

Assignment 2

POVs and Experience Prototypes

Our Team



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We are in the Digital Democracy studio.

Problem Domain

Our problem domain is **One-Sided News**. The *Needfinding* interviews we conducted last week revealed that citizens are informed by partisan news sources. To research this problem further, we conducted additional POV and *Needfinding* interviews and tested three assumption-based prototypes. Our assumptions were that (1) people would be more open-minded when presented with different political viewpoints, and (2) partisans would seek out alternate viewpoints if given the opportunity. Our target users were politically moderate individuals, as they read news from across the political spectrum. Extreme users were those who would or could not access viewpoints that disagreed with their own.

Preliminary POV

We met **Bryan Powell**, a 22-year old student at the University of Texas. We were amazed to learn that he almost never sees news articles and opinions that he disagrees with. It would be game-changing if there were a way for people like Bryan to have an easy, balanced way of staying informed.



Additional Needfinding Results

We conducted interviews at a variety of locations, including Palo Alto coffee shops to meet representative voters and an election lecture series to meet those interested in politics.

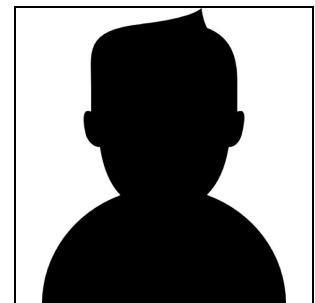
At Coupa Café, we talked to **Taylor Streaty**, a self-identified liberal from Nashville, Tennessee. She is an extreme user, as she grew up in a overwhelmingly conservative state where liberal news sources are in short supply. Taylor lamented that her Facebook news feed consisted of strong opinions, which often articulated views opposing her own. She found these views “icky”, and they made her angry and upset. She was, however, interested in learning how people with opposing views understand the world.



Maria was drinking coffee at Philz when we approached her for an interview. She is a forty-two year old author who has voted before. She does not like to read “extreme articles” and stated a preference to read “substantial” and “thoughtful” news. Maria, mid-interview and unprompted, noted that she wished she could get both sides of the news in one place. She wants to hear an “unbiased” view of all sides of the issues she will be voting on.



Bonnie was attending a Stanford lecture series on the election when we asked her for an interview. She is a middle-school teacher who tries her best to keep up with politics, but admits missing the details on occasion. She expressed concerns that some of her friends only got news from “alternative” sources; she worries that they are creating their own realities, since the internet makes it easy to find places where everyone is in agreement with their views. (She declined to take a picture out of privacy concerns.)



Revised POVs and HMW Statements

POV 1

We met Taylor Streaty, a college student with an extremely conservative news feed, who needs a way to diversify the news articles that she consumes. Taylor identifies as a liberal, and the articles on her news feed often make her upset, reducing her desire to read the news or understand where the other side is coming from. It would be game changing if Taylor could diversify her news feed and receive a more well-rounded version of the news.

How might we...

- Connect minority-ideology voters in areas where they feel isolated?
- Filter out extreme viewpoints on social media?
- Help people receive a more well-rounded version of the news?
- Create alternative spaces for political posts/discussion outside of social media?

POV 2

We met Maria who needs an easier way to learn about the issues besides the long California voting booklet because she doesn't know much about issues below the presidential level. She was frustrated with how one has to really go out of their way to learn about all the issues and memorize them before voting. It would be game-changing if Maria could get unbiased information to assist her in voting.

How might we...

- Help people move away from just voting along party lines?
- Allow people to save their answers/ opinions/ survey results to refer to later for voting?
- Give people more concise information on how to vote?

POV 3

We met Bonnie who needs a way of ensuring that the news she is seeking out is not biased because she is worried that she, like many of her friends, could be creating her "own reality" with one-sided news. It would be game-changing if we could create a way to show Bonnie how her news sources may be slanted and suggest ways or sources that could give her a more unbiased view of what is going on with politics today.

How might we...

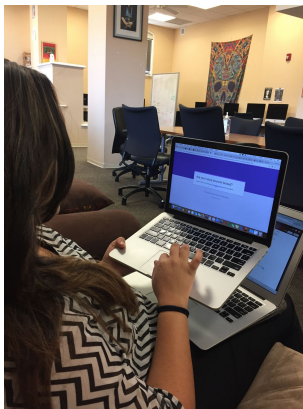
- Incentivize open-mindedness?

