

Site Design

SWE 632
Fall 2023



Administrivia

- HW4 due next week
- Midterm grades out shortly

Class Overview

1. Overview of Second Half of the Course: Design Principles
2. Overview of Site Design Principles: A User Centered Approach
3. Navigation: Guiding the User
4. Metaphors & Idioms: Modeling What we Know
5. Ordering User Actions: Defining Task Flows
6. *7 Minute Break*
7. In-Class Activity: Designing a Course Registration System
8. 2 Tech Talks

Overview of Second-Half of Course

Iterative Model of User-Centered Design

Observation

(Re)Define the Problem
Understand User Needs

Test

Evaluate what
you have built



Idea Generation

Brainstorm
what to build

Prototype

Build

Theories and Principles

- Offer ways to better explore design space
- Design principles offer guidance on which design choices are more effective in a particular context
 - e.g., User control and freedom
- Sometimes informed by underlying theories of human psychology

Plan for Second Half of Course

- Examine principles, theories, design goals for different types of interaction design
- Site design (today)
- Interaction techniques
- Preventing errors
- Visual design
- Information visualization
- Community design


Overview of Site Design Principles

Today

- How do you help users understand if it is possible to do what they'd like to do?
- How do you help users find what they're looking for?
- How do you balance tradeoffs between competing objectives in site design?

What can you do with this app?

The screenshot shows the Google Cloud Platform console interface for the 'Task queues' page. The browser address bar indicates the URL: <https://console.cloud.google.com/appengine/taskqueues?project=crowd-coding-dev&serviceId=default&versionId=1&tab=PUSH>. The page title is 'Task queues' with a 'REFRESH' button. The left sidebar contains navigation options: App Engine, Dashboard, Services, Versions, Instances, Task queues (selected), Security scans, Firewall rules, Quotas, Blobstore, Memcache, Search, and Settings. The main content area shows tabs for 'Push Queues', 'Pull Queues', and 'Cron Jobs'. A 'Show quotas' link is visible in the top right. The table below lists the task queues:

Queue Name	Tasks In Queue	Completed In Last Min.	Oldest Task ETA ?	Maximum Rate ?	Enforced Rate ?	Bucket Size ?	Maximum Concurrent
default	0	0		1/s		1	
 subscription-queue	0	0		0/s		5	

Analogy: Buying a Chainsaw

- You walk in to a hardware store to buy a chainsaw. What do you do?

Challenges in Site Design

- Sometimes large space for users to navigate to find information.
- No spatial sense of scale. 50 pages? 500 pages? 50,000 pages?
- No sense of direction. Which way did I just go?
- No sense of location. No spatial anchoring of where I am now and how that relates to where I could go.
- No place to check if something is *not* present or supported.

Exercise: How Should a Shopping App be Organized?

Exercise: How Should a Shopping App be Organized?

- Items organized into categories
- Shopping cart for collecting items you want to buy
- Secure way to enter payment information
- An easy way to search for items

Site Design

- Some key design dimensions
 - Organization of content into pages / screens
 - Organization of content within pages / screens
 - Ways in which users navigate between pages / screens
- Key design goals
 - Reduce the time / cost for users to reach content
 - Reduce the irrelevant information users must read

Planning

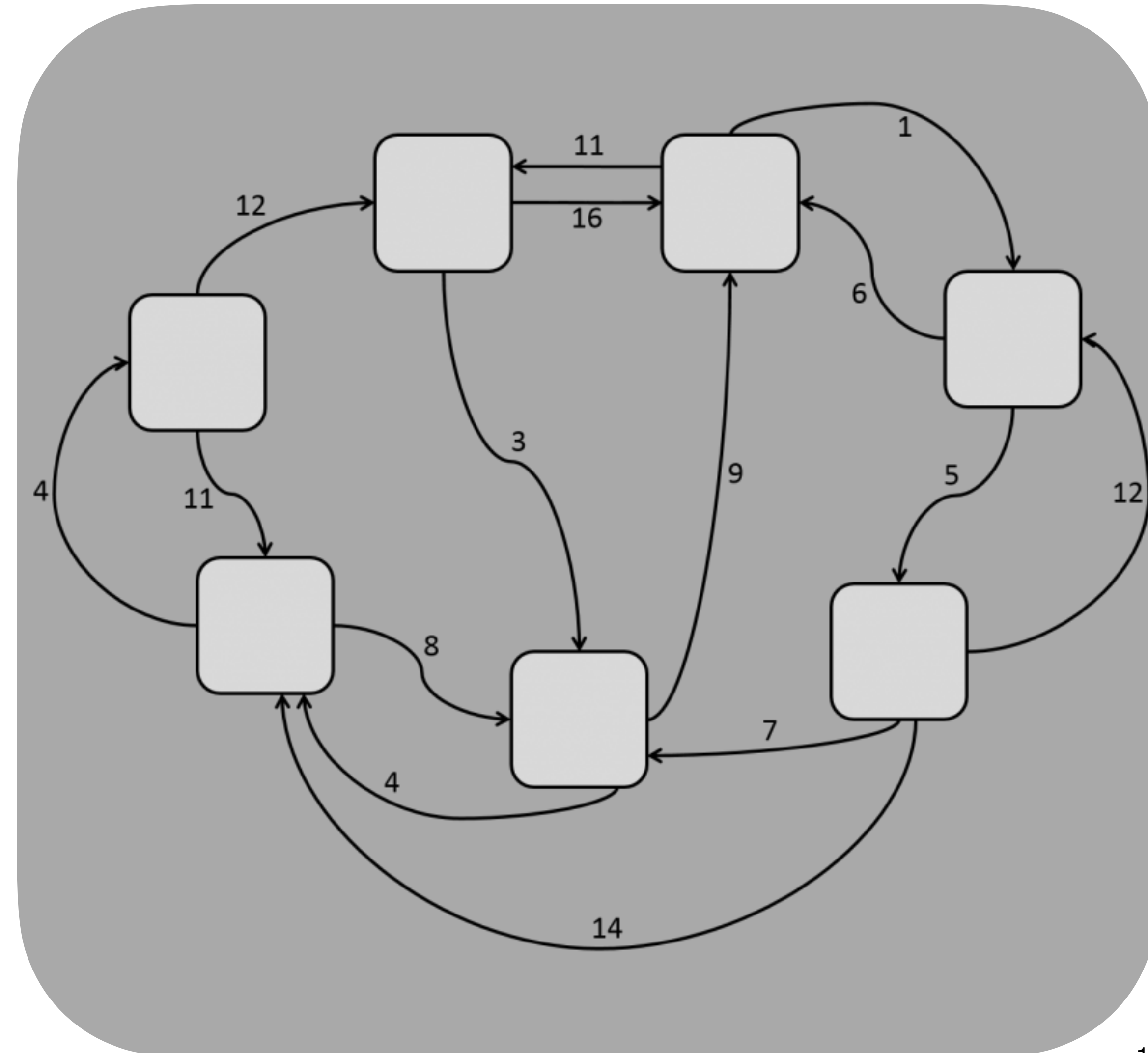
- Help users determine what they **can** do
 - Is this the right site for my goals? Is this the right page where I should spend my time?
- Support users in how they **determine** what to do
 - If this is the right place, how do I reach goal?

