16, “...how I would answer certain interview questions, how to approach a portfolio walkthrough, how to believe I am capable...” there is a correlation between not understanding or having the right tools for an interview and the lack confidence to

succeed in that presentation. These two pain points go hand-in-hand. Without a proper experience-building education which results in case studies to create a well-rounded portfolio, it is difficult for these prospective designers to differentiate themselves, outline their qualifications, and understand how to communicate their design process. The creative outcome of the thesis addresses the pain points articulated by individuals by focusing on gaining experience, communicating process, building portfolios, and being able to get an interview. While the book query will not be centered around educational practices, and the basics of UX design, it will culminate in tactical ways to gain experience, find mentors, differentiate themselves, and build a portfolio. These prospective designer pain points begin to surface the need of a transition guide, one that can tactically move them into job placement.

While synthesizing the findings from current practitioners and recruiters, the two were combined together in terms of feedback as the two segments provide similar advice and tactics to prospective and junior designers. Additionally, the observations that highlight the passion from prospective designers as well as their pain points, align one-to-one with the desired drive that hiring managers are looking for, and the advice that they give based on the gaps that they see in prospective designers.

The gaps in skillset that were articulated by current practitioners and recruiters when looking at prospective designer portfolios and their recruiting materials centered around five main deficiencies: showing diversity in work, articulating process and UCD understanding, having the necessary experience, soft skills, and crafting a proper portfolio. When it comes to showing diversity in work, surveyed practitioners and recruiters agreed that this could be anything from highlighting another skillset (e.g. Front-

end Web Development) to showing different types of execution for a UX design problem (e.g. web UI vs. Service Design). Having the necessary experience is one of the most complicated pieces to unravel as it applies to a chicken and egg situation. Students graduating from a degree program, naturally, would not have significant practical experience, hence, their ongoing job search to gain that experience. Internships can play a major role in gaining experience, as P21 noted, “They need to be able work on a team and have successful REAL client projects in their portfolio.” When it comes to showcasing experience, recruiters lend a piece of advice, R06 recommended, “Be patient - play with a lot of different mediums - even if you don’t use them on a daily basis it might open you to new opportunities. Really just make more time to have fun with the principles that drive your UX work.” Hands-down, recruiters and practitioners alike agree that prospective designers are not demonstrating an “overall understanding of UX and a user first approach,” (P39) which is problematic as those should be taught as the foundations of the discipline. There are tactical ways to address UX understanding from a theoretical, approach, and case study perspective that can be accommodated in the tactical guide once written. The soft skills that tend to be lacking from prospective designers are skills like, “communication, cooperation, collaboration, and persuasion,” (P08) which are not necessarily something the guide would go in-depth to teach, but could articulate how, when, and why these skills need to be demonstrated. Crafting a proper portfolio was the most requested need by recruiters and practitioners who included a wide variety of needs and recommendations. P06 mentioned the need for a well-crafted portfolio, “Be a freaking designer, make it nice, make it personal...” while R06 recommended a curated touch, “I also like when a portfolio seems curated just for me - I

only have 5min to review something initially so catch me if you can!” and finally, P37 mentioned the need to pay close attention to the job you are applying for, “Read the job description carefully and look for clues to what specific tasks and skills the employer is particularly concerned about...Focus on the ways in which you differ from their ‘ideal’ candidate profile, and make sure you tailor your presentation to try to address those concerns, while emphasizing your strengths.”

Additionally, when synthesizing the feedback from current practitioners and recruiters, there were four areas that centered on advice for prospective designers and opportunities for them to improve upon. These four areas are: patience, coachability and ego, networking and proactiveness, and finding the right company and role (See Figure 5).

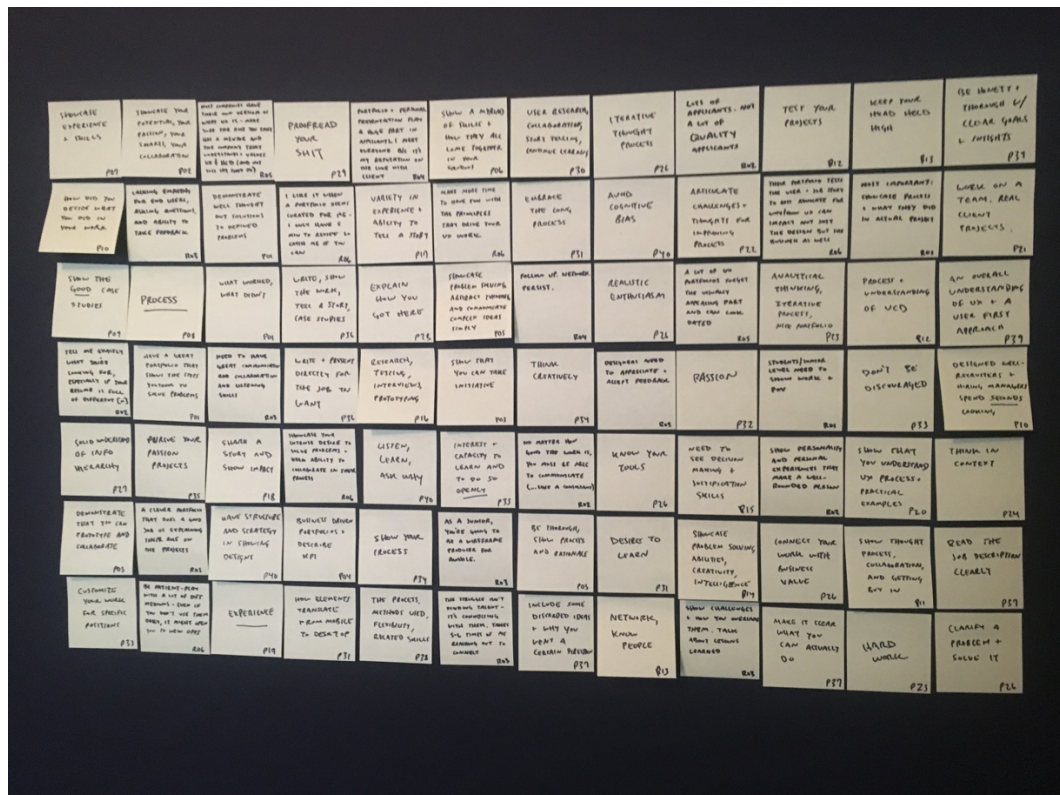


Figure 6. Photograph of practitioner and recruiter advice.

Patience might be the most obvious of answers. With UX design becoming a mandate in many corporations, organizations, and institutions of higher learning, competition in the market is fierce. P33 provided the following advice, “if you aren’t customizing all aspects for the specific position you are applying for you will not stand out. Shoot for the moon, apply anywhere and everywhere, and it will be hard and you will hear mostly nothing back, or you may go through 3 rounds of interviews and not get it. Don’t be discouraged, it helps you for the next time.” While this might not be the most reassuring piece of advice, it is sound, and practice, patience, and persistence will ultimately yield results.

In terms of coachability and ego, R06 had noticed that, “there’s a lot of ego and not a long of strong junior UXers to back it up,” along with P34 who thought prospective UX designers need, “grit. Servant-mindedness. An expectation that they’ll need to pay some dues.” If this is a designer’s first career, they need to keep that in mind and showcase their enthusiasm and excitement for the discipline. If an individual is changing careers, regardless of however much experience they have in their initial discipline, it may not transfer one-to-one to UX design, and need to keep any presuppositions or ego at bay.

Networking and proactiveness is about putting yourself as a designer, out into the world to make connections, find recruiters and mentors, and learn about the companies who are hiring. As R03 suggested, “the struggle isn’t finding them [prospective designers] it’s connecting with them. They are so busy it usually takes 5-6 times of me reaching out before I do connect.” While networking is paramount, also making oneself available at all times when job searching is a key priority.

Finally, companies are unique in what they design and whom they design for. Each job title may have a different expectation and prospective designers need to understand what it is they are applying for, and make sure they're applying for the correct role. R04 mentioned knowing, "what the client is really looking for. UX vs. UI vs. WD are all different," and a recruiter's time is valuable—designers need to use it wisely, on the correct job description. P37 posited that social media and online platforms "...links to LinkedIn, a private website, online portfolio, etc...." provide an opportunity for applicants to showcase work and collect feedback.