- Prevent people from only seeking out media that supports their own views?
- Help people understand/visualize the biases of their news sources?

Experience Prototype 1

How might we help people understand/visualize the biases of their news sources?

This prototype was built on the assumption that if people were made aware of the one-sidedness of their news sources, they would feel incentivized to read news from other viewpoints. It was constructed using a Google Survey, which was closer to a possible app or website survey than a paper survey. The prototype gave a list of the top 10 news stories of the week from websites across the political spectrum. Once the individual indicated if they had read the articles, they were given feedback on the political slant of their news (e.g. “You’ve read 3 liberal articles, 2 moderate and 0 conservative”).




This prototype worked well because it was intuitive to use and understand. Users appreciated the large headlines of each article, as well as a linked-picture to the article in case they weren’t sure. However, it turned out that users don’t actually read that many articles in general; in some cases users hadn’t read any of the articles at all. That may have happened because we used articles from journalistic sources; respondents stated that they got their news

Did you read "Al Gore tells Floridians: 'Take it from me, every vote counts'", written by Liz Goodwin for Yahoo! News on October 11, 2016?

Al Gore tells Floridians: 'Take it from me, every vote counts'

 **Liz Goodwin**
Senior National Affairs Reporter
October 11, 2016

 1,650 Comments



Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton and former Vice President Al Gore campaign at the Miami-Dade College-Kendall Campus on Oct. 11 in Miami. (Photo: Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

MIAMI — Former Vice President Al Gore relived his painful past Tuesday, invoking his campaign’s incredibly close loss to George W. Bush in the 2000 presidential election as a way to motivate Florida voters to head to the polls on Nov. 8.

Yes

No

Did you read "Emails raise further questions over possible Clinton pay-to-play tactics", written by Jon Street for The Blaze on October 11, 2016?

Emails raise further questions over possible Clinton pay-to-play tactics

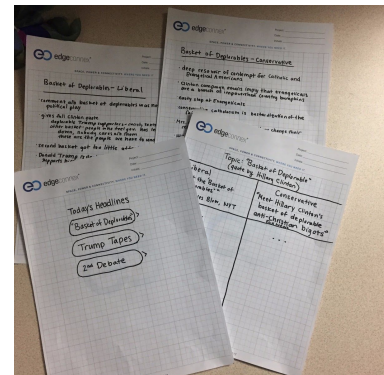
also from radio (e.g. NPR) and visuals or sound-bites (e.g. BuzzFeed).

Did you read "Donald Trump's Sad, Lonely Life", written by David Brooks for the New York Times on October 11, 2016 ?	Did you read "Hillary Clinton's Poisoned Prize", written by Frank Bruni for the New York Times on October 8, 2016?	Did you read "A Medal for Trying", written by James Taranto for the Wall Street Journal on October 7, 2016?	Did you read "Trump's ObamaCare Silence", written by Kimberley A. Strassel for the Wall Street Journal on October 6, 2016?	Did you read "Al Gore tells Floridians: 'Take it from me, every vote counts'", written by Liz Goodwin for Yahoo! News on October 11, 2016?	Did you read "Hacked WikiLeaks emails show concerns about Clinton candidacy, email serve written by Abby Phillip and John Wagner for The Washington Post on October 12, 2016?
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
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No	No	No	No	No	No
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Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
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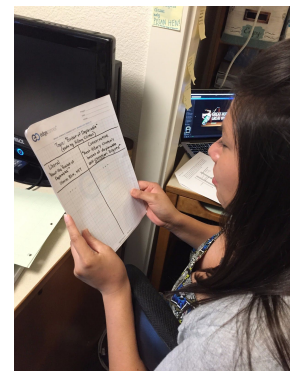
Experience Prototype 2

How might we help people receive a more well-rounded version of the news?

This prototype was built on the assumption that people receiving more well-rounded news would be more open-minded and likely to listen to opposing viewpoints. The prototype was constructed with several pieces of paper. The first gave the user a list of headlines, and once a headline was selected, they were given a chance to choose a liberal or conservative article on that topic. Depending on that selection, they read a short synopsis of the article (to lessen the time it took to test).



This prototype worked well because it was so simple and did not take the user long to experience. Something interesting that we learned was that people tended to read the opposing viewpoint first when it was presented side by side with an article more in line with their ideology. Overall, our assumption was somewhat validated. People said it was interesting and enlightening to read two articles with very different slants on the same topic. One issue was that even though both articles were from credible news sources, people still questioned the opposing article's facts and legitimacy which could hurt their open-mindedness.