Information Foraging

- Mathematical model describing navigation
- Analogy: animals foraging for food
 - Can forage in different patches (locations)
 - Goal is to maximize chances of finding **prey** while minimizing time spent in hunt
- Information foraging: navigating through an information space (patches) in order to maximize chances of finding prey (information) in minimal time

Information environment

- Information environment represented as topology
 - Information patches connected by traversable links
- Examples
 - Web pages, connected by links
 - Menu options & dialogs connected by commands
 - Locations on map, connected by search, scroll, move interactions with map

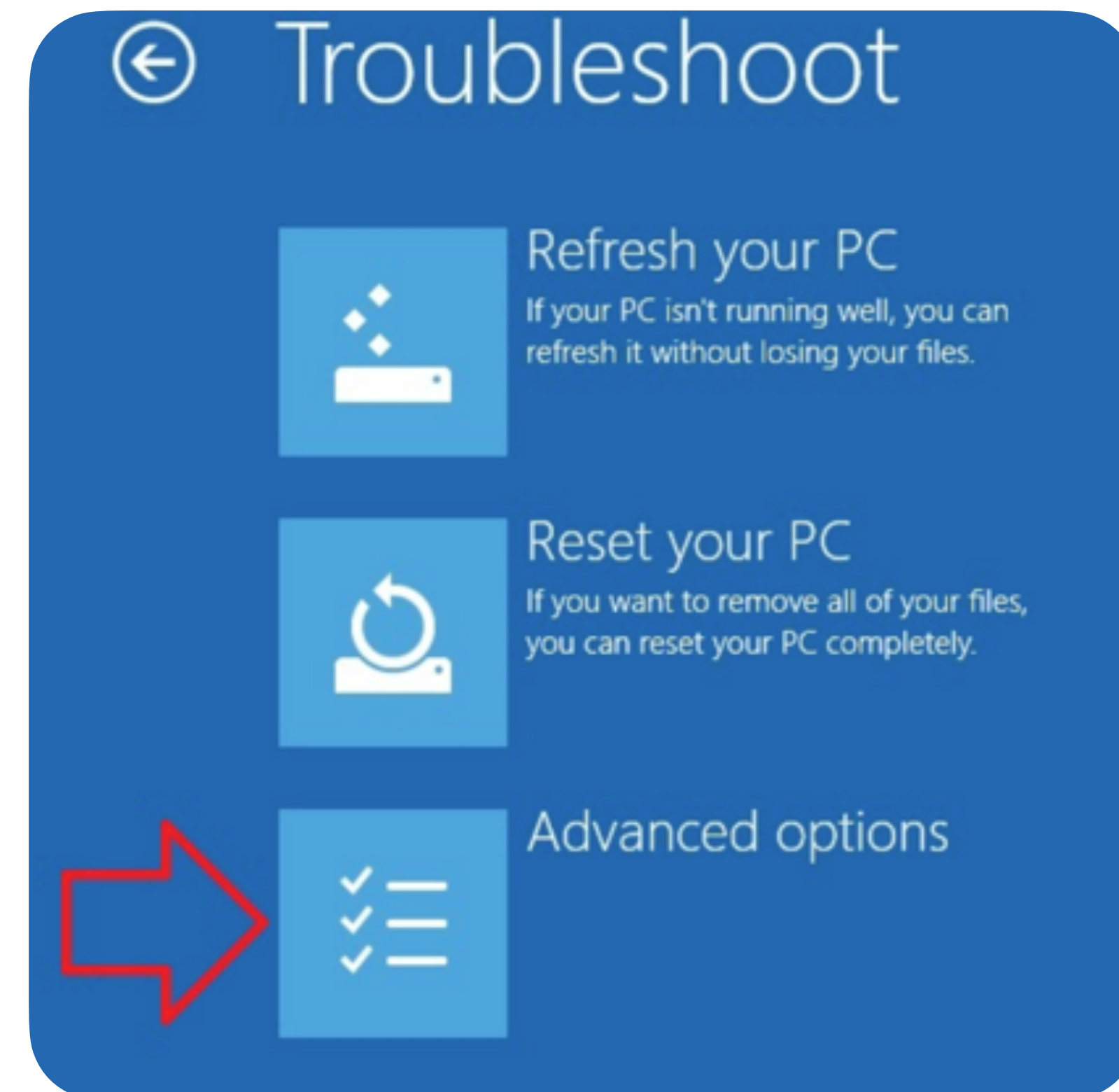


Traversing Links

- Patch - a space in the environment where a user is located (e.g., a page, a dialog)
- Links - connection between patch offered by the information environment
- Cues - information features associated with outgoing links from patch
 - E.g., text label on a hyperlink
- User must choose which, of all possible links to traverse, has best chance of reaching prey

Scent

- User interprets cues on links by likelihood they will reach prey
 - e.g., do I think that the “Advanced options” page is likely to have the option I’m looking for?



Simplified mathematical model

- Users make choices to maximize possibility of reaching prey per cost of interaction
- Predators (idealized) choice = $\max [V / C]$
 - V - value of information gain, C - cost of interaction
- Don't usually know ground truth, have to estimate
- Predator's desired choice = $\max [E[V] / E[C]]$

Design Implications of Information Foraging Theory

- Organize information into functionally *related* groups
 - If information required is already on same page, no need to go elsewhere
- Design effective *cues*, helping users predict what will be found by traversing links
 - Better cues --> better ability to navigate to correct pages
- Match *expectations* of user's mental model
 - Cues are interpreted relative to mental model
- Provide *search*
 - In large spaces, faster to search than traverse links

Search Increases Competition

- Users often enter sites through search engines, looking for site that will help accomplish goals
- Users form first impressions of sites rapidly
- Users will try another site if they perceive the value of continuing to forage in patch is low

Navigation

Common Navigation Usability Problems

- User can't find desired location
- User loses track of location
- User can't remember information from another location

Hierarchy

- Information in sites is hierarchical
 - Different pages at different levels of hierarchy
 - May be different navigation elements that lead into different subtrees
- Important to signal
 - what hierarchies are present
 - which navigation elements are part of the same hierarchy
 - where the user currently is on each hierarchy

Example: Wikipedia

The image shows a screenshot of the English Wikipedia homepage. At the top left is the Wikipedia logo and the text "WIKIPEDIA The Free Encyclopedia". Below it is a sidebar with various navigation links such as "Main page", "Contents", "Featured content", "Current events", "Random article", "Donate to Wikipedia", and "Wikipedia store". The main content area is divided into several sections: "Welcome to Wikipedia" with a search bar and navigation links; "From today's featured article" featuring a bio of Barry Voight; "Did you know..." with a list of trivia items and a small image of a statue; "In the news" with a list of current events and a photo of Vladimir Putin; "On this day..." with a list of historical events and a photo of Harriet Beecher Stowe; and "Today's featured picture" at the bottom with a photo of the Acacus Mountains and a short description.

Not logged in | Talk | Contributions | Create account | Log in

Main Page | Talk | Read | View source | View history | Search Wikipedia

Welcome to Wikipedia,

the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit.
5,594,019 articles in English

- Arts
- History
- Society
- Biography
- Mathematics
- Technology
- Geography
- Science
- All portals

From today's featured article

Barry Voight (born 1937) is an American geologist, volcanologist, author, and engineer. He was a professor of geology at [Pennsylvania State University](#) from 1964 until his retirement in 2005. He still conducts research on rock mechanics, plate tectonics, disaster prevention, and geotechnical engineering. In April 1980, Voight's publications on landslides, avalanches and other mass movements convinced Rocky Crandell of the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) (USGS) to ask him to look at a growing bulge on the [Mount St. Helens](#) volcano in the state of [Washington](#). Voight predicted the collapse of the mountain's north flank as well as a powerful eruption. After his predictions were realized in May 1980, he was hired by the USGS to investigate the debris avalanche that initiated the eruption. His work at St. Helens brought him international recognition, and he continued researching and guiding monitoring efforts at several active volcanoes, including [Nevado del Ruiz](#) in Colombia, [Mount Merapi](#) in Indonesia, and [Soufrière Hills](#), a volcano on the Caribbean island of [Montserrat](#). ([Full article...](#))

Recently featured: *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* · [Elcor, Minnesota](#) · *Freedom Planet*
[Archive](#) · [By email](#) · [More featured articles](#)

Did you know...