Compiled feedback from practitioners and recruiters currently in the UX design discipline affirmed that the key elements they look for in prospective designers (aside from tactical skillset and the appropriate recruitment materials) was a distinguishable drive and ability to problem solve. Practitioner #032 mentioned that the most imperative skill a junior designer needs showcase to get a job in UX is "Passion. Love your work and love design or you're going to have a hard time." While all of these requirements, gaps, and opportunity areas may seem like a lot, in fact, they are. Finding a UX job is a complicated, complex, and timely process. This does not mean that there cannot be a useful resource to help guide new designers towards a successful path.

For those individuals looking to make a transition from one discipline to that of UX design, it is an attainable task: 85% (35 out of 41 practitioner respondents) made a transition themselves from a variety of disciplines: Front-end Development, ID, Graphic Designer, Psychology, Forensic Interviewer, for example. All of the advice from these practitioners who have undergone the discipline transition fall under the same recommendations and advice as outlined in the synthesis noted above. Know that

persistence and continued growth is paramount, as outlined by P07, “You’re going to get a lot of no’s. Like a stupid amount of no’s and doors closing. Don’t give up, keep networking and improving your experience and skills. Get involved in the community and try to mentor peers and others. Even if you’re just starting out, you can build a community among peers and learn from each other’s’ experiences.”

This correlation of desires and needs from students and prospective UX designers, along with the advice, gaps, and abilities to transition from one discipline to that of UX design surfaced by current practitioners and recruiters, further confirmed the need for the guide to be written. The findings aligned with the hypothesis that prospective UX designers have difficulty preparing for, finding, and procuring a job with a company in the UX design discipline.

Outlining the Tactical Guide

The proposed tactical guide will be a book with eight chapters that will include an introduction, making connections, understanding employers, articulating expertise, iterating continuously, designing portfolios, dropping ego, and selling oneself. These chapters were identified through affinity diagramming as mentioned above in the Research Plan. Once commonalities were found among each individual survey group, they were then combined into a larger set to identify how the needs of prospective designers aligned with the gaps that practitioners and recruiters had mentioned (See Table 2). These chapters address the problems prospective designers face when transitioning to UX design, and the gaps that current practitioners and recruiters are seeing today in their applicants. Additionally, the book will incorporate the feedback and advice from the

practitioners and recruiters to provide one-to-one answers and tactical strategies for improvement.

Table 2. Screenshot of how the findings formulated chapters.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Making Connections									
2	P21	Coffee meetings, setup 1x1 coffee meetings with folks in the field to get advice on anything and everything.								
3	R01	Network and attend meet ups. Meet with Senior level designer to help with portfolio and skills.								
4	R04	Follow up, network, and be persistent.								
5										
6	Understanding Employers									
7	P04	Portfolios that describe KPIs.								
8	P19	Spend time researching companies that you are applying for and make sure your resume and portfolio get past the HR gateway.								
9	P24	Its not all about design, there's a lot of documentation work								
10										
11	Articulating Expertise									
12	P12	A well-articulated project journey that includes rationale and user-based feedback for all the design decisions.								
13	R02	Tell me exactly what you're looking for, especially if your resume is full of different degrees, internships, jobs etc.								
14	R06	Demand and someone who is specialized or an SME of a niche need I have. ie. Blockchain Technology, Machine Learning, or Security.								
15										
16	Iterating Continuously									
17	P19	Don't stop looking, if you're not getting picked up, try to get feedback from hiring managers.								
18	P22	You need to constantly be learning new technics and adjusting yourself to new technology and methods.								
19	P10	Expect to work for next to nothing on short contracts, and expect to spend 1-3 years trying to fight your way out of the experience gap.								
20										
21	Designing Portfolios									
22	P01	A great portfolio showing the steps they took to solve specific problems, why they chose those solutions, what worked and what didn't.								
23	P12	For your portfolio projects, focus on the user and the problem you're solving, and show how the solution actually solves that problem.								
24	R03	Don't just show a bunch of deliverables. Show your process, give some insight into your design methodology.								
25										
26	Dropping Ego									
27	P06	If they communicate their decisions well, they have an excellent portfolio (no excuses), and they can show me that they know what they're talking about								

Chapter 1: Introduction, will be the premiere chapter to the book, articulating what the book is about, what audience it is tailored to serve, and what the expected outcomes from reading the book may be. This chapter will clearly identify that this is not a book designed to teach someone the fundamentals of UX design but specifically provide tactical guidance for an individual to secure a job and demonstrate the active voice of the author.

Chapter 2: Making Connections, will center on the advice from practitioners and recruiters for prospective designers to actively attend industry events, meet ups, open houses, portfolio critiques, and other opportunities where they can get to know other designers and begin making inroads with practitioners and recruiters who may also be

attending these events. P29 succinctly put it, “it’s who you know,” and while knowing the right people might not guarantee an individual a job, it might surface an opportunity or provide a starting point to a conversation that might not have previously occurred.

Chapter 3: Understanding Employers, will address the need for prospective designers to be introspective and identify what kind of job they are looking for, while simultaneously researching companies that they are interested in to understand that employer’s needs and requirements. S04 reinforced this need with, “for me, I’m looking for positions that allow for a lot of exploratory conceiving, a lot of strategy work and insight-finding. (As opposed to doing user flows and wireframes all the time.) Because UX can mean so many different things, I’m always trying to figure out what companies and positions are going to offer the particular kind of UX that excites me.” Additionally, this chapter will address the pain points surfaced by practitioners and recruiters who consistently see UX designers applying for a position that is not suited for their area of expertise, or who cannot articulate the differences between UX and UI design.

Chapter 4: Articulating Expertise, will provide background on what different types of expertise might look like, where internships play a role, and how to articulate the strengths that individuals may have. While there is still confusion for some prospective designers surrounding what design capabilities and job requisitions are requesting as S20 vocalized, “I’m still confused about the line between UX and UI. I realize the level of involvement and cross-over likely varies depending on what company you work for and how that design team runs things, but it makes it pretty confusing in job interviews to know exactly what the job will entail,” there will be practical advice that will be surfaced to help alleviate these confusions. Sub-sections of this chapter will provide specific

feedback and guidance for visual designers, web designers, industrial designers, and architects, the disciplines as outlined in previous chapters as those most frequently transitioning into UX.

Chapter 5: Iterating Continuously, will demonstrate the need for prospective designers to not be satisfied with their initial draft or instantiation of their project work. While project work tells the story of how prospective designers worked with other team members or how they ultimately came up with the design, it does not need to be the exact work that was created in the moment during that project. P06 recommended, “Do everything you can to stand out, but do it in a classy way. Cover letters are fine, but be a freaking designer. Make it nice. Make it personal. If your portfolio doesn't exactly line up with a job you're applying for, make them a custom one and make sure they know that you made it for them because you want to make sure they get the right impression of you.” Practitioners and hiring managers care less about the project itself and more about the work, thinking, and process behind it. This chapter will demonstrate that it is acceptable to have project and portfolio work that is recreated or imagined – as long as it tells the story they are looking for.

Chapter 6: Designing Portfolios, will uncover why portfolios might be the singular most paramount piece of content for landing a job, while simultaneously outlining that portfolios may also be the most difficult challenge a designer may face. Prospective designers consistently articulated in the research their inability to craft a successful portfolio “my biggest struggle is showing the right type of portfolio” (S05), while current practitioners and recruiters shared their insights, needs, and expectations for portfolios “...must be able to tell a story about yourself with your portfolio. UX is about

storytelling and communicating. Definitely have your own personal brand together” (P05). This chapter will not only articulate the requirements and distinguishing elements of a UX design portfolio in order to create one for the first time, but will also demonstrate how designers from adjacent disciplines can adjust their existing portfolio for success and may include online resources with exemplars.

Chapter 7: Dropping Ego, will set the expectations for prospective designers, providing direct yet tactful messaging that outlines what job types and levels of seniority in a company they should consider based on experience and foundational skills. R06 expressed that, “there’s a lot of ego and not a long of strong junior UXers to back it up,” which emphasized the need to address these misaligned perceptions and expectations of prospective UX designers and how they need to present and properly level themselves.

