

Redesigning Alma

CS 247 HCI Design Studio Project

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Introduction

Alma is a collegiate social-academic networking website founded by two Stanford students in 2017. With more than 1,000 Stanford students currently registered with the platform, Alma has a noble mission to “enhance the college experience by providing students the data that empower them to build strong relationships and explore new opportunities.” However, the current design of Alma makes it difficult for users to navigate, making it a great candidate for redesign.

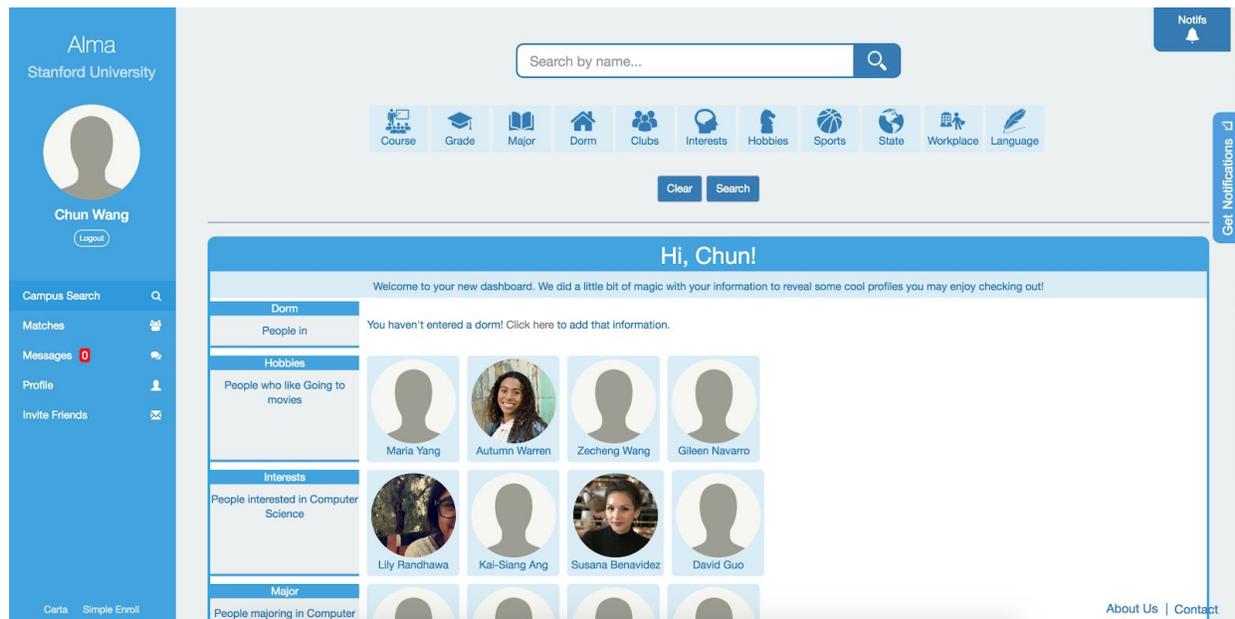


Figure 1 - Original Alma Design. ([view website](#))

Research

Usability Study

Objective

To pinpoint the focus area of redesign, our team went out to conduct a usability study of Alma.

Procedure

We recruited six Stanford students for the study, including three existing users of Alma and four new users. We asked the new users to sign up, create their profile, and find one fellow

Stanford student they wished to get to know. For the participants who had already registered with Alma, we asked them to use Alma to search for a potential group assignment teammate in a course they were taking this quarter. As the participants performed their tasks, we asked them to think out loud, speaking about whatever they were looking at, thinking, doing, and feeling at the moment, which we took notes of.

Synthesis of Observations

The usability study was especially helpful for identifying what aspects of Alma's interface were confusing or frustrating. We analyzed the raw observations from participants and pulled out repeated mentions of problematic areas. It uncovered that Alma had a long and tedious sign-up process, cluttered with mandatory form fields to fill out but were not necessarily related to their search for potential connections. The study also revealed the roadblocks that hindered users from using the "Campus Search" feature successfully and efficiently, namely (1) the site put unnecessary constraint that users had to have a "complete" profile in order to use search; (2) the search bar and filters were competing for user's attention, causing some confusion; (3) users were overwhelmed by the choices of filters and frustrated by not being able to input multiple keywords from one filter category; (4) it was not immediately clear that the dashboard area was related to the search.