- ... that a badly wounded [Major Shaitan Singh](#) (*statue pictured*), who was later awarded the [Param Vir Chakra](#), ordered his soldiers to leave him behind rather than face enemy fire evacuating him?
- ... that [Citicorp](#) chose to build a tower near the [Court Square–23rd Street](#) station in Queens because it was one subway stop away from the company's headquarters in Manhattan, across the East River?
- ... that the performances of [Maaya Sakamoto](#) and [Sanae Kobayashi](#) inspired [Saori Ōnishi](#) to pursue a voice acting career?
- ... that the [Orange College of Breda](#) was founded by [Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange](#)?
- ... that the [inland free-tailed bat](#) can survive the most extreme range of body temperatures of any mammal known?
- ... that upon her completion in 1885, the [French cruiser Milan](#) was considered the fastest warship afloat?
- ... that in 2016, annual global internet traffic reached 1.2 zettabytes, leading some to label the current period the [Zettabyte Era](#)?
- ... that [Charles Phillips](#), who excavated the [Sutton Hoo](#) ship-burial, was tasked as a schoolboy with digging latrines near [Stonehenge](#)?

[Archive](#) · [Start a new article](#) · [Nominate an article](#)

In the news

- [Vladimir Putin](#) (*pictured*) is re-elected President of Russia.
- Brazilian politician and human rights activist [Marielle Franco](#) is killed in a shooting in [Rio de Janeiro](#).
- In response to the [poisoning of Sergei Skripal](#) with a nerve agent, the United Kingdom expels 23 Russian diplomats.
- British physicist and cosmologist [Stephen Hawking](#) dies at the age of 76.

Ongoing: [Rif Dimashq offensive](#) · [Turkish military operation in Afrin](#) · [UK higher education strike](#)

Recent deaths: [Ayaz Soomro](#) · [Sudan](#) · [Mike MacDonald](#) · [Adrian Lamo](#)
[Nominate an article](#)

On this day...

March 20: March equinox (16:15 UTC, 2018); Independence Day in [Tunisia](#) (1956)

- 235 – [Maximinus Thrax](#) succeeded to the throne of the Roman Empire, a so-called barracks emperor who gained power by virtue of his command of the army.
- 1852 – *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by [Harriet Beecher Stowe](#) (*pictured*) was first published, profoundly affecting attitudes toward African Americans and slavery in the United States.
- 1922 – The United States Navy commissioned its first aircraft carrier, [USS Langley](#).
- 1987 – The antiretroviral drug [zidovudine \(AZT\)](#) became the first antiviral drug approved for use against HIV and AIDS.
- 1993 – The Troubles: The second of two bomb attacks by the Provisional IRA in [Warrington](#), England, killed two children.

[Adrienne Lecouvreur](#) (d. 1730) · [Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck](#) (b. 1870) · [Willie Brown](#) (b. 1934)

More anniversaries: [March 19](#) · [March 20](#) · [March 21](#)
[Archive](#) · [By email](#) · [List of historical anniversaries](#)

Today's featured picture

The [Acacus Mountains](#) are a mountain range in western [Libya](#), part of the [Sahara](#). Situated east of the city of [Ghat](#), they stretch north from the border with [Algeria](#), about 100 kilometres (60 mi). The mountains have a large variation of landscapes, from different-coloured dunes to arches, gorges, isolated rocks and deep wadis. The area has a particularly rich array of prehistoric rock art.

Web navigation conventions

The screenshot shows the Amazon.com search results page for "lg tv 4k". At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Amazon Prime logo, a search bar containing "LED & LCD TVs" and "lg tv 4k", and a "BLACK FRIDAY DEALS WEEK" banner. Below the search bar, there are links for "Departments", "Browsing History", "Thomas's Amazon.com", and "Today's Deals". On the right, there are links for "Hello, Thomas Your Account", "Prime", "Lists", and "Cart".

The search results are displayed in a grid format. The first result is a sponsored advertisement for "LG SUPER UHD TV" with the headline "Save on LG Super UHD TVs" and a "Shop now" link. Below this, there are two smaller product images for "LG Electronics 65UH77..." and "LG Electronics 55UH77...".

The main search results are listed below. The first result is for "LG Electronics 55UH6550 55-Inch 4K Ultra HD Smart LED TV (2016 Model)" by LG Electronics. It is a sponsored result with a price of \$747.00 (originally \$897.00) and a Prime logo. The product has a 4.5-star rating from 25 reviews. Key features listed include: Display Size: 55 inches, Resolution: 4K Ultra HD, Connectivity Technology: Built-in Wi-Fi, Display Technology: LED, and Display Resolution Maximum: 4K Ultra HD.

The second result is for "LG Electronics 60UH8500 60-Inch 4K Ultra HD Smart LED TV (2016 Model)" by LG Electronics. It is also a sponsored result with a price of \$1,297.00 (originally \$1,697.00) and a Prime logo. The product has a 4.5-star rating from 87 reviews. A link to the "Electronics Gift Guide" is visible below the product.

On the left side of the search results, there is a "Refine by" section with the following filters:

- Delivery Day: Get It by Tomorrow
- Amazon Prime: Prime
- Television Feature: Smart TV (132), 3D (53)
- Television Resolution: 4K Ultra HD (70), 1080p (16), 1080i, 760p, 760i, 720p (1), 720i, 480p, 480i

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the text: "Conditions of Use Privacy Notice Interest-Based Ads © 1996-2016, Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates".