Chapter 8: Selling Yourself, will be the final chapter to the book, and will outline the ways that prospective designers need to showcase and differentiate themselves from the other individuals who are applying for the same position. P06 posited, “The only people I paid attention to were ones who broke out of that and tried to solve something on their own or teamed up with an actual organization to solve their problem,” which resonated with the need for prospective designers to find ways to differentiate themselves. This chapter will focus on means for differentiating, and how to articulate those unique qualities or experiences.

VI. TESTING

Validation Testing

Validation Testing is a methodology which brings a product or service in front of the end-user to prove (or disprove) the validity of that product or service. It should not be confused with Usability Testing, which focuses more on evaluating the usefulness and intuitiveness of a product or service. For this thesis, Validation Testing was the selected method because a finished product is not available to test its usability. Instead, the author is able to discover whether or not the book query is representative of a valid solution and if it has bearing in the market with the individuals (prospective designers and practitioners of UX design) who would be using it. Testing is a critical process in UX design as Boag (2017) noted, not everybody finds empathy easy—asking colleagues to empathize with users can be challenging—which is especially true when they do not have frequent contact with their customer (p. 179). While assumptions can be made based on research that the creative outcome of this thesis was an appropriate solution—validating it with users highlights any inaccuracies in that assumption and allows for additional feedback to be incorporated.

Methodology

To test the validity of the hypothesis, two rounds of Validation Testing were completed in order to first validate the general idea of the book (in the form of a book query), and second, to validate the directional approach to the book (in the form of a book outline and first introductory chapter). The methods used for Validation Testing were reminiscent of those used in the Chapter V (Research) by using surveys, externalization,

and affinity diagramming. While both rounds of testing utilized surveys, the book query was sent with a personalized email to individuals who had opted-in for further communication from the research questionnaire, and the book concept with outline and first chapter were sent to a general audience of prospective designers, current practitioners, and recruiters within the UX discipline.

For the first round of Validation Testing, the one-page book query was sent to forty-one prospective UX designers, current practitioners, and recruiters in the field for validation and critique (See Appendix G). These individuals had already participated in the initial research survey and opted-in to the elective data consent section for follow-up contact (See Figure 6 for example email). As a book query can be an abstract idea about a topic, it was essential to reach out to individuals who had some basic context for what this proposal would be, hence, extending the invitation for feedback to those individuals who had previously opted-in for further communication. Forty-one participants were solicited and 25% responded with feedback to the questionnaire.

Hello!

First and foremost, I wanted to thank you so much for the time you spent filling out my survey while I was conducting a research study to write my thesis on a solution to help designers make more informed, thoughtful, and deliberate choices when transitioning from their current job, into the role of User Experience Designer. I'm in the final stages of finishing my thesis; thank you again for your time.

I'm contacting you now because you opted-in to the survey for additional contact. I am writing to see if you would be interested and available in answering 6 more questions. My research has confirmed the need for a resource to help designers make a tactical decisions when getting into UX Design and I would appreciate your insight into your perceived usefulness of this resource.

Attached you will find a one-page PDF of a book query outlining my proposed topic and solution.

Below are the six questions for you to provide your thoughts/insight on the book query.

1. Have you seen or read a book or other resource that is similar in nature? What resource/book.
2. Is the content and context of this book appealing to you? Why or why not.
3. Would you find this book useful? Why or why not.
4. Would you purchase this book? Why or why not.
5. What is missing from this book? Why or why not.
6. What would be your preferred format for you to digest this information (e.g. physical book, ebook, online toolkit/website, something else...).

If you have the time to read the one-page PDF and answer the 6 questions above, I would be most appreciative. If not, thank you for all the feedback you've provided thus far.

Please let me know if you have any questions or additional thoughts. Thank you for your time and valuable insight.

Best,
Alexis Du Mond Puchek

Figure 7. Screenshot of an example email request for book query Validation Testing.

The purpose of this book query Validation Testing was to understand if the participants would find the idea of the book useful, and gain any insight, knowledge, and suggestions the individuals being surveyed may have to make the approach more practical in use. Additionally, this first round of Validation Testing would surface the collective knowledge of these individuals and uncover if other similar guides exist in the field and if the proposed solution of this thesis is repetitive in nature or unnecessary altogether, If the results of Validation Testing the book query were positive, the book query would be viewed as successful enough to continue with the writing and framing of

the book concept, *Making the Switch: A Career Transition Guide Into UX*, to then test with relevant individuals.

The second round of Validation Testing was to test the book concept, consisting of a book outline and first introductory chapter, that were created in Google Forms (See Figure 7) and were sent out via email and through social media channels to reach a wide audience of prospective UX designers, current practitioners, recruiters, and educators in the UX discipline (See Appendix H). As the book outline and first introductory chapter were a refined and more structurally complete concept than the more abstract nature of the book query, this round of Validation Testing was able to be sent to a wide and broad UX audience (See Appendix I). While the approach for garnering feedback for this round of Validation Testing was more generalized in terms of a wider target audience, the same criteria as Chapter V (Research) was in place, making sure that the participants supplying feedback on the questionnaire were prospective UX designers, current practitioners, recruiters, or educators in the UX discipline. The addition of educators in the field were included as a viable audience for this round of testing, as they are at the forefront of educating UX students. They could either become a conduit for recommending the book or learn themselves about the difficulty these prospective practitioners have and current practitioners face when securing talent—an insight that could help reframe the approach educators take with their syllabus.

Thesis Project: UX Book Concept Validation

Alexis Du Mond Puchek, a graduate student at Texas State University, is conducting a research study to validate the usefulness of her thesis project: a book (Making the Switch: A Career Transition Guide Into UX) for how designers from any discipline can make a successful transition to UX Design.

You are being asked to complete this survey because of your experience in the User Experience Design discipline: you can offer valuable advice, insight, questions, and feedback.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Alexis Du Mond Puchek or her faculty advisor:

Alexis Du Mond Puchek, Graduate Student
Communication Design
512-656-7801
adp68@txstate.edu

Grayson Lawrence, Associate Professor
Communication Design
512-245-1546
gl16@txstate.edu

This project 2017915 was approved by the Texas State IRB on October 17, 2017. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser 512-245-3413 (lasser@txstate.edu) or to Monica Gonzales, IRB Regulatory Manager 512-245-2334 (meg201@txstate.edu).

If you would prefer not to participate, please do not fill out the survey.

If you consent to participate, please read The Book Introduction and complete the survey (below).

The Book Introduction

Figure 8. Screenshot of the Google Form for book concept Validation Testing.

This last round of Validation Testing was conducted in order to corroborate the hypothesis that prospective practitioners require an instructional, step-by-step, tactical guide—one that is founded in research and recommendations by industry practitioners, recruiters, and hiring managers—to teach them how to successfully make the transition into UX design. Additionally, the purpose of testing the outline and first chapter of the book was to substantiate the context, usefulness, tone of voice, and the participants'

desire to purchase the book will meet the expectations and needs of those transitioning into UX design. Fundamentally, the book concept validation was to test whether the book has an audience and could be successful if published (See Appendix J).

Results of Book Query Validation Testing

From the feedback garnered from the participants of the book query Validation Testing, the book concept received a positive reinforcement of the proposal, with 90% of participants confirming that the concept of the book had a unique perspective and would be a useful publication that they would consider purchasing. Feedback from the documented email responses uncovered a clear validation of the book query (See Figure 8). There were three primary findings from this round of Validation Testing, the first, was an additional confirmation to the Research that prospective designers continue are ineffectual in finding a path into job placement. BQV05 epitomized the participants that confirmed the need for this book and validated the unique perspective it will take, “the content is definitely appealing as I have struggled to make the switch from a job in academia to the UX field working in the industry and relate to the topic being presented... I have not read any books quite like this.” Additionally, BQV10, although a current practitioner in UX design, mentioned that they are still new to the field and “would want it as a reference book. I personally really struggled finding my place in UX, as well as navigating the ambiguity. I’m sure I could glean insights, and also stay grounded as I continue my journey.”