Furthermore, the way that Alma presented search and recommendation results also had much space for improvement. During the tests, users complained about the lack of sorting function, the tedious process of clicking through individual user profiles in order to find more useful information, and suggested that they were not particularly motivated to reach out to the other users as the way Alma presented them. The recordings of raw user observations and our synthesis result is included in Appendix A.

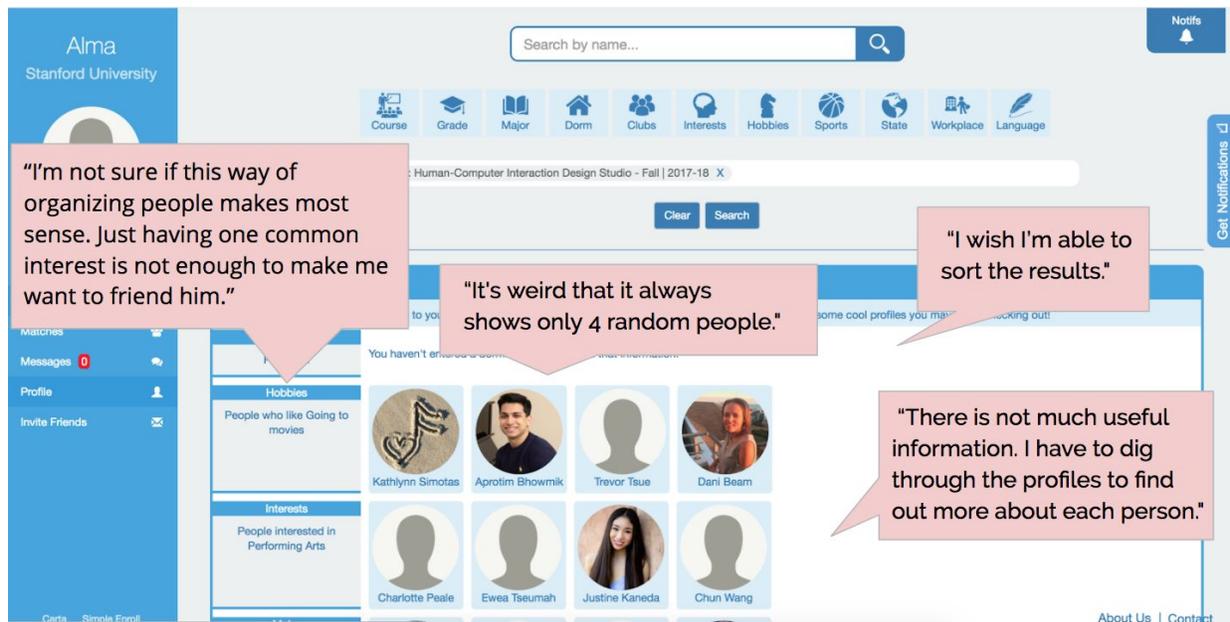
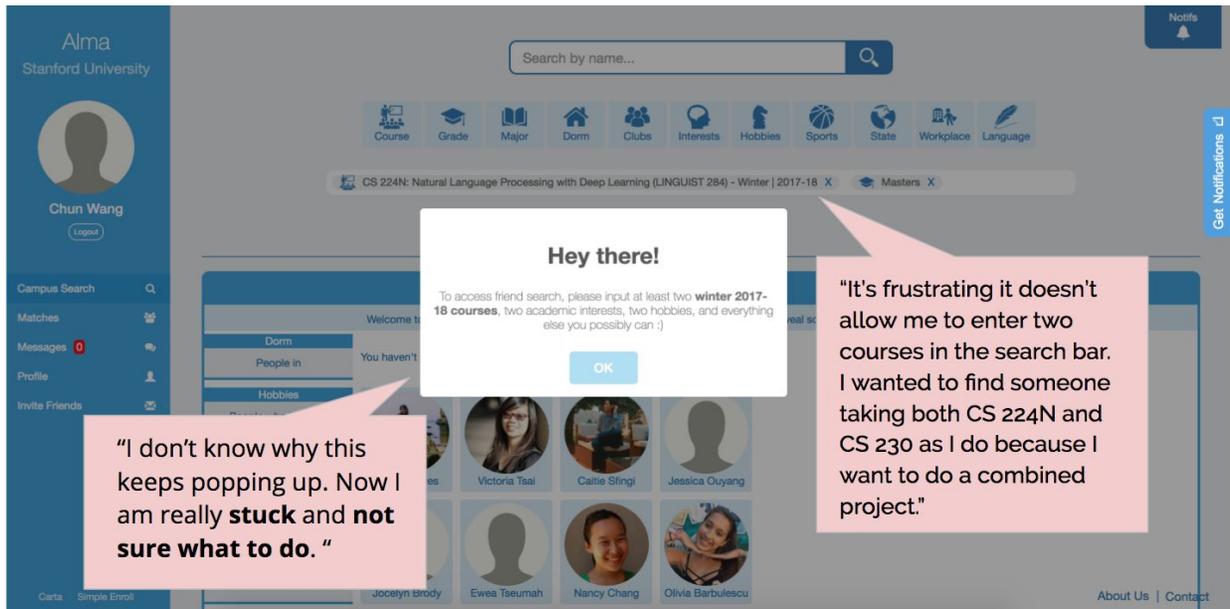