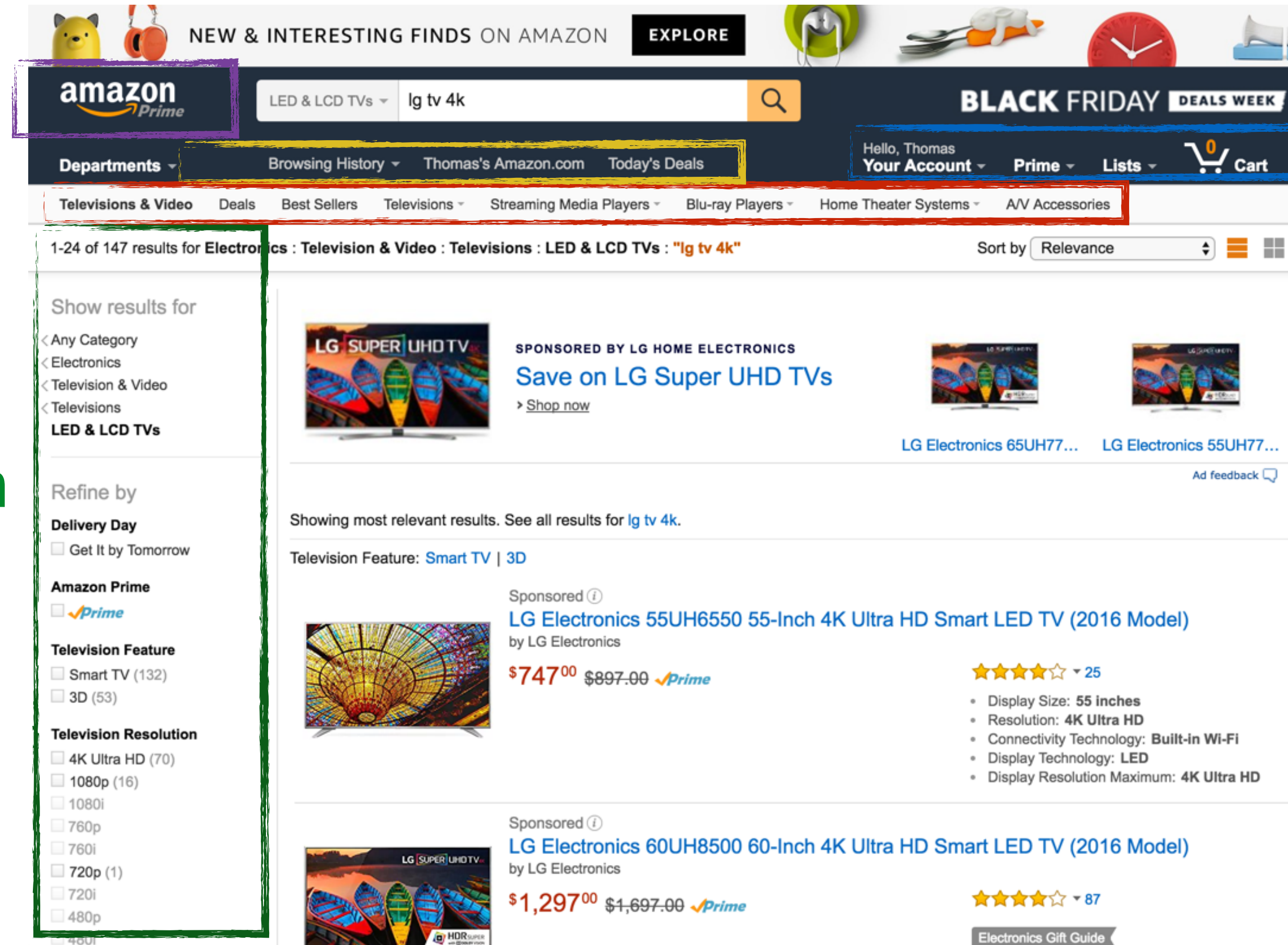
Web navigation conventions

Site ID

You are here

Local navigation

Footer navigation



Utilities
Sections

MS in Computer Science

Masters Students

- Advising
- FAQs
- Foundation Courses
- MS in Computer Science
- Core Courses
- Pre-approved Courses
- CS Course Descriptions
- Accelerated BS/MS Programs
- MS in Information Systems
- MS in Information Security and Assurance
- MS in Software Engineering
- Graduate Certificates

The MS in Computer Science prepares students for research and professional practice in computer science and related technologies. The program includes both fundamentals and advanced work in the areas of artificial intelligence and databases, programming languages and software engineering, systems and networks, theoretical computer science, and visual computing.

Degree Requirements

Students are required to complete 30 credits corresponding to 10 graduate courses. Courses are divided into **basic courses**, which have no graduate course prerequisite, and **advanced courses**, which have a graduate course as a prerequisite.

Courses are grouped in the following five broad areas:

- Artificial Intelligence and Databases
- Programming Languages and Software Engineering
- Systems and Networks
- Theoretical Computer Science
- Visual Computing

All the following requirements should be satisfied for the MS in CS degree:

- CS 583 - Analysis of Algorithms. (from the Theoretical Computer Science area) and two additional [core courses](#) from two other areas must be successfully completed with a grade of B- or better.
- At least four courses (12 credits) must be chosen from the **advanced courses** in the list of [preapproved courses](#) from at least three different areas.
- At least six courses, including two advanced courses, must be designated CS.
- At least eight courses must be taken from the list of [preapproved courses](#). Up to two computer science-related courses that are not on the list of preapproved courses may be taken with the approval of the Computer Science Department.

Project/Thesis (optional):

Three to six credit hours of the advanced classes may be replaced by a project or thesis. The project or thesis must be guided and approved by a committee of three appropriate faculty members and presented at an appropriate forum. The thesis must meet relevant university requirements.

For additional information on the degree requirements of the MS in CS:

- The [MS CS section of the Mason Catalog](#) is the **official source** for the degree requirements of the program.
- These [slides](#) from the orientation for new MS students provide an overview of the program, as well as additional useful information.

Academic Advising

A plan of study form for the MS degree should be completed and submitted by the student soon after admission to the program. This serves as a planning guide for the student. This plan should be kept up to date by regular consultation with the academic advisor. A final signed version of the plan must be included when the student submits a graduation application.

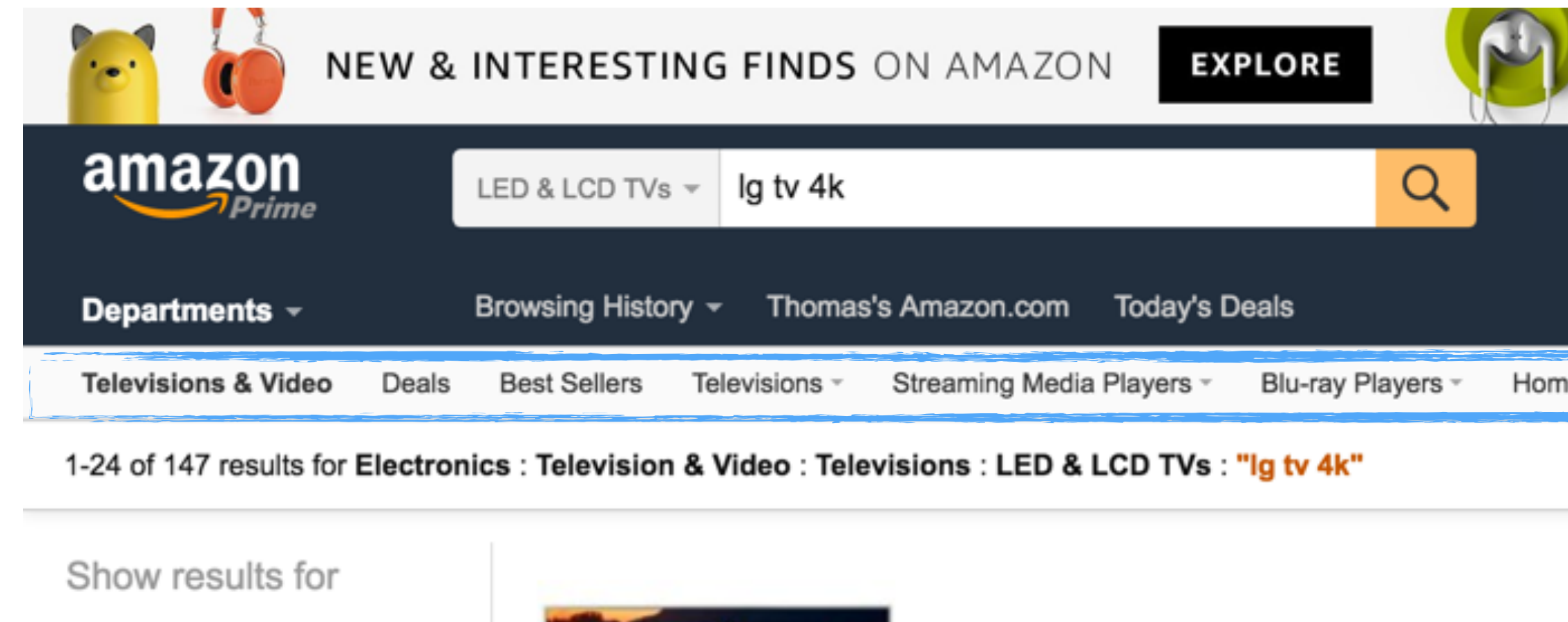
Plan of Study forms for all the MS degrees offered by the CS department are available at [this web page](#).

For more information, please see the [academic advising pages](#) and the [FAQ](#) for Masters students.

Persistent Navigation

- Forms a common idiom users already understand
- Gives instant confirmation that still on the same site
- Supports consistency and standards
 - If *all* of your pages function same way, users know how to do actions & what to expect
 - Ok for specialized page like forms that are clearly different to not follow conventions.