1. Have you seen or read a book or other resource that is similar in nature? What resource/book.
I have not read any books quite like this
2. Is the content and context of this book appealing to you? Why or why not.
The content is definitely appealing as I have struggled to make the switch from a job in academia to the UX field working in the industry and relate to the topic being presented.
3. Would you find this book useful? Why or why not.
Despite my knowledge and practice in UX, the job market does not seem willing to give much chance on newcomers. I could certainly benefit from a roadmap. Since recognizing my prolonged struggle in obtaining a position in this field, I have integrated many UX methods into my design teachings to help my students learn the standard methods and principles used in UX. A book offering knowledge like this would also trickle into my mentorship in teaching classes.
4. Would you purchase this book? Why or why not.
Yes, although I have read several books and many online articles on UX I have not seen much written from this particular angle.
5. What is missing from this book? Why or why not.
I think adding more would complicate the primary focus. Keeping it on-the-point and not adding too many other side topics would be important to keep the book digestible, and be less likely to overwhelm your audience.
6. What would be your preferred format for you to digest this information (e.g. physical book, ebook, online toolkit/website, something else...)
I would love a physical book with an online toolkit component for tracking job applications, interactive elements (ie. short surveys, quizzes), and community job postings, support forum, and/or showcasing work.

Figure 9. Screenshot of a received response from the book query Validation Testing.

The second finding was that while all of the participants in support of the book would want it as a physical book, many of them craved a supplement of some type, in addition to the publication. Some of the recommendations for a supplement were logical additions and companions to a book, such as BQV06 who suggested, “a website might be nice, for quick on the go references or sharing with others.” This type of recommendation is an influential consideration, as maintaining an online presence is essential to building relationships, continuing to market the book, and to providing access to additional publications or writings that are more accessible to a wider audience. It is definitely a great marketing tool for the author itself, providing an accessible platform for highlighting or receiving speaking engagements or further promotion of new topics. Other recommendations pushed beyond the initially perceived scope of the thesis’

proposed solution, but seemed important nonetheless. BQV02 recommended “a support forum or a place to showcase work,” while BQV05 hoped for “an online toolkit component for tracking job applications, interactive elements (e.g. short surveys, quizzes), and community job postings.” Upon receiving this feedback, there seemed to be a need for these prospective designers to have a support structure in addition to an instructional guide. Today, there are supportive environments in community environments, both online (e.g. Interaction Design Foundation) and in-person (e.g. meetups or group organizations), portfolio and work showcase platforms (e.g. Dribbble), and hiring progress feedback which some companies (e.g. IBM) provide throughout the interview process. Creating a platform from the ground-up to serve as this supportive environment would need its own set of research and validation as a concept to test its validity as the breadth and scope of this potential avenue is immeasurable at this stage, one that is an intriguing idea to investigate upon the successful publishing of the book. A foundational solution would be for the book and its supplemental website to include links to and advice for how to use these platforms that exist today. Additionally, authoring content in online publications like Smashing Magazine or UX Pin may provide an introductory forum in reference to the book.

The third finding was that the adverse responses to the book query did not seem to apply towards the proposal itself, but rather took a more ideological refute to the idea of UX design as a discipline. This was indeed an unexpected manner of feedback, steering away from more expected refutes such as one that might be averse to the idea of the book query or one that suggests that this guide would be a duplicate of other content in the landscape. The feedback instead insisted that, “there is no such thing as UX design” as

mentioned by BQV01 or that the opportunity lies in “building a consulting opportunity with different HR departments, firms, etc.” as articulated by BQV08. Referencing 2018’s UX Designer Salary Forecast (Baker, 2017) as mentioned in Chapter II, that article would argue otherwise in response to BQV01 and the notion that there is no such practice as UX design. However, this response brings up an interesting thought about ever-changing job titles which The State of UX in 2018 collaborates by saying, “From ‘webmaster’ to ‘information architect’ to ‘interaction designer’ to ‘UX designer,’ we have always been able to adapt what we do and call ourselves—while maintaining our mission of creating meaningful experiences for people” (UX Collective, 2018, para. 5). As the specific adverse feedback did not invalidate the hypothesis, and the majority of respondents gave a positive reinforcement of the book query, the first round of Validation Testing was seen as successful and set the precedence for the next round of testing.

With a promising validation of the book query, the next step was to create the book concept, composed of an outline and a first introductory chapter to the book (See Appendix J). This final round of Validation Testing was conducted in order to corroborate the hypothesis and align the context, usefulness, tone of voice, and the participants’ desire to purchase the book, to meet the expectations and needs of those transitioning into UX design.

Results of Book Concept Validation Testing

After sending the book concept and survey to a broad audience of prospective designers, current practitioners, recruiters, and educators in the UX discipline, the survey was completed by twenty-two individuals (See Appendix K). It was found that

overwhelmingly, the participant response yielded 100% positive support and demand for this book to be written and introduced into the arena of UX design publishing. As in the Research Plan, responses were automatically recorded in a spreadsheet upon each submission of the survey (See Table 3). As the purpose of this round of Validation Testing was to evaluate the overall concept of the book, as demonstrated by context, usefulness, tone of voice, and participants' desire to purchase the book, the findings from each of those dimensions are as follows.

Table 3. Screenshot of received responses (from book concept Validation Testing).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Timestamp	What is your job title:	Have you seen or read a book or other resource that is similar in nature? What resource/book:	Is the content and context of this book appealing to you? Why or why not:	Does the tone of voice appeal to you? Why or why not:	Would you find this book useful? Why or why not:
5	6/28/2018 9:29:16	Talent Acquisition Manager + UX/UI Generalist	Yes. Career Services through bootcamp schools	Tailored to the individual, rather than the masses	Yes, focuses on the person and someone trying to sell a service or "what the masses did"	Yes, as long as it was focused on "me" rather than the masses
6	6/28/2018 11:17:51	UX Design Student	I have not. I have read articles on Medium and UX Collective on a few of these topics, but no piece of literature or thorough guide.	Yes, very much so. Even from the chapter introductions so many questions began to swirl in my head and peaked my interests. Making a career transition is tough and as a UX Designer, your goal is to get inside the heart and mind of those you are working with, so to have a resource that would help me empathize and understand those I am trying to work with and impress would be invaluable.	Yes. Alex communicates the breadth of her experience giving her the right credibility, but also consistently brings it back to the heart of why she is writing - she loves the field and loves helping others. Knowing the heart behind her work makes it all the more appealing.	Certainly. As the chapter title suggests, ego can be such a barrier, but thankfully I have the perspective that I truly have so much to learn - and I'm excited about that! But knowing that I am hungry for any insights into the field. But not all insight is created equal. Knowing Alex's background gives me confidence that her guidance will be along the path and within the culture I am seeking.
				Yes, because these topics are ones I've needed more information on. There are a lot of resources		

The participants were asked specifically about the context (and its appeal) as well as the usefulness of the book upon reading the book's outline and first chapter. It was found that the participants found absolute value in the context and usefulness of the book, from a multitude of perspectives. From the viewpoint of a junior designer who is currently employed as a UX designer, but still has many jobs ahead of them in their career, BCV03 said of the appeal of the context, "Definitely. I'm new in the UX field and

still feel like I have a lot to do to my portfolio and to strengthen my connections to the UX community. So even though I'm employed as a UX designer, I'm still very interested in this especially when thinking of looking for another job in the future." Additionally, BCV12, a UX product designer responded, "Any book that can help educate young designers is useful. My company actually struggles to find UX experts who were job-ready. We need people to be reading books like this one." Finally, BCV22 a career coach who instructs prospective designers about UX job placement, reaffirmed with "Yes, I think it could be very helpful for people transitioning in the field to get specific feedback on the portfolio piece of the UX job search especially." Validation of the context and usefulness of the book was the key endorsement needed for the thesis; as continuing to write a book that was found unfitting in testing would not have success in the market.

To evaluate the tone of voice of the outline and first chapter of the book, participants were asked to provide their feedback on the writing style and whether or not it is appropriate for the book. BCV20, director of product design who would not find the book personally useful at their current point in their career but would recommend it nonetheless, said this of the tone: "From what I have seen it sounds friendly and approachable while still sounding authoritative." Additionally, BCV06, an intern in the UX field provided a reaffirming validation of the tone of voice and suggests of including humor, "Yes, it's very instructive. Adding a bit of humor could also make it more of a fun journey and not daunting (as many career transitions may be)." Finally, BCV05 (a UX design student) tied the author specifically to the tone of voice, "Yes. Alexis communicates the breadth of her experience giving her the right credibility, but also consistently brings it back to the heart of why she is writing - she loves the field and

loves helping others. Knowing the heart behind her work makes it all the more appealing.” Tone of voice is a key element to the book, and based on the feedback, it needs to be authoritative, approachable, and include a bit of humor to make the author seem relatable and allow research and expertise to shine as instructional guides.