Figure 2A, 2B. Recordings of some users' thinking process as they navigated the Alma interface to search for potential friends and teammates.

Interview with the Founders

Synthesizing observations from the usability study and taking the mission of Alma into consideration, our team reached a consensus that the search and friend recommendation feature should be prioritized for redesign. In order to further narrow down the problem scope and produce a redesign that generates the most value and impact, we decided to follow the 80/20 rule to figure out the top features used by most Alma visitors. To gather these information, our team arranged an interview with the founders of Alma, Akshay Ramaswamy and Chetan Rane, over a group video chat. During the interview, the founders provided us with the user statistics they kept a record of about common use cases and typical user workflows, as well as common user feedbacks about Alma's search feature. They also shared with us the goal and brand identity they envisioned for Alma. The table below summarizes key insights about users of Alma from this interview.

Most common use case	Finding teammates for course projects and/or group assignments
Most typical user workflow	Search for a course taken in current quarter → browse search results for students taking the same course → click into individual student profiles and explore → if student profile looks promising for a good match, establish contact by sending friend requests and/or messages in Alma
Types of queries	Very common: Single queries deploying only one filter Common (over 25% of all queries): Compound queries deploying multiple filters
Most commonly used filters	Most common: Name, Course, Grade, Major, Dorm, Clubs Not common: Interests, Hobbies Rarely used: Sports, State, Workplace, Language
Common user feedbacks	Cluttered filters: users have complained that they don't know how to use filters efficiently

In addition, the founders mentioned that while the majority of current users use the website for academic purpose such as looking for project teammates, they were also considering incorporating ways that would encourage people to use the platform for making more friends. Speaking further about what features they imagined could help the platform to

achieve this goal, the founders mentioned allowing user to see how other students shared commonalities with the user would incentivize them to reach out to more users.

Conclusion from Research

Based on our findings from usability study and interview with the founders, we concluded that searching people was a key feature of Alma that needed to be redesigned. The high-level goal of our redesign should aim at making Alma a much more efficient data exploration tool of student profiles. More specifically, we needed to streamline and optimize the user experience for the process of searching students by user-defined criteria. With the redesign, we also aimed at prioritizing showing the information most relevant to users' decision-making process about who to make connections with.

Solutions

Branding, Moodboard, and Style Tile

Alma brands itself as a young, social network. Given Alma's mission statement and branding, we want to maintain a modern, minimalist look and a blue color scheme typical of social networks.



Figure 3 - Example Moodboard. Our moodboards aim to capture a professional, yet youthful social networking atmosphere appropriate for the brand of Alma ([view all moodboards](#)).