Tabs



- Example of a metaphor: tab dividers in a three ring binder or folders in a file drawer
- Partition into sections
- Advantages
 - Easily understood and self-evident
 - (Usually) hard to miss

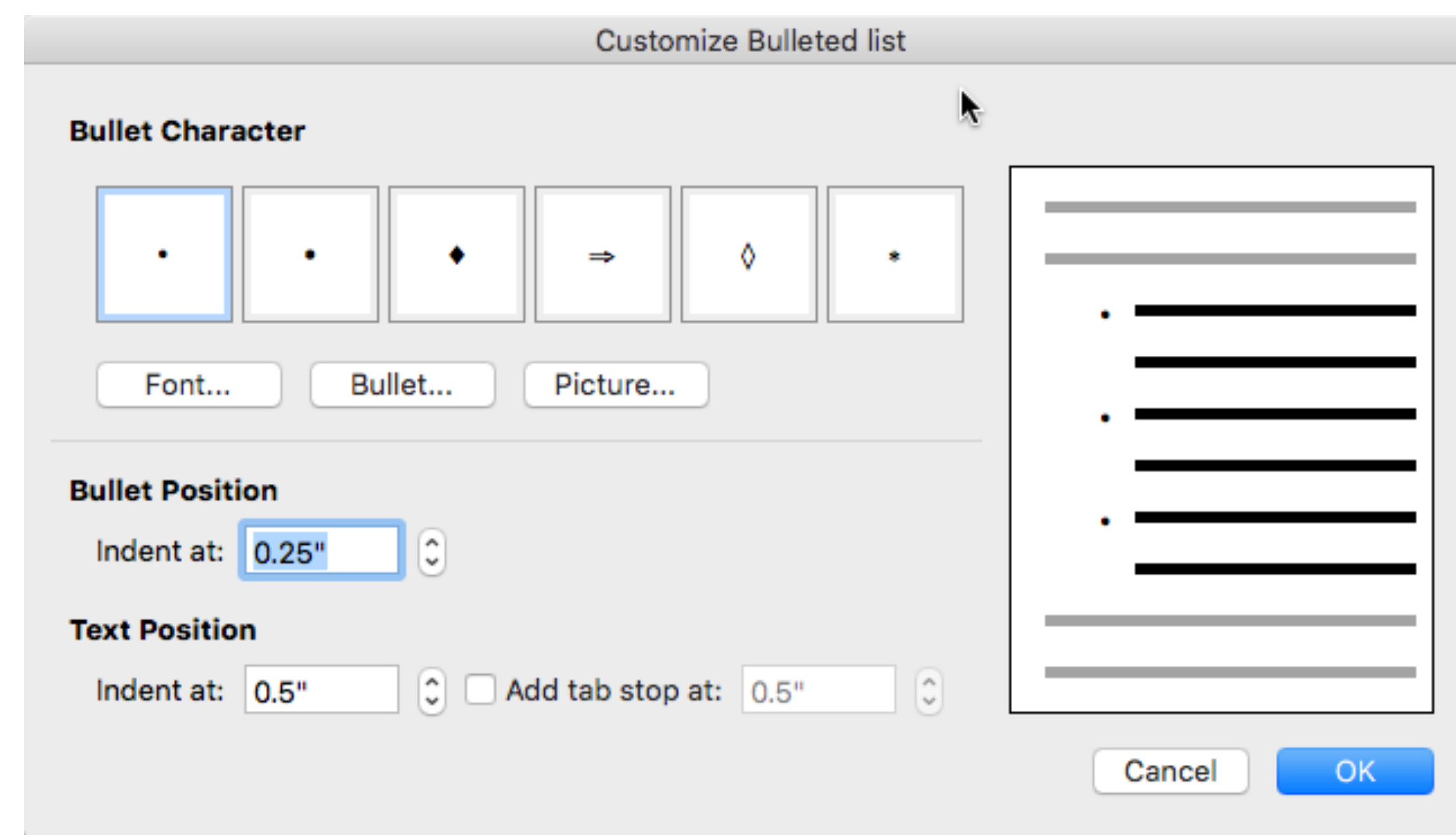
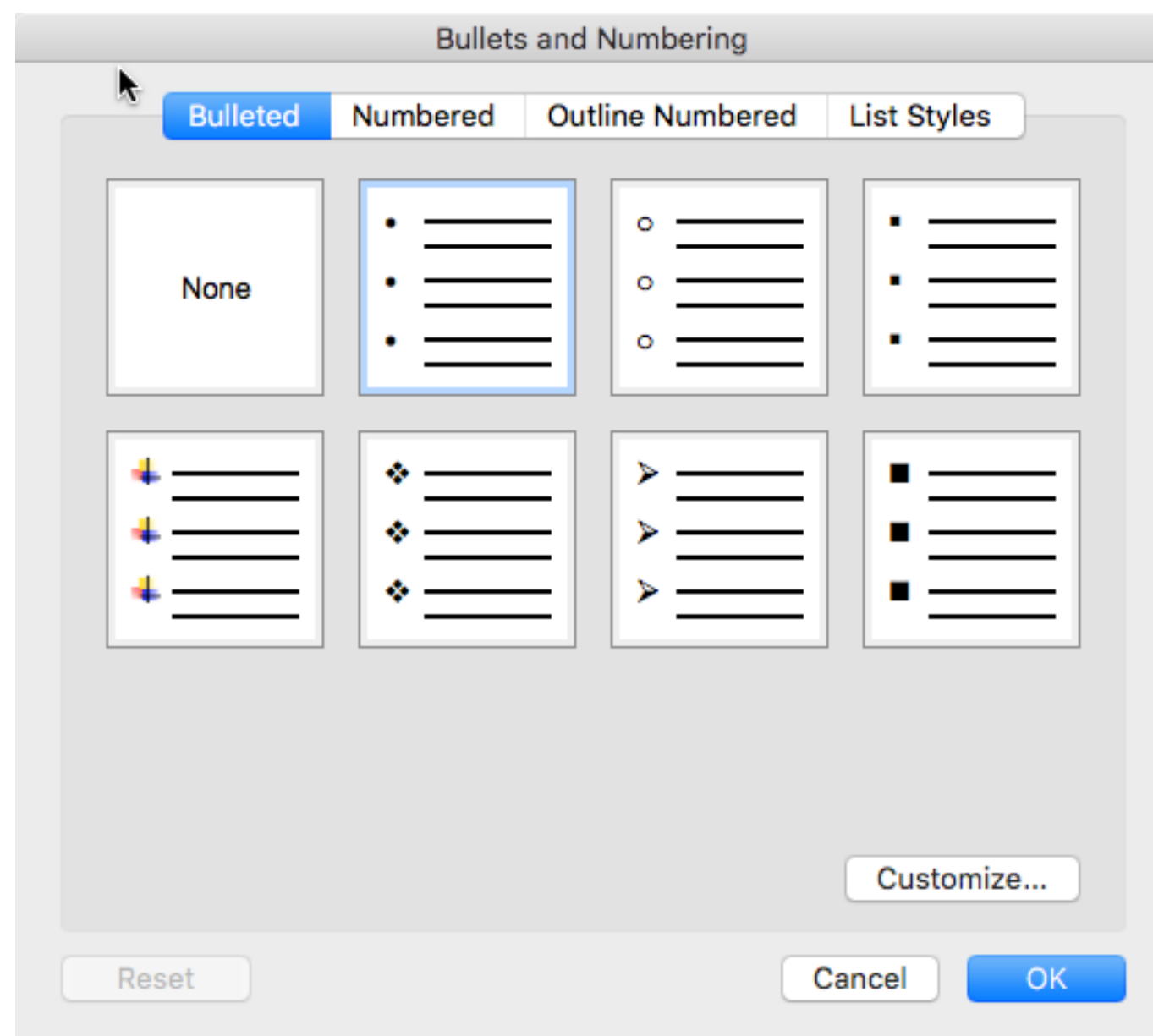
Breadcrumbs

- Offer trail of where the user has been and how they got there
- Shows hierarchy of information space
- Shows current location

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Progressive Disclosure

- a.k.a. details on demand
- Separate information & commands into layers
- Present most frequently used information & commands first



Effective Site Design

- Answers to the following should be obvious for a good site design
 - What site is this? (Site ID)
 - What page am I on? (Page name)
 - What are the major sections of this site? (Sections)
 - What are my options at this level? (Local navigation)
 - Where am I in the site? (“You are here” indicators)
 - How can I search?

