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General Idea

Our project idea comes from a convergence of the concepts of social networking and reading. Similarly to the way Apple has provided a means to communicate with friends and others through its "Ping" social music space, our concept allows people who enjoy reading (both digitally as well as physical reading paper material) to socialize online, sharing literary experiences with one another. Additionally, this online application intends to allow users to manage their person libraries, keeping track of titles they own, have read, or would like to read in the future. Finally, the application will allow users to keep personal or public "notes" on their reading material, and suggest titles to other users.

Findings from Research Methods

Although it may seem somewhat intuitive, after the completion of both of our research methods (interviewing individuals and sending out a survey), we were surprised at the profound differences in the results we achieved using such seemingly similar methods. Interviewing individuals gave us a much more subjective take on how our concept would be received. It was easy to "read" the participants and understand what they were trying to convey even if they didn't necessarily say it outright. On the other hand, our survey allowed us to poll a much larger sampling of users and achieve much more objective view on our idea. We came out of it with a spreadsheet of data that statistically supported the decisions we plan to implement when designing the application. All in all though, each research method really gave us a distinct insight into the minds of our users that any other method likely couldn't provide.

Our first interviews showed that most people still preferred reading physical books as opposed to digital. This was somewhat surprising because of the general popularity of newer technology devices. Most people were open to trying digital books and thought they were more convenient than physical books. Some factors that may have affected this result are their general lifestyle and preferred reading locations.

Useful Lessons Learned

Interview Method - narrowing down the total amount of questions asked and selecting a prime set of questions. The responses were very interesting, many similar responses to what social networks were used, Facebook mostly, and that the "weight" held with these social networks is of moderate importance. The most enjoy the connection with friends that is provided by these services.

Survey – Unlike other research methods such as contextual inquiry, think-aloud usability tests and focus groups, quantitative techniques such as surveys can outline the attributes of the product's potential users and separate them from the general population. However, compared with interviews, results may be inconclusive since it depends on whether the respondents accurately report their responses.