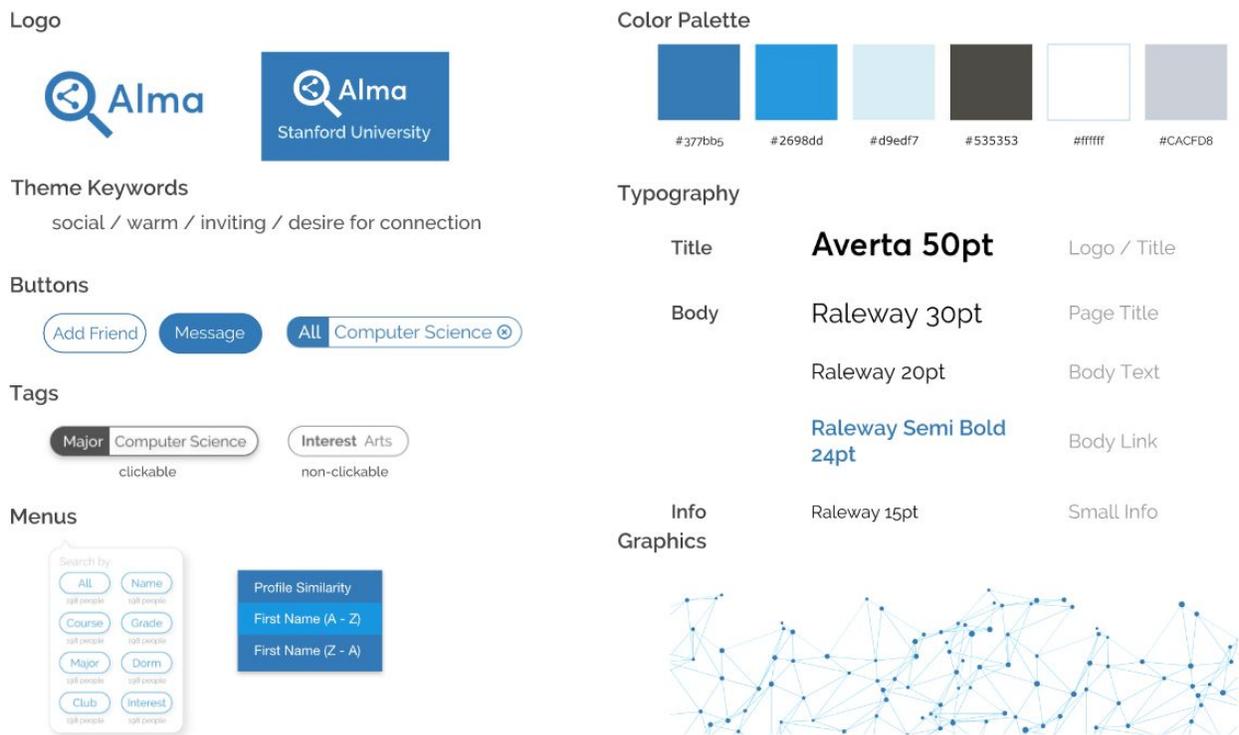


Figure 4 - Final Style Tile. Our style tile incorporates blue hues, modern typefaces and page tools, and a connected network of dots graphic to suggest the themes of modern social networking. The logo emphasizes the primary function—searching for a connection.

Low-fi prototypes

Prototype and Feedbacks

Our lo-fi prototypes explored different ways to implement the search feature to address the issues we found users had trouble with while searching. In addition, all of our prototypes attempted at reducing the efforts required from users to manually click through user profiles shown in the search results. One of the prototypes achieved this by sorting search results by “profile similarity”, a metric that measured the number of commonalities between the user and a particular student. Based on findings from usability study and founder interview, we reasoned that profile similarity score was a good indicator of inclination that user possessed to reach out to a certain student, as information such as major, class year, dorm are the most considered when students searched for teammates. Sharing common interests and club associations would provide additional incentive for user to connect with a

fellow student. All of our prototypes removed the filters that the founders mentioned were rarely used.

The following previews of prototypes we created and tested contain key quotes from the in-studio critiques about these prototypes.