Metaphors & Idioms

Metaphors

- One way to communicate what interface can do is through metaphors to the real world
- Uses existing mental models from the real world



Metaphors - Advantages

- Leverages understanding of familiar objects & their functions
 - File cabinets, desks, telephones
- Provides *intuitive* understanding of possible affordances & eases mapping tasks to actions
 - Open a folder, throw file in trash, momentum scrolling

Metaphors - Disadvantages

- Tyranny of metaphor: ties interactions closely to workings of physical world
- Adds useless overhead in extra steps, wastes visual bandwidth
- Taken literally, becomes non-sensical
 - e.g., nesting folders 10 levels deep



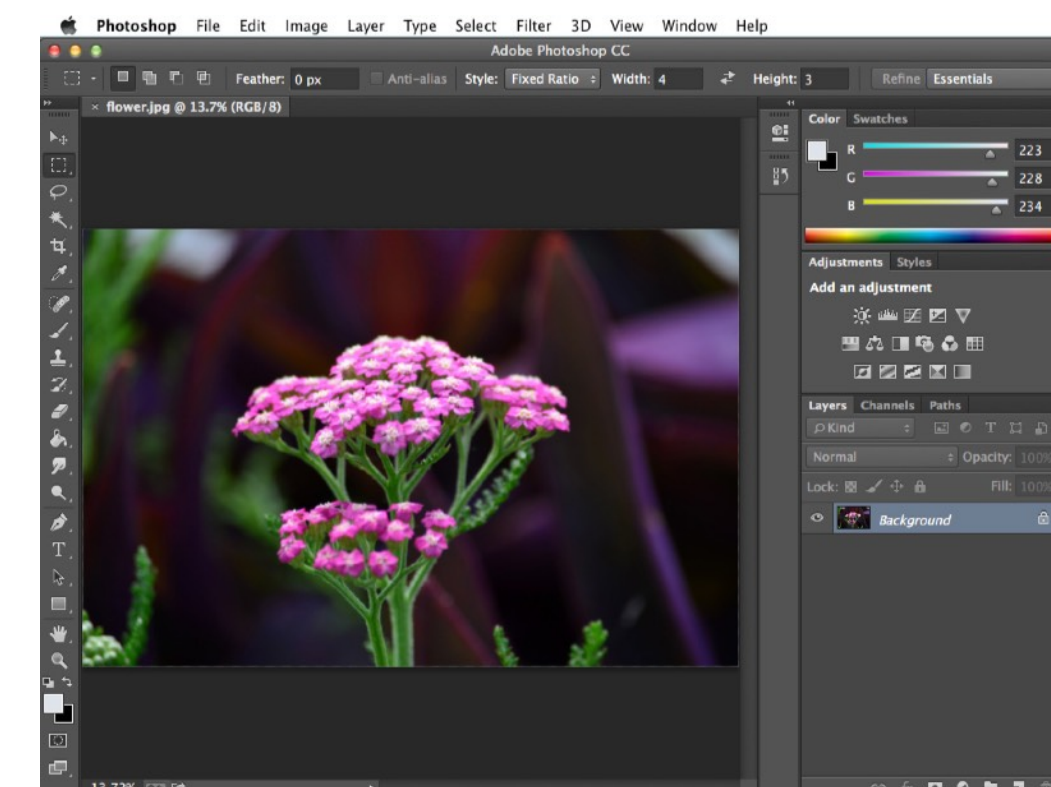
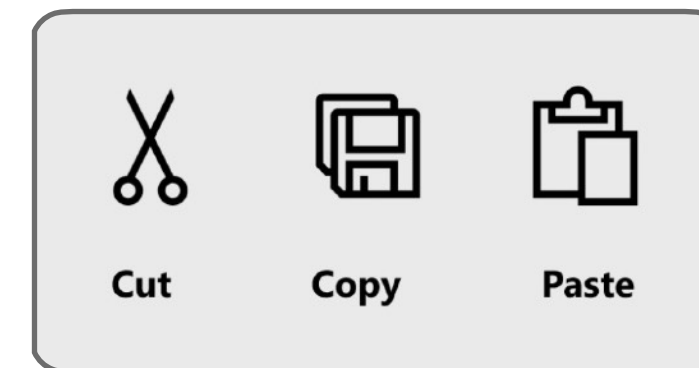
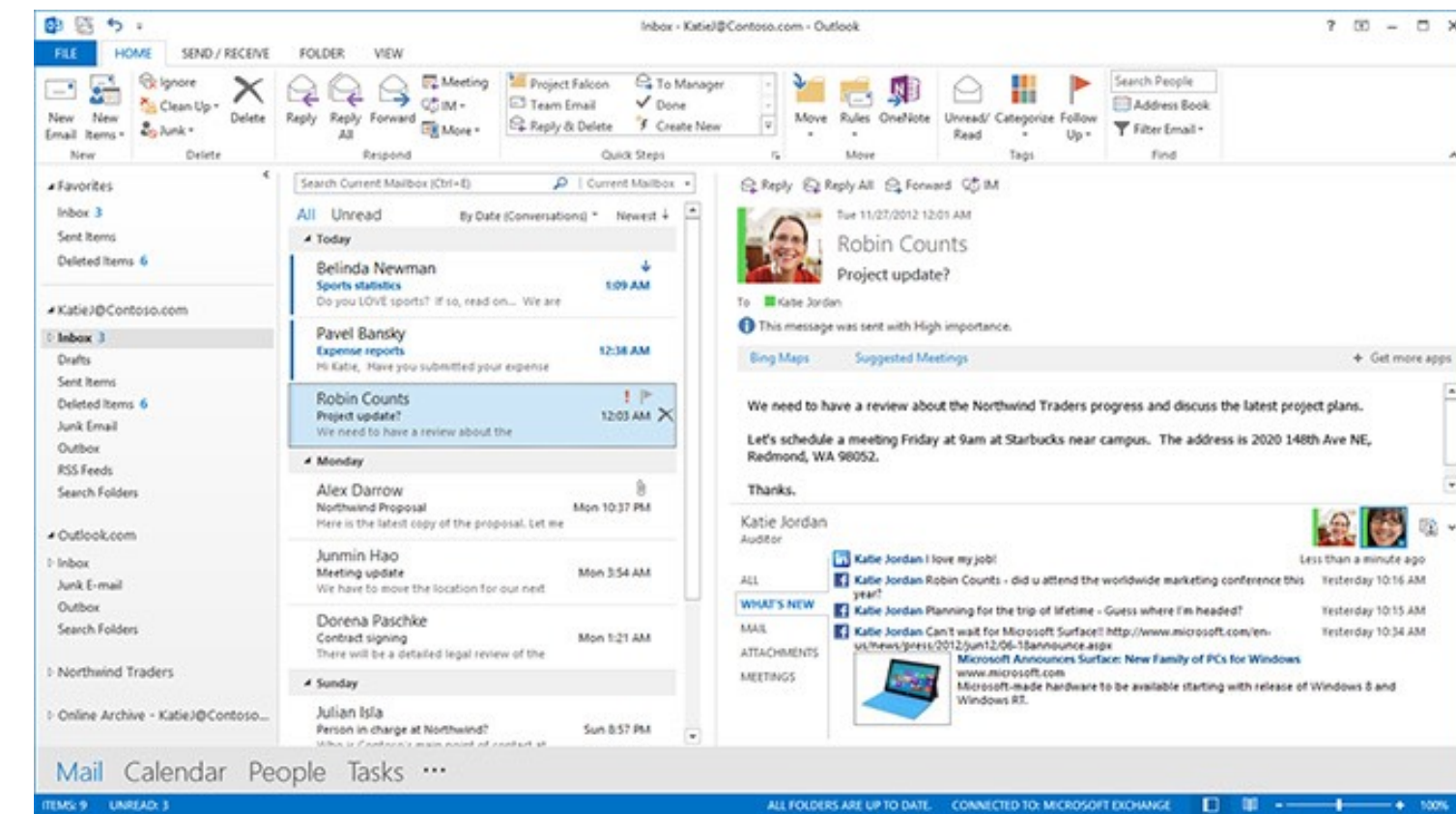
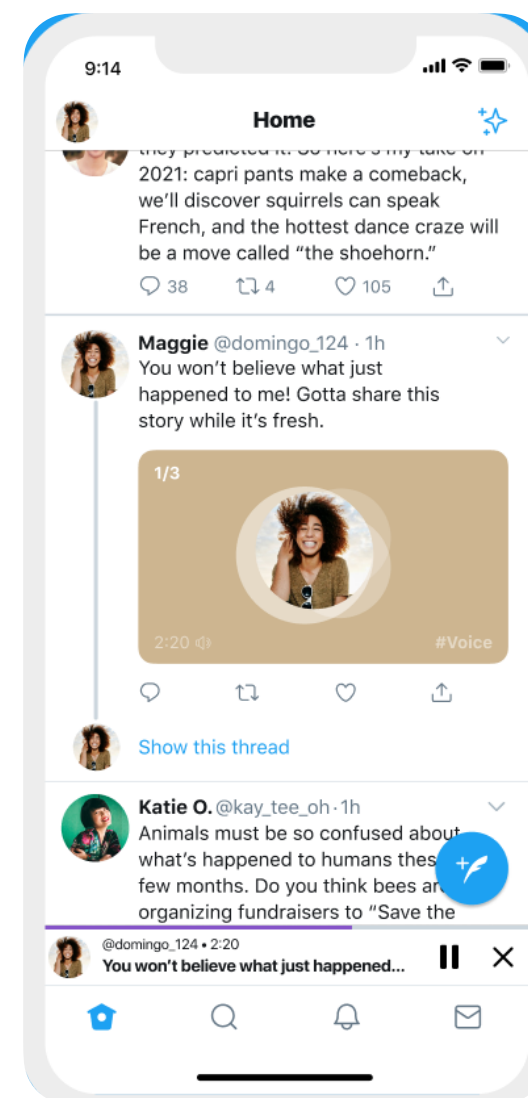
Alternative - Idioms