Lastly, participants were probed on their desire to purchase the book, to validate not only if the book’s context was useful, but if individuals would invest their own earnings in this resource, which is the key to a successful book publication. BCV15, a UX designer, said, “Yes, immediately. If it is out there ready to drop, I will pay.” This participant also added that nothing was missing from the book’s initial chapter outlines, but that Chapter 6 on Designing Portfolios was incredibly critical and needs to be a huge chapter. This is valuable feedback to take forward as each chapter will need its own specific length for proper focus. BCV18, a graduate advisor, affirmed the desire to purchase the book with, “YES! I would purchase this. It has a friendly tone and is broken down into steps that make sense to me.” It is imperative to have educators and career advisors validate the concept of the book and express an interest in purchasing it as they are on the front line of instructing students and prospective designers on job placement.

Although some participants alluded to the fact that there were other resources out in the market, they referenced the vast smattering of articles and school resources as already noted in the Competitive Audit in Chapter V, such as BCV05 (a UX design student), “I have not. I have read articles on Medium and UX Collective on a few of these topics, but no piece of literature or thorough guide.” Other participants, like BCV06 (an intern), BCV16 (a freelance UX designer), and BCV21 (a marketing and strategic design consultant), responded with a resound “NO” in regards to related resources; the similarity

of aggregation with these responses is a positive reinforcement that the book is a necessary addition to the field of UX publishing.

With an overwhelming participant response providing 100% positive support and demand for this book to be written and introduced into the arena of UX design publishing, the final round of Validation Testing, focused on the outline and first introductory chapter for the book concept, was viewed as an affirmation of the demand for this book.

VII. CONCLUSION

Readers should now recognize the value of UX design and see how it is fundamentally centered around creating solutions that provide meaningful and personally relevant experiences. Additionally, understanding the breadth of the practice and how it also serves as an umbrella discipline within the industry showcases how the four pillars of UX design contribute to making the discipline an incredibly comprehensive design method. Outlining the breadth that the UX design discipline covers has revealed how adjacent disciplines (such as Visual Design, Web Design, Industrial Design, Architecture, and other adjacent specialties) may use their learned skillsets and apply those same practices and methodologies to UX design.

As referenced in Chapter IV, it is expected that new and junior designers are finding ways to learn about UX design, whether self-taught, online, via instructional courses, or through higher-level education. While this foundational education exists, the consistent obstacle identified was transitioning from non-practitioner to actually getting a job. The results from the research in Chapter V and two rounds of Validation Testing in Chapter VI corroborated the hypothesis that a tactical guide (as proposed as a book) to getting into UX is in demand. Not only is there an indicated need for this book, but the pain points identified from the student survey align one-to-one with the feedback and advice from the current practitioners and recruiters in the field of UX design. The research from Chapter V also uncovered pain points of hiring managers and the gaps prospective designers have, both of which can be identified and answered in the book.

As Chapter V uncovered the gaps in education and understanding of prospective practitioners in how to get a job, the book query and book concept validated that the

proposed solution of a book to tactically guide these individuals into job placement is needed. These research results, coupled with the results from the book query and book concept Validation Testing identified that the perspective of the book concept is unique, that there is a strongly indicated demand for it, and that there is an audience ready and willing to purchase the book once in the market.

Future Research

Upon completion of the thesis, the next step is to compose uniquely tailored book queries to the three publishing houses closely related to the User Experience Design discipline, Rosenfeld Media, A Book Apart, and O'Reilly Books, in the hopes that one of the publishing houses will approve the concept to be authored on their line of books. The associated research will be fundamental to writing the book, *Making the Switch: A Career Transition Guide into UX*, upon acceptance from one of the publishing houses. Although the overall sample size for the research included in this thesis was appropriate to validate the hypothesis, it was a relatively small sample in comparison to the scale of a global UX audience. With this in mind, considerations and additional research may be conducted to further understand the needs of a global audience, so the published book may be accessible to all individuals, not just westerners.

In the event that none of the three publishing houses accept to publish from the book query, additional research will be completed to discover other technical and design publishing houses. Considerations for self-publishing will also be made.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A: STUDENT SURVEY	63
APPENDIX B: PRACTITIONER SURVEY	65
APPENDIX C: RECRUITER SURVEY	67
APPENDIX D: SURVEY PARTICIPANT LOCATION DEMOGRAPHICS	69
APPENDIX E: PRACTITIONER INTERVIEW	70
APPENDIX F: SURVEY & INTERVIEW DATA CONSENT OPT-IN	71
APPENDIX G: BOOK QUERY FOR VALIDATION TESTING.....	72
APPENDIX H: BOOK QUERY VALIDATION TESTING SURVEY.....	74
APPENDIX I: PROPOSED BOOK CHAPTERS	75
APPENDIX J: BOOK CONCEPT FOR VALIDATION TESTING.....	76
APPENDIX K: BOOK CONCEPT VALIDATION TESTING SURVEY	80

APPENDIX A: STUDENT SURVEY

1. Select the age that best describes you:
 - a. 18 – 25
 - b. 26 – 35
 - c. 36 – 45
 - d. 46 – 55
 - e. 55 +
2. Select the gender identity that best represents you:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Other
3. What city do you go to school in:
 - a. [Free entry field]
4. What state do you go to school in:
 - a. [Free entry field]
5. If applicable, what previous education experience do you have:
 - a. Some high school
 - b. High school diploma
 - c. Some college
 - d. Bachelors
 - e. Some graduate
 - f. Masters
 - g. Doctoral
6. If applicable, what field is your education experience (above) in:
 - a. [Free entry field]
7. If currently enrolled in a User Experience (UX) program or attending a university, what will your expected degree be in (if comfortable, also share from what institution):
 - a. [Free entry field]
8. What interests you about the UX discipline (e.g. why have you chosen this career path):
 - a. [Free entry field]
9. Have you learned any valuable lessons about the UX discipline? If so, what have you learned thus far:
 - a. [Free entry field]

10. What do you still need to know about UX to feel confident in getting a job in the discipline:
 - a. [Free entry field]
11. What is missing from your current studies that would help you learn more about UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
12. What things confuse you about the UX discipline:
 - a. [Free entry field]
13. What are the most useful or valuable lessons you have learned about getting a job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
14. If you have graduated from a UX program, what do you wish you had learned:
 - a. [Free entry field]
15. If applicable, what have been your biggest struggle(s) in finding a job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
16. What would be valuable for you to know/have in securing a job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
17. If you have successfully found a job in UX, what advice would you give to someone else:
 - a. [Free entry field]
18. What question(s) might have been missed here? What else would you like to say:
 - a. [Free entry field]

APPENDIX B: PRACTITIONER SURVEY

1. What city do you reside in:
 - a. [Free entry field]
2. What state do you reside in:
[Free entry field]
3. What is your job title:
 - a. [Free entry field]
4. What company do you work at:
 - a. [Free entry field]
5. If applicable, what previous education experience do you have:
 - a. Some high school
 - b. High school diploma
 - c. Some college
 - d. Bachelors
 - e. Some graduate
 - f. Masters
 - g. Doctoral
6. If applicable, what field is your education experience (above) in:
 - a. [Free entry field]
7. If you have education experience in a UX program or a university, what was your degree in (if comfortable, also share from what institution):
 - a. [Free entry field]
8. Describe in as much detail as you feel comfortable, your career path and how you got to where you are today
 - a. [Free entry field]
9. What interested you about the UX discipline (e.g. why have you chosen this career path):
 - a. [Free entry field]
10. What are the most useful or valuable lessons you have learned about the UX discipline:
 - a. [Free entry field]
11. What are the most useful or valuable lessons you have learned about getting a job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]

12. What were your biggest struggle(s) in securing a job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
13. What are the tasks/skills you use on a daily basis in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
14. How has UX evolved since you started in the discipline:
 - a. [Free entry field]
15. Where do you see the UX discipline going in the future:
 - a. [Free entry field]
16. What are the skills junior designers are lacking coming out of a trade school or 4-year institutions?
 - a. [Free entry field]
17. What are the most important things junior UX designers need to showcase to get a job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
18. When hiring new UX practitioners, what do you look for in applicants:
 - a. [Free entry field]
19. What tips/tricks might you recommend for UX applicants (e.g. in portfolio, resume, cover letter, etc):
 - a. [Free entry field]
20. What would draw you to hire someone on the spot:
 - a. [Free entry field]
21. What expectations should junior designers coming into UX have:
 - a. [Free entry field]
22. What advice would you give to someone looking for a career/job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
23. Is mentorship important (and why)? What is the best way junior designers can approach senior designers for mentorship:
 - a. [Free entry field]
24. What question(s) might have been missed here? What else would you like to say:
 - a. [Free entry field]