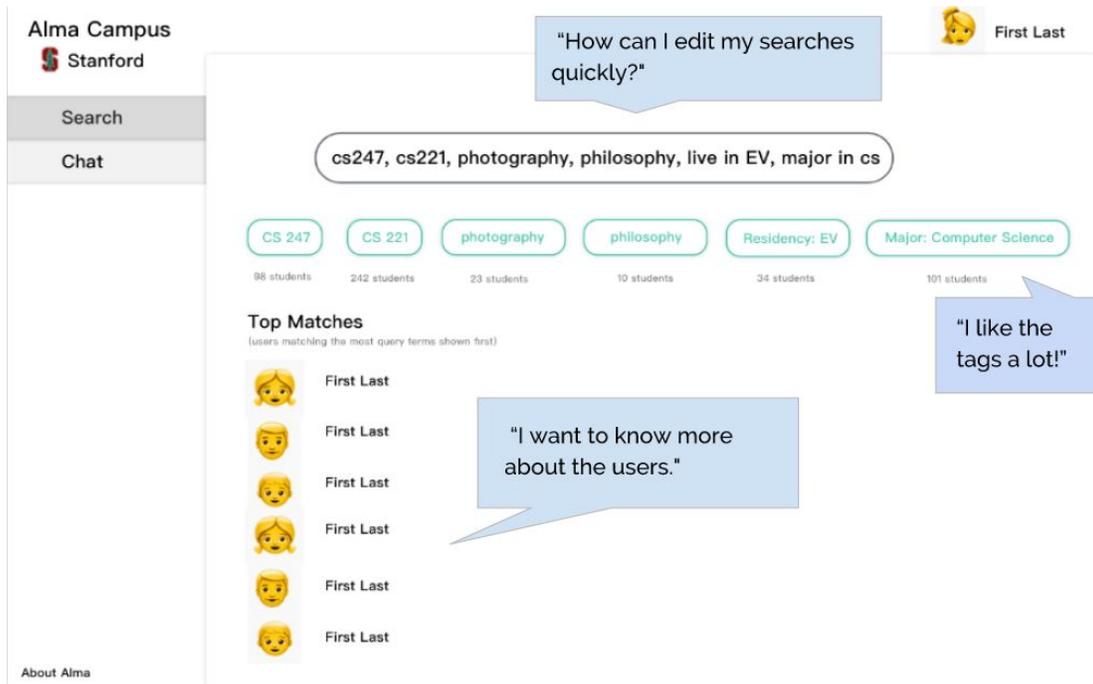


Figure 5 - Prototype 1 Preview. The key features of this prototype are the type in search bar and visual separation of filters. ([view full prototype](#))

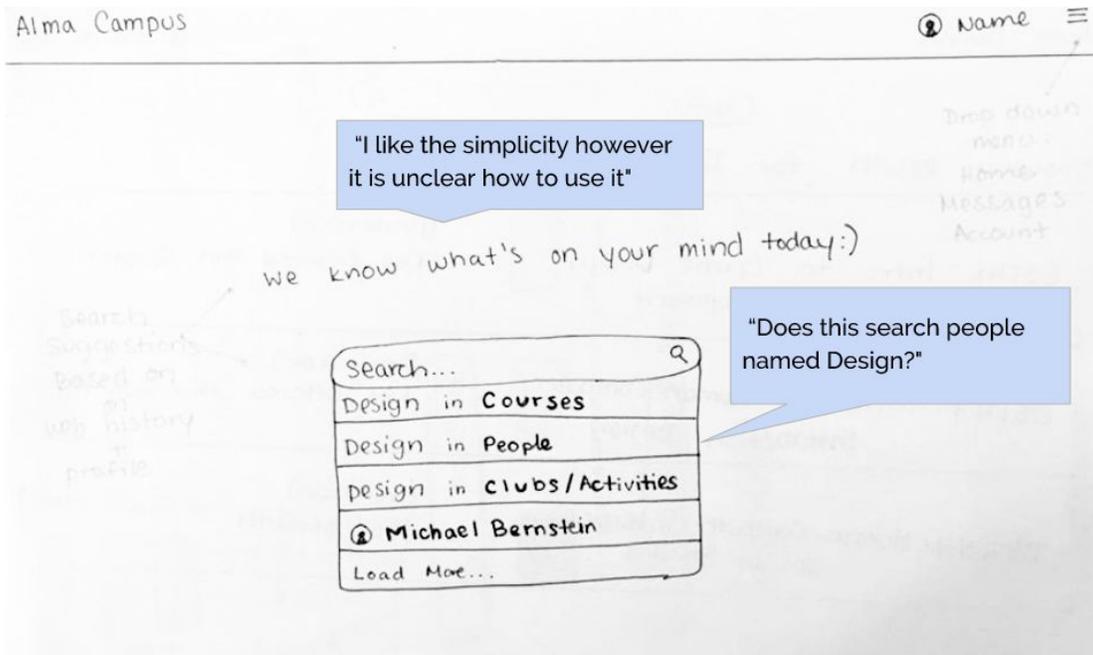


Figure 6 - Prototype 2 Preview. This was our “dark horse” prototype. The key feature of this prototype is the an automatic drop down menu containing curated search keywords based on all the user-data it has collected from the user.