- A consistent mental model of how something works
 - e.g., Files: open / close / save / save as
- Offers intuitive understanding of affordances & interactions
- Provides consistent vocabulary for describing interactions
- Only have to learn it once
- Might have originated in real world, but thought of in terms of mental model for UI interactions

Exercise: Examples of Idioms

Examples of Idioms

- Email
- Clipboard: cut / copy / paste
- Format painter
- Newsfeed
- Follow item



Ordering User Actions

Task Structure

- In some cases, users must take actions in specific sequence
- Must input some information before being able to access subsequent information
 - e.g., must select a shipping method before seeing a final price
- To the extent possible, want to leave users in control of task (user control and freedom)
- But also do not want to distract users by making unrelated decisions in random order (flexibility and efficiency of use)
- And do not want to overwhelm users with too many options at a time (minimalist design)
- Good designs need to balance tradeoffs

Separate long tasks into sequences

- Reduce short term memory demands by having user only work on one aspect of larger task at a time
- Don't interrupt users in the middle with unrelated tasks
- Provide closure of each subtask at the end

The screenshot shows the American Airlines website during a flight booking process. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Login', 'Hello, THOMAS', 'English', and a search bar. The main navigation bar has 'Plan Travel', 'Travel Information', and 'AAdvantage'. The current page is 'Travelers', with a progress bar showing 'Find Flights', 'Choose Flights', 'Travelers', 'Trip Options', 'Select Seats', 'Review & Pay', and 'Finish'. The flight details are: Washington to Raleigh/ Durham, 1 Adult, Sunday January 10, 2016 – Monday January 11, 2016. The trip price is \$203.70 USD. A promotional banner offers 40,000 bonus miles, up to \$100 in statement credits, and a free checked bag. The final price is \$103.70 USD. The page also includes a 'Passenger Details' section with a note to enter names as they appear on government-issued photo identification.

Design for flexibility & efficiency

- Users may take paths never envisioned by designer
- Using studies to identify different task flows, design flexible support for each

The screenshot shows the American Airlines website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the American Airlines logo, 'Plan Travel', 'Travel Information', and 'AAdvantage' links. A search bar is located in the top right corner. Below the navigation bar, a progress bar indicates the current step: 'Travelers'. The main content area is titled 'Travelers' and includes a warning icon and text: 'Check below for errors'. The flight details section shows 'Washington to Raleigh/ Durham', '1 Adult', and the dates 'Sunday January 10, 2016 - Monday January 11, 2016'. A 'Show Trip Details' button is present. To the right, the 'Your Trip Price' is listed as '\$203.70 USD'. Below this, a promotional offer states 'Earn 40,000 bonus miles, up to \$100 in statement credits, and your first checked bag free*!'. A summary table shows the trip price and a statement credit. At the bottom, there is a 'Passenger Details' section with a help icon and a note about entering names as they appear on government-issued photo identification. A '*Required' note is at the very bottom.

Item	Amount
Your Trip Price	\$203.70 USD
Statement Credit	- \$100.00 USD
Total	\$103.70 USD

Keep users in control

- Important users do not feel constrained
- Want users to feel that they can do things the way they want to do them, not as software dictates to them

American Airlines Plan Travel Travel Information AAdvantage oneworld

Home Login Hello, THOMAS English Search aa.com

Find Flights Choose Flights **Travelers** Trip Options Select Seats Review & Pay Finish

Travelers

⚠ Check below for errors

✈ Washington to Raleigh/ Durham
1 Adult
Sunday January 10, 2016 – Monday January 11, 2016

Your Trip Price: **\$203.70 USD**
[Baggage and Optional Charges](#)

Show Trip Details

AAdvantage Earn 40,000 bonus miles,
up to \$100 in statement credits, and your **first checked bag free***!
[Learn More](#)

Your Trip Price: \$203.70 USD
Statement Credit: - \$100.00 USD
\$103.70 USD

Passenger Details

Please enter all passenger names as they appear on the passenger's government-issued photo identification. [More details on passenger names](#)
[TSA Privacy Notice](#)

