

## Call for Proposals User Experience as Innovative Academic Practice

**Editors: Kate Crane and Kelli Cargile Cook**

Curricular design and assessment at the degree, program, course, and even unit/lesson levels are commonplace on university and college campuses. In most cases, content experts--instructors, program directors, and other administrators--decide what content is taught and how that content will be assessed. These decisions are then codified in plans that track students' demonstrable achievement of assessment measures. In user experience terms, students are functional by-products of curricular design, and, as such, students and their achievements are measured, weighed, analyzed, and then reported. Rarely do instructors, program designers, and other administrators engage students as other than functional by-products of that curriculum. In typical waterfall design, students' functionality is measured at the end of the instructional unit in terms of what they can and cannot do.

This collection proposes a different, and we think innovative, approach to instructional design and assessment, one that moves students and their experiences to the center of academic practice. We invite instructors, program directors, and scholars to propose chapters about how user experience (UX) works beyond a course topic: How can we engage user experience to better understand and engage our users (students) to strengthen degrees, programs, courses, units within courses, and even lessons?

### **Why Consider User Experience in Degree, Program, and Course Curricular Design?**

The terms "user experience," "user-centered design," and "usability" are often, understandably, conflated. These concepts are intermingled and interdependent. But, mistaking usability or user-centered design as an all encompassing practice for user advocacy limits the potential for each. Instead, user experience adopts user-centered design and usability principles, but it is broader than either one of those practices. **User-centered design** focuses on innovating products with users at the center, consulting users throughout the design lifecycle using a myriad of research methods (Still and Crane, 2016). **Usability** not only refers to the usefulness of a product but also to a research method that tests the usefulness of a product at a specific point in time (Nielsen, 2012; Lallemand, Gronier, & Koenig, 2015). **User experience** is the culmination of research, design, and testing that goes into understanding the user's experience before, during, and after their encounter with a product. It focuses on the users' motivations for using a product rather than experts' assumptions of users' needs (Getto and Beecher, 2016; Still and Crane, 2016; Rose, et. al., 2017). Therefore, while user-centered design and usability iteratively inform the user experience, they do not encompass the user experience design process entirely as experience architects and human computer interaction scholars have noted (Rose, 2016; Potts, 2014; Potts and Salvo, 2017; Zachry and Spyradakis, 2016).

Although scholars argue that user experience is a necessary literacy within technical and professional communication education, there is a divide in how user experience is deployed in industry and academia (Redish & Barnum, 2011; Lauer & Brumberger, 2016). In industry, user

experience is a necessary, dynamic process that informs how the user engages with and feels about a product throughout and after their use of it (Lallemand, Gronier, & Koenig, 2015; Getto and Beecher, 2016). However, these scholars also suggest that academics are observers of user experience, but not necessarily practitioners. In other words, we study user experience, but we do not actively practice user experience as a process for developing new frameworks, such as program design, curriculum, and technologies.

We argue that user experience should play a central role in our work as program administrators, curriculum developers, and instructional designers. From designing programs, assessing programmatic outcomes, developing course materials, and designing online and other learning spaces, user experience processes and methods of research can, and ought to, inform how we solve problems facing the ever-changing nature of technical and professional communication pedagogy and assessment.

### **What Gap might User Experience Fill in Course and Curriculum Design?**

Program assessment, a ubiquitous practice on university and college campuses, requires degree programs to report assessment findings annually. Typically, university planning and/or assessment offices provide guidance on how program outcomes and assessment should be conducted and reported. There is certainly room, however, for UX knowledge to inform the design of outcomes at macro- (programmatic assessment) and micro- (course design, documents, activities, and lesson) levels.

Traditionally, in technical and professional communication programs, assessment begins with subject matter experts—often a faculty team—identifying a set of measurable objectives that will demonstrate student learning. These objectives are commonly called SLO's (student learning outcomes). To identify and articulate these outcomes, these experts draw upon a disciplinary “body of knowledge [that] guides identification, analysis, and interpretation of the information generated in the process of assessment” (Hundleby and Allen, 2010, ix).