APPENDIX C: RECRUITER SURVEY

1. What city do you reside in:
 - a. [Free entry field]
2. What state do you reside in:
[Free entry field]
3. What is your job title:
 - a. [Free entry field]
4. What company do you work at:
 - a. [Free entry field]
5. What cities, events, resources, or institutions do you recruit from when filling junior UX practitioner roles:
 - a. [Free entry field]
6. What are the most useful or valuable lessons you have learned about recruiting for the UX discipline:
 - a. [Free entry field]
7. What motivates you to reach out to a potential UX candidate:
 - a. [Free entry field]
8. What are your thoughts on UX candidates submitting an application even if there's not an open position?
 - a. [Free entry field]
9. What are the skills junior designers are lacking coming out of a trade school or 4-year institutions?
 - a. [Free entry field]
10. What are the most important things junior UX designers need to showcase to get a job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
11. When hiring new UX practitioners, what do you look for in applicants:
 - a. [Free entry field]
12. What were your biggest struggle(s) in finding applicants for the UX discipline:
 - a. [Free entry field]
13. What tips/tricks might you recommend for UX applicants (e.g. in portfolio, resume, cover letter, etc):

- a. [Free entry field]
- 14. What would draw you to hire someone on the spot:
 - a. [Free entry field]
- 15. What expectations should junior designers coming into UX have:
 - a. [Free entry field]
- 16. What advice would you give to a junior designer looking for a career/job in UX:
 - a. [Free entry field]
- 17. What question(s) might have been missed here? Is there anything else you'd like to contribute that I might not have asked:
 - a. [Free entry field]

APPENDIX D: SURVEY PARTICIPANT LOCATION DEMOGRAPHICS



Austin, Texas: 22
 San Antonio, Texas: 2
 San Marcos, Texas: 6
 Dallas, Texas: 1
 Cedar Park, Texas: 1
 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 1
 San Francisco, California: 4
 Palo Alto, California: 1
 Seattle, Washington: 2
 Minneapolis, Minnesota: 1
 Memphis, Tennessee: 1
 Tempe, Arizona: 1
 New York, New York: 2
 Washington, D.C.: 2
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 1
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: 1

Toronto, Canada: 1
 Vancouver, Canada: 1

Rio De Janeiro, Brazil: 1
 Belo Horizonte, Brazil: 1
 São Paulo, Brazil: 1

Brighton, England: 1
 Bristol, England: 1
 Poole, England: 1
 London, England: 1

Dublin, Ireland: 1

Barcelona, Spain: 1

Oslo, Norway: 1
 Gjøvik, Norway: 1

Berlin, Germany: 1

Paris, France: 1

Auckland, New Zealand: 1

N/A: 1

Total Respondents: 66

APPENDIX E: PRACTITIONER INTERVIEW

1. Tell me about yourself. What is your current role/profession and where do you work?
2. How long have you been in User Experience Design (UX)?
3. How did you get into UX?
4. [if applicable] How and why did you make the transition into UX?
5. What are the key qualifications and skills you look for when hiring a UX designer?
6. What about new/junior designers?
7. What are the primary mistakes/gaps you see in UX interviewees?
8. What would drive you to hire someone on the spot?
9. What advice do you have for prospective UX designers fresh out of school/certification programs?

APPENDIX F: SURVEY & INTERVIEW DATA CONSENT OPT-IN

Data Consent Opt-In (optional)

This section is optional and does not need to be completed to submit the form. If you do not fill out this section, all of your responses above will be kept anonymous. If you would be comfortable having your responses published and identifiable to you, personally, please fill out this section. By completing this section, Alexis Du Mond Puchek may be able to get in touch with you for any clarifying follow-up questions and to obtain your consent prior to any non-anonymous publishing.

1. Your Name
 - a. [Free entry field]
2. Your Email Address (for follow-up consent or a photo request)
 - a. [Free entry field]
3. Website (optional)
 - a. [Free entry field]
4. Social Media (optional)
 - a. [Twitter free entry field]
 - b. [Instagram free entry field]
 - c. [LinkedIn free entry field]

APPENDIX G: BOOK QUERY FOR VALIDATION TESTING

Author: Alexis Du Mond Puchek

Proposed or working title: Making the Switch: A Career Transition Guide Into UX

Elevator pitch (two or three sentences)

As interest in user-centered design continues to grow and become a mandate in many corporations, organizations, and institutions of higher learning, individuals have begun to make the switch from other design disciplines (e.g., Visual Design, Web Design, Industrial Design, Architecture) to the field of User Experience design. This book is not an instructional guide in learning UX methodologies, but rather a clear and concise pathway to transition into and landing a job in the UX discipline. Founded in research and showcasing anecdotal perspectives of prospective designers, current practitioners, and hiring recruiters, it will help designers make more informed, thoughtful, and deliberate choices when moving into the role of User Experience designer.

Why do you think this book's topic is important?

New and junior designers are finding ways to learn about User Experience design, whether self-taught, online, in instructional courses, or through higher-level education. A smattering of resources already exists to teach them the design methodology; where they truly struggle is moving from non-practitioner with a broad design skillset to actually getting a job. I have consistently found that new and junior designer portfolios look unpolished, familiar, and do not present the content in the compelling manner that recruiters and hiring managers are looking for. These prospective designers struggle to emphasize User-Centered Design methodology or communicate their rationale, point of view, or design process.

What would be the book's three main selling points?

New or prospective User Experience designers, either still in school or looking to make a career change from their current discipline will benefit by receiving tactical advice to get them into a job.

Educators and advocates for User Experience design will benefit from this helpful guide – allowing them to tailor their curriculum based on the skills and needs recruiters and hiring managers are seeking.

Mentors and current practitioners of User Experience design can benefit, as they build empathy for the gaps in education and struggles junior designers face when job hunting.

How might you involve different audiences and experts in the development of this book?

My Master's thesis was written specifically to outline the need for this book. I conducted research with new/junior designers who want to have a User Experience career (or make the switch to UX) that could use guidance in making that transition, existing practitioners to leverage their expertise, and recruiters who can provide their insight on what they look

for in candidates. I will be leveraging that research, and expanding upon it, to flesh out the content in my book and provide anecdotal evidence.

APPENDIX H: BOOK QUERY VALIDATION TESTING SURVEY

1. Have you seen or read a book or other resource that is similar in nature? What resource/book:
 - a. [Free entry field]
2. Is the content and context of this book appealing to you? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
3. Would you find this book useful? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
4. Would you purchase this book? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
5. What is missing from this book? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
6. What would be your preferred format for you to digest this information (e.g. physical book, ebook, online toolkit/website, something else...):
 - a. [Free entry field]

APPENDIX I: PROPOSED BOOK CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Making Connections

Chapter 3: Understanding Employers

Chapter 4: Articulating Expertise

Chapter 5: Iterating Continuously

Chapter 6: Designing Portfolios

Chapter 7: Dropping Ego

Chapter 8: Selling Yourself

APPENDIX J: BOOK CONCEPT FOR VALIDATION TESTING

Introduction

I get out of bed in the morning to go to work – and we all do – but I also do so because I love my job. I’ve spent the last 14 years of my career in User Experience design, helping people, and doing so by solving problems (whatever they may be). Over my career, I’ve solved problems from the perspective of a user, as the business, as an evaluator, as the voice of the user, as a boss, as an outsider, and as a coach. What I’ve learned, is that regardless of my perspective, I want to help people – end-users and design practitioners alike. I’ve become a craft-focused life coach, and it’s my passion. My fuel.

Over the years as an advisory board member, a guest lecturer, a teacher, and a mentor, I’ve heard the same stories and struggles from junior designers trying to make a transition into UX: how do I get a job; what do I need to do; what are companies looking for; why is it so hard...? I have found that I consistently provide the same feedback to each question, almost verbatim, about the steps these individuals need to take to showcase themselves in their work and how to demonstrate their prowess in the User Experience design discipline in order to land a job.