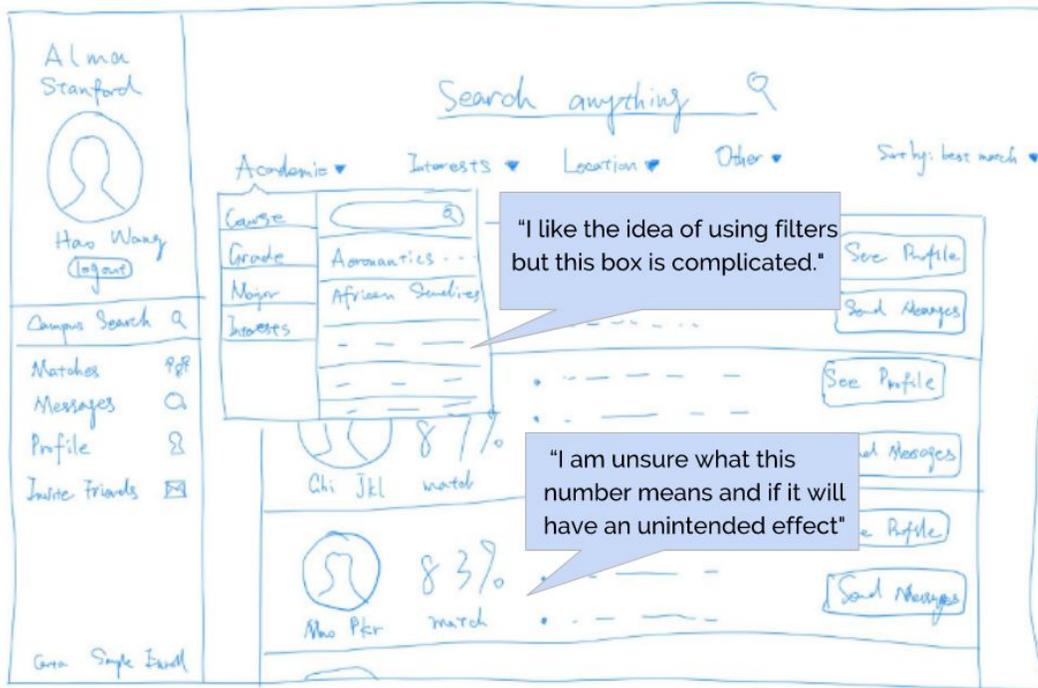


Figure 7 - Prototype 3 Preview. The key features of this prototype are the drop down filtering menu for advanced users, searching with filters, and a best match rating for users. ([view full prototype](#))

Addressing Feedback

Following the feedback (see Appendix A and B), we narrowed our prototype design choice to an upgraded Prototype 3, which had the least number of issues.

In the upgraded Prototype 3, we removed the problematic match-rating, and instead included some key tags a user would have in common with another user. This allows quick access to information that help users to find their potential connections. We also changed the "best match" wording to "profile similarity" in order to be more precise about its meaning. We also added basic information about users in search results.

We know that filtering is an important part of the search process, so we wanted to make filter menu a lot simpler. We wanted to remove the extra couple steps the filter required, and make it just one click away if the user would like to apply a filter. As users have felt unguided when applying filters, our redesign provided a real-time preview of user counts under each filter category in the menu to assist users with their decisions. Test participants really liked filter tags, so we kept them and incorporated them to make searching easier.

Applying the RITE Method to our Chosen Prototype Design

We then performed a RITE test on the upgraded version of Prototype 3 ([view full prototype](#)), which served as a draft for our next medium-fi prototype.

Procedure

Following the RITE practices, our team reached out to 3 more users. Each of our team members was responsible for running a usability test of the upgraded prototype with one user, recorded new issues discovered, discussed the issues with the team, and rapidly implemented solutions to these issues whenever applicable. The next team member would then test a prototype revised with these fixes on a new user. We coordinated our testing schedule over the weekend to allocate enough time for implementing changes and verifying their effectiveness with users.

Results

A majority of issues raised during Prototype 3's testing were Category 1 and one Category 2^u issue concerning the filter menu. We found a total of 9 issues, and attempted to fix 8, resulting in an Impact Ratio of 88%. Our total attempted fixes were 8 and subsequent re-fixes were 4, resulting in a Re-fix Ratio of 50% (see Appendix B).

Medium-fi prototype

Prototype and feedbacks

Including our results from our lo-fi prototype testing and applying the RITE method, we developed a medium-fi prototype that we hoped could effectively address the issues raised earlier and keep things that worked. The following preview of the prototype we created and tested contains key quotes from our studies.