Experience Prototype 3

How might we incentivise and discourage people from reading one-sided news?

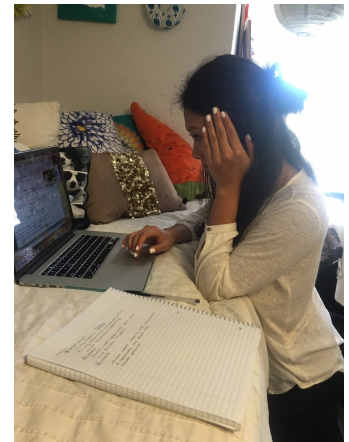
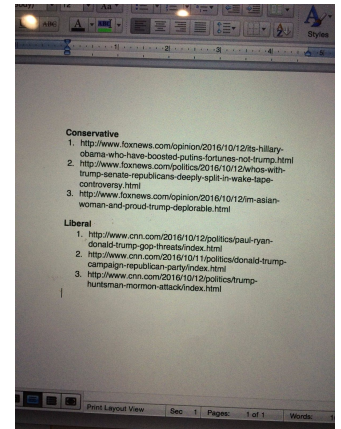
As with Prototype 2, this prototype was built on the assumption that people receiving more well-rounded news would be more open-minded and understanding of opposing viewpoints. We experimented with forcing people to read articles from both sides of the spectrum. The prototype was a two lists of articles from conservative and liberal sources. The user could pick and read an article from either list, but if they tried to read three articles from the same political view in a row, they would be asked to first read an article from the other side.

The prototype worked well in that it encouraged the user to read articles from different viewpoints. The user naturally alternated sides, saying that it only made sense that she would read articles from both. This test never needed to force the reader to read an article from the other side, so we couldn't record how the user responded when being forced to read an article from the other side. However, by actively showing the user that there were two sides to news, she chose to be open-minded and read articles from both sides. Given that the test subject naturally fluctuated between reading articles between the two sides, we can develop the new assumption that people will be more open-minded if they can see that their normal news might be one-sided.

Key Takeaways

We generated some valuable insights through our three prototypes:

- It is difficult to classify news sources as promoting liberal or conservative viewpoints. When we attempted to generalize a news source as being liberal or conservative, we quickly noticed outlier writers in the organization that broke the generalization.
- People tend to become more open-minded when presented with both liberal and conservative articles. This behavior occurred with both the second and third experience prototypes with people choosing to first read the article with the opposing view.



- Our third key takeaway was that people tend to read only a few articles on a few issues a day which leads to this one-sided view and that in order to improve this they would have to double the amount that they read.

Overall, we realized that the second prototype was the most efficient in terms of improving the open-mindedness of the reader.

Appendix:

Additional HMW Statements:

POV 1:

- Give people an unbiased source of news?
- Direct people feeling annoyed with opposing viewpoints to more moderate opposing viewpoints?
- Bridge the gap between opposing sides of issues?
- Help people understand the other side on decisive issues?
- Let people know if they're well-informed?
- Help people not feel attacked by the other side?
- Prevent political discussions from becoming divisive (on social media)?
- Create spaces where people with opposing viewpoints can have constructive discourse?

POV 2:

- Help people have a pre-made list for how to vote on an issue?
- Provide people with a central location for all voting information?
- Make people aware of existing sources that exist on referendums?
- Identify the pros and cons of a new law?
- Get all of a voter's <things to vote on> in one place?
- Make voting more convenient?
- Make voting more simple?
- Help people voting absentee that live outside their district stay up to date with local issues?
- Get voters to think their vote counts?
- Provide people information for voting based on zip code?

POV 3:

- Help people receive two-sided news?
- Reward people for reading up on opposing viewpoints?
- Help create unbiased news sources?
- Create a fun way of testing political awareness?
- Ensure that people are getting a balanced view of politics instead of creating their "own reality"?
- Give people real-time fact checking when they read articles?
- Use social media techniques as a way of getting large groups of friends/people more informed?
- Make becoming an informed voter fun rather than tedious?
- Make people aware of where they are getting their news from?

Interview Notes:

- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SDZV-Kwmp4f9Zjnz1Nx-3jqlye1yclxeO53IUIA2ZYQ/edit?usp=sharing>