I’m here to help: by instilling my knowledge in you so you can best set yourself up for success as you embark on your search. While job markets are unique regionally, nationally, and globally, chances are high that the User Experience design market in your area may be saturated with competition. For me, this is a great thing, because I love this discipline (I hire for it!) and I want to continue to see it grow. For you, this might feel like a daunting hurdle to overcome – setting your own path for standing out amongst everyone else.

User Experience design is a challenging—but exciting—field, one that has blurred lines between Visual Design, Web Design, Industrial Design, Architecture, and other auxiliary disciplines. The good news is that if you’re an individual with a background in one of these disciplines, you already have many of the skills needed to transition into a UX career. This book will show you how to reframe and translate your previous expertise and hone your message for the hiring recruiters and managers in User Experience design. Depending on which jobs you apply for, companies tend to have their own unique descriptions and expectations of what a User Experience designer is to accomplish in their role. Additionally, each of you will have your own desired focus within the UX discipline (be it research, information architecture, or whatever else). I’m not here to tell you which focus area or type of company is the best one to take – it’s up to you to know your market and find the jobs that align with your interests – but I will provide guidance around typical expectations in certain company types, and I am here to help you tailor your portfolios for those specific companies and job roles.

This book is a guide to help you understand your employer as an audience, craft your message, articulate your perspective, translate your skills, and align your expectations.

Overall, this book should be a relatively quick read so you can put this new knowledge to work and focus your time and energy on revamping your portfolio, work, and approach to continue on your job hunt.

Who am I to help you?

I am a designer, a mentor, an advocate, and a speaker. Having started my career in Front-End Web Development, I have personally gone through the transition from one discipline to that of User Experience design. I know first-hand what it is like to become enthralled with UX and wanting to immerse myself in this discipline, focusing on human-centered design (a framework that considers human perspectives throughout the design process). I have 14 years of experience from individual contributor to director, working in-house with Fortune 500 companies as well as in advertising and design consulting firms. Outside of my day-to-day job, I dedicate my time helping others gain their footing in User Experience design by lecturing, guest speaking, sitting on advisory boards at colleges and high schools, and working on diversity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives.

The last half of my career has been spent mentoring and teaching others, lifting them up to curate their own process and to become better communicators and practitioners. I'll never give up mentoring junior designers, but I do want to spend that time together focusing on what really matters – exemplary, usable, accessible, and intentional design. I wrote this book to give you, all of you, the same advice I've been giving my mentees in one fell swoop.

I wrote my thesis in graduate school to uncover the needs of prospective User Experience designers and marry those with the recommendations and needs of current practitioners, hiring managers, and recruiters in User Experience design fields. I've done the research for you, I have empathy for your struggles, and I have answers for you – from my expertise, and other practitioners and hiring managers like me.

As I mentioned above, I absolutely love this discipline, and want continued generations of passionate practitioners creating solutions that solve problems. I want you all to get a job in User Experience design so you can change the world through human-centered solutions. This book is the guide to help you get that job.

Why this book is for you.

If you're looking to switch disciplines to that of UX or someone who's currently in the field but can't seem to land that job –this is your book. This is not an educational book that teaches the fundamentals of User Experience design; you should know those already. It is, however, a guide to set you up for success in order to land that first, second, or third job in the User Experience Design discipline. In this book, you will take away the skills to set yourself up for success in order to sell yourself and properly articulate your UX prowess to potential employers; effectively getting you a job.

What you'll learn.

Chapter 1: Introduction, will be the premiere chapter to the book, articulating what the book is about, what audience it is tailored to serve, and what the expected outcomes from reading the book may be. This chapter will clearly identify that this is not a book designed to teach someone the fundamentals of User Experience design, but provide tactical guidance for an individual to secure a job.

Chapter 2: Making Connections, centers on the advice from practitioners and recruiters for prospective designers to actively attend industry events, meet ups, open houses, portfolio critiques, and other opportunities where they can get to know other designers and begin making inroads with practitioners and recruiters who may also be attending these events. As one UX professional puts it, “it’s who you know,” and while knowing the right people might not guarantee an individual a job, it might surface an opportunity or provide a starting point to a conversation that might not have previously occurred.

Chapter 3: Understanding Employers, will address the need for prospective designers to be introspective and identify what kind of job they are looking for, while simultaneously researching companies that they are interested in applying for to understand that employer’s needs and requirements. A junior designer reinforces this need with, “for me, I’m looking for positions that allow for a lot of exploratory conceiving, a lot of strategy work and insight-finding. (As opposed to doing user flows and wireframes all the time.) Because UX can mean so many different things, I’m always trying to figure out what companies and positions are going to offer the particular kind of UX that excites me.” Additionally, this chapter will address the pain points surfaced by practitioners and recruiters who consistently see User Experience designers applying for a position that is not suited for their area of expertise, or who cannot articulate the differences between UX and UI design.

Chapter 4: Articulating Expertise, will provide background on what different types of expertise might look like, and how to articulate the strengths that individuals may have. While there is still confusion in some prospective designers surrounding what design capabilities and job requisitions are requesting as a junior designer vocalizes, “I’m still confused about the line between UX and UI. I realize the level of involvement and cross-over likely varies depending on what company you work for and how that design team runs things, but it makes it pretty confusing in job interviews to know exactly what the job will entail,” there will be practical advice that is surfaced to help alleviate these confusions.

Chapter 5: Iterating Continuously, will demonstrate the need for prospective designers to not be satisfied with their initial draft or instantiation of their project work. While project work tells the story of how prospective designers worked with other team members or how they ultimately came up with the design, it does not need to be the exact work that was created in the moment during that project. One practitioner recommends, “Do everything you can to stand out, but do it in a classy way. Cover letters are fine, but be a freaking designer. Make it nice. Make it personal. If your portfolio doesn't exactly line up

with a job you're applying for, make them a custom one and make sure they know that you made it for them because you want to make sure they get the right impression of you.” Practitioners and hiring managers care less about the project itself and more about the work, thinking, and process behind it. This chapter will demonstrate that it is accepted to have project and portfolio work that is redone or imagined – as long as it tells the story they are looking for.

Chapter 6: Designing Portfolios, will uncover why portfolios might be the singular most important piece of content for landing a job, while simultaneously outlining that portfolios may also be the most difficult challenge a designer may face. Prospective designers consistently articulated in the research that they struggled with crafting a portfolio “my biggest struggle is showing the right type of portfolio” mentions a junior designer, while current practitioners and recruiters shared their insights, needs, and expectations for portfolios “...Must be able to tell a story about yourself with your portfolio. UX is about storytelling and communicating. Definitely have your own personal brand together” as noted by a practitioner. This chapter will not only articulate the requirements and distinguishing elements of a UX Design portfolio in order to create one for the first time, but will also demonstrate how designers from adjacent disciplines can adjust their existing portfolio for success.

Chapter 7: Dropping Ego, will set the expectations for prospective designers, providing direct yet tactful messaging that outlines what job types and levels of seniority in a company they should consider based on experience and foundational skills. One recruiter has expressed that, “there’s a lot of ego and not a long of strong junior UXers to back it up,” which emphasizes the need to address these misaligned perceptions and expectations of prospective User Experience designers and how they need to present and properly level themselves.

Chapter 8: Selling Yourself, will be the final chapter to the book, outlining the ways that prospective designers need to showcase and differentiate themselves from the other individuals who are applying for the same position. A practitioner posits, “The only people I paid attention to were ones who broke out of that and tried to solve something on their own or teamed up with an actual organization to solve their problem,” which resonates with the need for prospective designers to find ways to differentiate themselves. This chapter will focus on means for differentiating, and how to articulate those unique qualities or experiences.

Let’s do this.

I hope you’re eager to read this book, I know I have been to write it. I lived the experiences you’re going through and have spent my career honing my expertise and finding the next job for me. I’ve helped people through this personally, and wanted to extend my own expertise and that of those I’ve done research with to get the next passionate generations of User Experience designers into the roles that will help them solve the world’s problems. Be open, be coachable, be passionate – are you ready to get started?