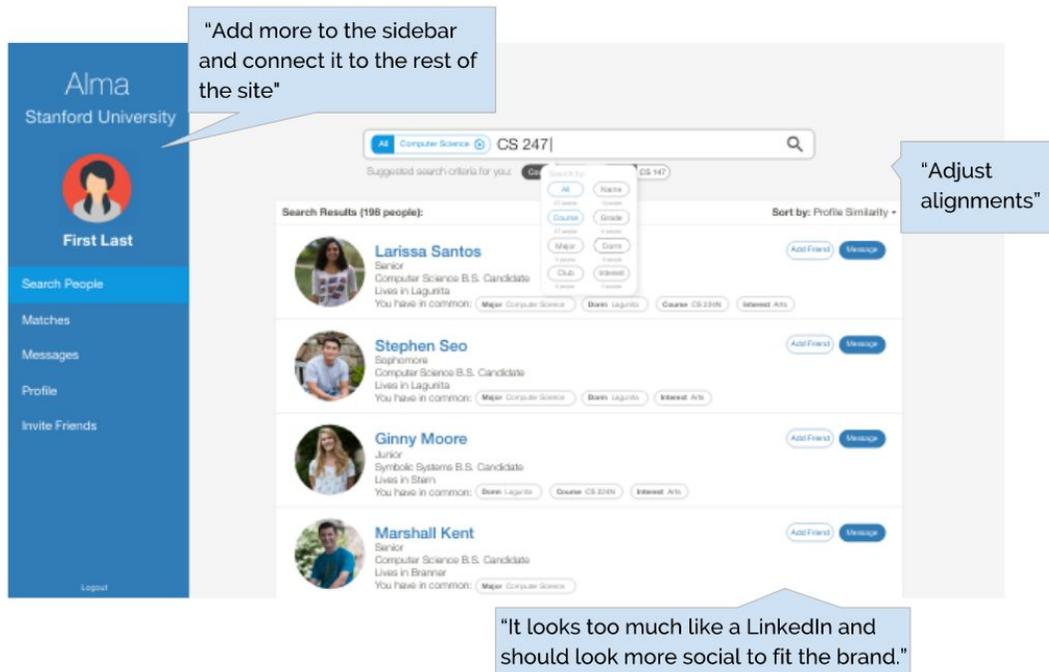


Figure 8 - Medium-fi Prototype Preview. ([view full prototype](#))

Addressing Feedback

Following our studies, we hoped to reconcile in the final prototype some of the stylistic and branding comments, and also adjust the search bar to be positioned at a focal point on the page as searching is the most empowering feature of Alma.

Execution

Final prototype

We implemented our final interactive prototype ([view full prototype](#) and [source file](#)) in Adobe XD, where we could build the prototype and link interactions in the same place.