After educators generate these SLOs and metrics, they link them within their publically available syllabi, assess them, and then report findings regularly to administrators and regional accreditors. In some programs, professors, program directors, and even advisory board members participate in this process. In the best situations, program assessors use knowledge gained from this process to iterate and redesign their programs (See Cargile Cook and Zachry, 2010; Carnegie and Crane, 2018).

Yet what is notable about this common educational procedure is that the individuals being assessed—the students engaged in degree programs—are almost never consulted during curricular design and/or redesign processes. While it is true that new programs often must justify their formation through market or needs analyses, most established programs rarely engage students in program design, redesign, or assessment processes. At best, students offer feedback in exit interviews and end-of-term course evaluations; at worst, their experiences are not considered at all.

This common practice of curricular design, redesign, and assessment directly opposes principles of user experience, which asks us as researchers to put the user/client or, in this case, student into the center of the design and assessment/evaluation process. It is this tension that we intend for this collection to explore.

### **Can User Experience Research Foster Pedagogical Innovations?**

This collection aims to provide a foundation for incorporating user experience in our technical and professional communication pedagogies. The audience for this collection is interdisciplinary, though it will be rooted in Technical and Professional Communication (TPC). In other words, TPC is interdisciplinary in nature, and we view UX and pedagogy as connected to Education and Human-Computer Interaction. Given these connections, we invite contributions from a broad swath of instructional and research backgrounds. Other projects related to program and curriculum design using UX (and its cousins Experience Architecture and Human Computer Interaction) are also welcome.

Below are potential questions to consider for this collection.

#### **User Experience and Programmatic Design and Assessment**

- How can user experience help develop curricula on a programmatic level?
- How can user experience research methods be used to collect data on the health and sustainability of a program?
- How can user experience help us collect and interpret data for program assessment? How might user experience's emphasis on iteration help inform ongoing assessment questions and practices?
- How can user experience methods be used to present information about our programs to stakeholders?

#### **User Experience and Course Curriculum Design and Assessment**

- How might user experience methods be used to design curricula for a course?
- What are the benefits, or potential benefits, of creating user experience-based course lessons, activities, and/or documents?
- How do our course documents reflect the documentation/information students will work with post-graduation? How do we (or could we) use course documents to model expectations for designing technical and professional communication in the workplace?
- How do we use LMS/CMS systems (Blackboard, Brightspace, Canvas, Moodle, etc.) to enhance the user experience of the course? What are the limitations of these systems in creating a user-centered course for face-to-face, hybrid, or online students?
- How do user experience methods help us collect and interpret course assessments that contribute to iterative course designs and experiences?

#### **User Experience and Pedagogical Practices**

- How can we leverage user experience to teach better or to design better class experiences for our students?
- How do user experience frameworks--including user-centered design, human-centered interfaces, and experience architectures--lend themselves to thinking about pedagogy?

## Proposal Requirements

**Length:** 500 to 750 words (not including references)

### Structure

- clear topic or research question;
- clear research method or conceptual framework;
- clear take-aways and/or implications/applications;
- clear connection to collection's anticipated audience citations

### Questions and Feedback

We strongly encourage you to contact us with queries, and we will be happy to provide feedback on your proposal ideas prior to submission. Email to Kate Crane at [kcrane4@ewu.edu](mailto:kcrane4@ewu.edu) or Kelli Cargile Cook at [kelli.cargile-cook@ttu.edu](mailto:kelli.cargile-cook@ttu.edu) with any questions.

**Submission:** Send complete submissions in .docx to Kate Crane at [kcrane4@ewu.edu](mailto:kcrane4@ewu.edu)

### Extended Timeline for Submissions and Publication

Action Item	Due Date
Proposals due	March 1, 2019
Proposal decisions	March 22, 2019
Manuscript drafts	June 24, 2019
Editorial feedback	July 15, 2019
Chapter revisions	August 26, 2019
Editorial feedback	September 30, 2019
Final chapter revisions	October 7, 2019
Collection submission for review**	October 14, 2019
Anticipated Publication	Spring 2020

\*\*Pending a successful peer review, this volume will be published in the WAC Clearinghouse/CSU Press, TPC Foundations and Innovations Book Series  
<<https://wac.colostate.edu/books/tpc/>>

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