*Required

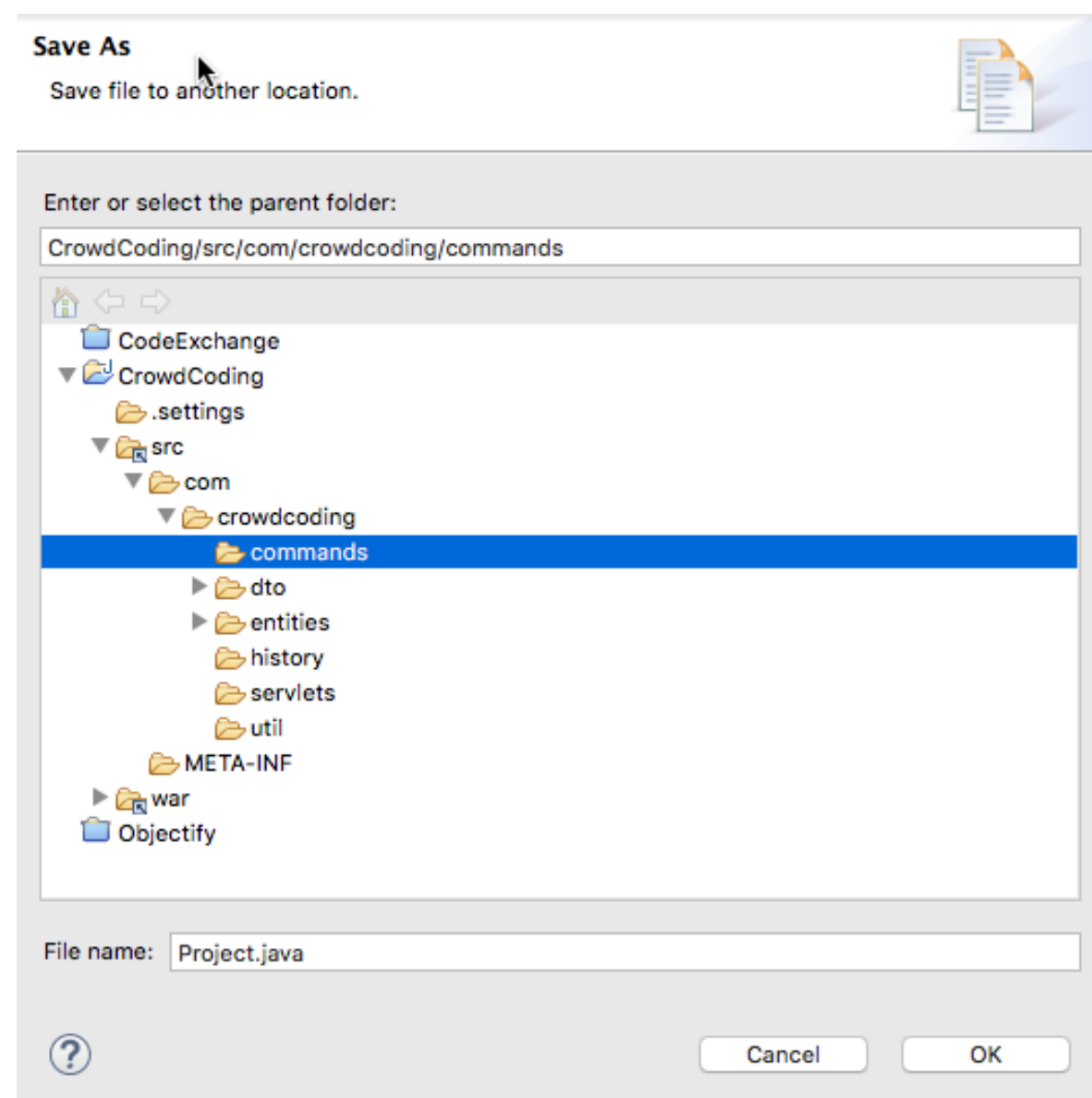
Orchestration & Interaction Flow

- Interaction flow - the next thing the interface wants to do is exactly what user expects
 - Follow users' mental model
 - Let user direct software
 - Keep all related tools available
- Surprises interrupt interaction flow
- Interfaces should be invisible

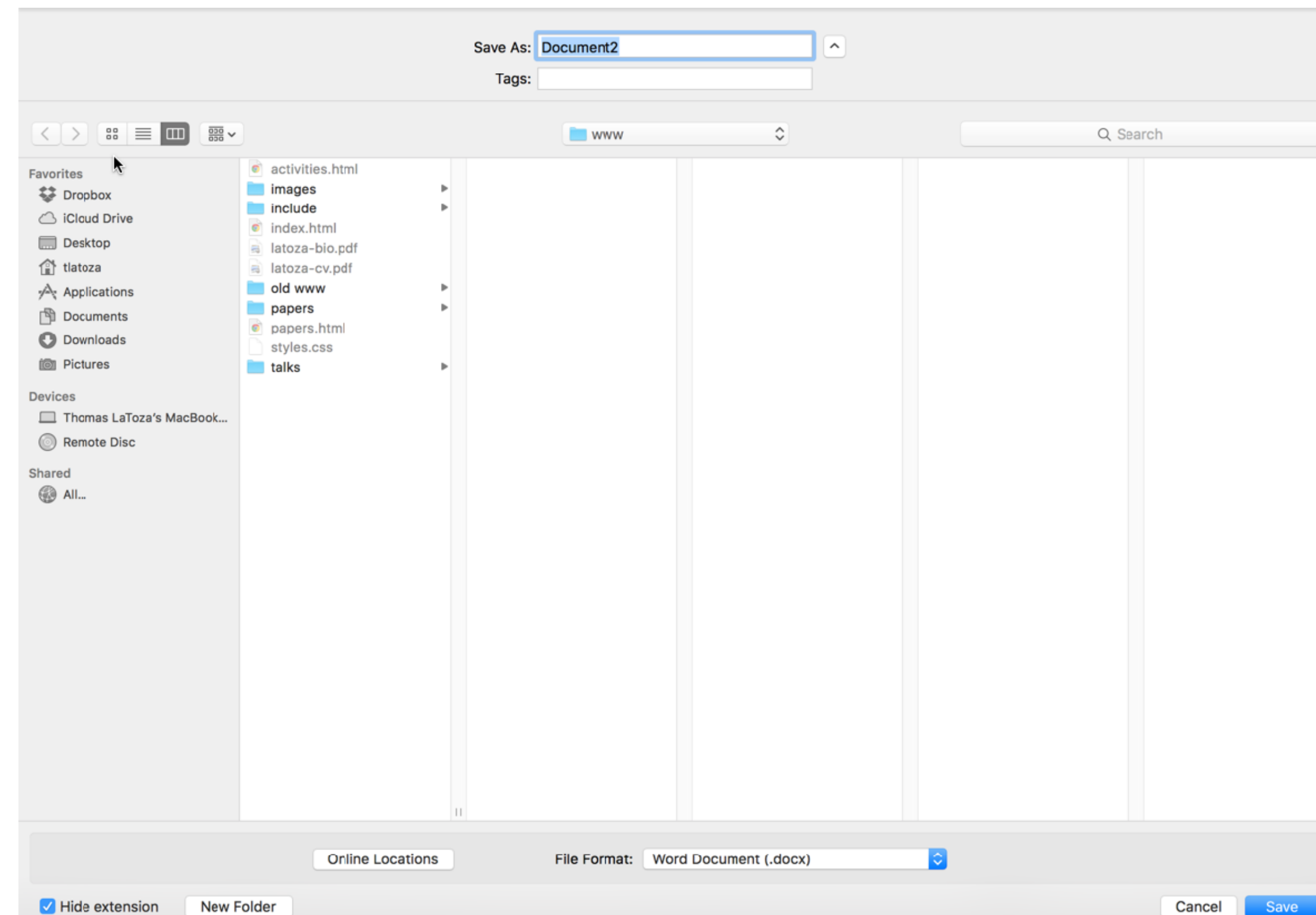
Anticipate Likely Next Actions

- Based on typical observed task flows, surface options for user to take likely next steps

What if folder does not exist?



VS.



Interaction Flow Guidelines

- Don't use dialogs to report normal behavior
- Separate commands from configuration
- Don't ask questions, give users choices
 - Give users default input, show possible options
- Make dangerous choices hard to reach
- Design for the probable, provide for the possible

10 Minute Break

Group Activity

In Class Activity: Design a Course Catalog & Registration System

- In groups of 2 or 3
 - Design a course catalog & registration system
 - Create sketches showing key screens
 - Should support
 - browsing course catalog, registering for classes, waitlists
 - building plan of courses to take over multiple semesters to fulfill degree requirements
- Deliverables: sketches showing key screens with annotations explaining user interactions
- Due by 6:25pm today