APPENDIX K: BOOK CONCEPT VALIDATION TESTING SURVEY

1. What is your job title:
 - a. [Free entry field]
2. Have you seen or read a book or other resource that is similar in nature? What resource/book:
 - a. [Free entry field]
3. Is the content and context of this book appealing to you? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
4. Does the tone of voice of the *Introduction* appeal to you? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
5. Would you find this book useful? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
6. Would you purchase this book? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
7. What is missing from this book? Why or why not:
 - a. [Free entry field]
8. What would be your preferred format for you to digest this information (e.g. physical book, ebook, online toolkit/website, something else...):
 - a. [Free entry field]

Data Consent Opt-In (optional)

This section is optional and does not need to be completed to submit the form. By completing this section, Alexis Du Mond Puchek may be able to get in touch with you for any clarifying follow-up questions. None of your responses will be published.

1. Your Name
 - a. [Free entry field]
2. Your Email Address (for follow-up consent or a photo request)
 - a. [Free entry field]
3. If the book gets published, would you like to be contacted about it:
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, C., Ishikawa, S., Silverstein, M., Jacobson, M., Fiksdahl-King, I., & Angel, S. (1977). *A Pattern Language: Towns · Buildings · Construction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Babich, Nick. (12 Nov. 2017). *The Many Benefits of Learning UX Design*. Retrieved from <https://theblog.adobe.com/many-benefits-learning-ux-design/>

Baker, Justin. (26 Nov. 2017). *2018's UX Designer Salary Forecast*. Retrieved from <https://medium.muz.li/2018s-ux-designer-salary-forecast-32ccc1dfcd5f>

Beaird, Jason. (2007). *The Principles of Beautiful Web Design*. VIC Australia: Sitepoint Pty. Ltd.

Beyer, H. & Holtzblatt, K. (1998). *Contextual Design: Defining Customer-Centered Systems*. San Francisco, California: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, Inc.

Boag, Paul. (2017). *User Experience Revolution*. Freiburg, Germany: Smashing Media AG.

Brown, Tim. (2009). *Change by Design*. Broadway, New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Center Centre. (n.d.). *About Us*. Retrieved from <http://centercentre.com/about>

Carnegie Mellon. (n.d.). *HCI Undergraduate Programs*. Retrieved from <https://www.hcii.cmu.edu/academics/hci-undergraduate>

Ching, Francis. (2015). *Architecture: Form, Space, & Order*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Cooper, Alan. (2004). *The Inmates Are Running the Asylum: Why High-Tech Products Drive Us Crazy and How to Restore the Sanity*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Sams Publishing.

Cooper, A., Reimann, R., & Cronin, D. (2007). *About Face 3: The Essentials of Interaction Design*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Wiley Publishing Inc.

Coursera. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from <https://about.coursera.org/>

Crunchbase. (n.d.). *General Assembly*. Retrieved from <https://www.crunchbase.com/organization/general-assembly#section-funding-rounds>

Fabricant, Robert. (29 Dec. 2014). *The Rapidly Disappearing Business of Design*. Retrieved from <https://www.wired.com/2014/12/disappearing-business-of-design/>

Faller, Patrick. (3 Feb. 2017). *Hiring Trends in UX Design: The 6 Things You Need to Know About Tech's Fastest Growing Field*. Retrieved from <https://blogs.adobe.com/creativecloud/hiring-trends-in-ux-design-the-6-things-you-need-to-know-about-techs-fastest-growing-field/>

Garrett, Jesse. (2011). *The Elements of User Experience*. Berkeley, California: New Riders.

General Assembly. (n.d.). *User Experience Design Immersive*. Retrieved from <https://generalassemb.ly/education/user-experience-design-immersive>

Hanington, B., & Martin, B. (2012). *Universal Methods of Design: 100 Ways to Research Complex Problems, Develop Innovative Ideas, and Design Effective Solutions*. Beverly, Massachusetts: Rockport Publishers.

Howard, Caroline. (26 Apr. 2018). *How General Assembly's \$412.5 Million Deal Signals A Classroom-To-Career Revolution*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinehoward/2018/04/26/how-general-assemblies-412-5-million-deal-signals-a-classroom-to-career-revolution>

Humble, Jeff. (n.d.). *How To Land Your First Job in UX Design: 11 Common Questions Answered*. Retrieved from <https://www.uxpin.com/studio/blog/land-first-job-ux-design/>

Interaction Design Foundation. (n.d.). *Get Your First Job as a UX or Interaction Designer*. Retrieved from <https://www.interaction-design.org/courses/get-your-first-job-as-a-ux-or-interaction-designer>

Interaction Design Foundation. (n.d.). *User Experience (UX) Design*. Retrieved from <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/ux-design>

Kravis, G., & Sparke, P. (2018). *Industrial Design in the Modern Age*. New York, New York: Rizzoli Electra.

Krug, Steve. (2006). *Don't Make Me Think! A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*. Berkeley, California: New Riders

Kumar, Vijay. (2013). *101 Design Methods*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Kuniavsky, Mike. (2003). *Observing the User Experience: A Practitioner's Guide to User Research*. San Francisco, California: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.

Lidwell, W., Holden, K., & Butler, J. (2003) *Universal Principles of Design: 125 Ways to Enhance Usability, Influence Perception, Increase Appeal, Make Better Design Decisions, and Teach through Design*. Beverly, Massachusetts: Rockport Publishers.

- Maccarone, D., & Doody, S. (16 May 2016). *The UX of Learning UX is Broken*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@danmaccarone/the-ux-of-learning-ux-is-broken-f972b27d3273>
- McIntyre, Carolyn. (25 Sep. 2015). *Is Getting a Verified Certificate on Coursera Worth It*. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/getting-verified-certificate-coursera-worth-carolyn-mcintyre/>
- McKnight, Jennifer. (12 Oct. 2004). *Educating the hybrid designer*. Retrieved from <https://www.aiga.org/educating-the-hybrid-designer>
- Moggridge, Bill. (2007). *Designing Interactions*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Morville, M., & Rosenfeld, L. (2006). *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*. Sebastopol, California: O'Reilly Media.
- Norman, Donald. (1988). *The Design of Everyday Things*. New York, New York: Basic Books.
- Phyo, Ani. (2003). *Return on Design: Smarter Web Design That Works*. Indianapolis, Indiana: New Riders.
- Quora. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from <https://www.quora.com/about>
- Roelofs, Jill. (19 Jul. 2017). *The Difference Between User Experience (UX) And Customer Experience (CX)*. Retrieved from <https://home.kpmg.com/nl/en/home/social/2017/07/the-difference-between-user-experience-ux-and-customer-experience-cx.html>
- Saffer, Dan. (2008). *The Disciplines Of User Experience Design*. Retrieved from <https://visual.ly/community/infographic/computers/disciplines-user-experience-design>.
- Saffer, Dan. (2010). *Designing for Interaction: Creating Innovative Applications and Devices*. Berkeley, California: New Riders.
- Sea, Nida. (13 Mar. 2018). *Which Online Certificate Courses Are Credible For Your Career*. Retrieved from <https://www.risesmart.com/blog/which-online-certificate-courses-are-credible-your-career>
- Siang, Teo. (n.d.). *How to Change Your Career from Graphic Design to UX Design*. Retrieved from <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/how-to-change-your-career-from-graphic-design-to-ux-design>
- Slatin, J., & Rush, S. (2003). *Maximum Accessibility*. Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson Education, Inc.

UT Austin. (n.d.). The *UX/UI Book Camp at UT Austin*. Retrieved from <https://techbootcamps.extendedcampus.utexas.edu/ux-ui/>

UX Beginner. (n.d.). *How to Get a UX Job with no Professional UX Experience*. Retrieved from <https://www.uxbeginner.com/how-to-get-a-ux-job-with-no-professional-ux-experience/>

UX Collective. (n.d.) *The State of UX in 2018*. Retrieved from <https://trends.uxdesign.cc/>

UX Design: Humanizing Interaction. (n.d.). *UX Design Defined*. Retrieved from <http://uxdesign.com/ux-defined>

Vinh, Khoi. (2011). *Ordering Disorder: Grid Principles for Web Design*. Berkeley, California: New Riders.

vxdlab (n.d.). *VXD Lab: Visual Experience Design Lab*. Retrieved from <https://www.vxdlab.com/>

Xiao, Lulu. (14 Mar. 2016). *Why UX Teams Need Diversity*. Retrieved from <https://blinkux.com/blog/ux-needs-diversity/>