Final Solution Description

Overview

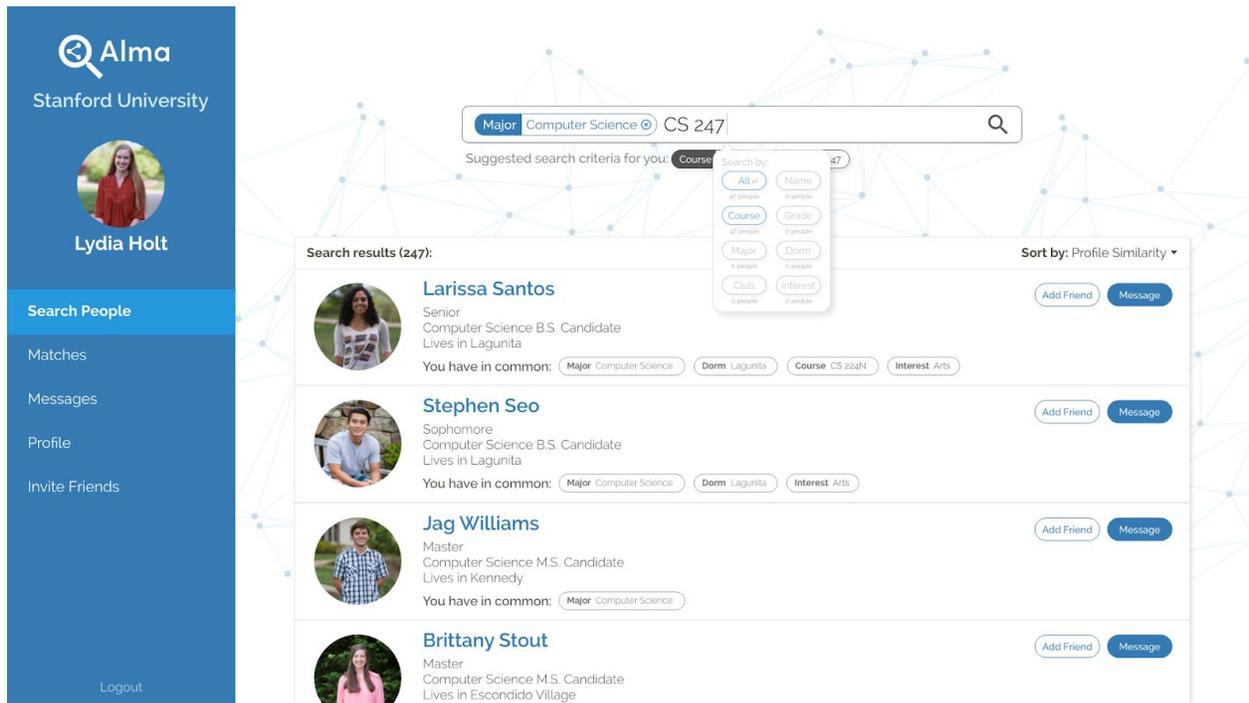


Figure 9 - Final Prototype Preview.

Compared to the original design of Alma, our final design made two major changes that made searching more efficient and easier on eyes. First, we removed filter buttons on the homepage and only kept a search bar with a drop-down menu. Second, we added sorting to search results and surfaced the information about user profile similarity, which facilitated the process of making connections with potential teammates/friends. We also designed a logo, fine-tuned the sidebar, background, color scheme and font of the original design, all of which enhanced the brand identity and added a touch of personality to the site. In the following subsections, we will describe the final design and explain reasons in detail. For

each change, the first paragraph describes the change and the second paragraph gives the reasoning behind the design decisions.

Note: we refer to plain text typed into the search bar as "keywords", and keywords associated with a filter category as a "tag".

Search bar

(1) Filter buttons are moved into a drop-down menu and the original search bar for names is repurposed to be a general search bar. When user start typing, a drop-down will show, where users chooses a filter for current keywords or simply ignores it, presses return and gets search results. We title the menu "Search by" to help users understand the menu's purpose. There is a sign in the "All" filter which indicates pressing `return` key is equivalent to clicking "All". If user chooses to use the "All" filter, this will effectively search for results that match any of the filter categories.

This is the key change we made. According to the 80/20 rule, the usability study and the interview with founders, we realized that more users were using single-filter search than multi-filter search. Thus, we decided to simplify the search bar by hiding filter buttons in the original website. Besides, the drop-down menu can also teach users what they can search.

(2) While typing keywords, users can view the number of search results in each filter in real-time. The filter with no search result will be grayed out.

In the original Alma design, users had to first select or search for a keyword within the popup menu of a filter button, and then use the keyword to search people. We considered this process over-complicated. Instead, with our redesign, given the real-time preview of search result counts, users should be able to quickly adjust the keywords they input into search bar. Some may be concerned that users cannot find the right keywords to start with -- however, we argue that this can be addressed by a more advanced algorithm that does smart or fuzzy matching of keywords, the technical implementation of which is beyond the scope of our project.

(3) Compared to the original design, filters are reduced and rearranged. Infrequent filters are removed and all filters are now sorted by frequency in the drop-down menu.

This change was motivated by what we found out during the interview with the founders: we were told that filters including language, sport, workplace and state were used infrequently, while the order of most frequent filters were course, grade, major, dorm, club, interests and hobbies.

(4) We remove the "clear" and "search" buttons in the original design. Now that search results will show up right after adding a tag, a button labeled "search" is unnecessary. A small "x" button to the right of each tag is used to remove the tag.

From usability tests, we learned the original "clear" and "search" buttons were both confusing and inefficient. This motivated us to seamlessly integrate them to the search bar.

(5) Suggested search criteria are shown below the search bar.

Suggested search criteria can be considered as both shortcuts and guides that teach users how to use the search bar with Alma. When adding this functionality, we were thinking about users' intention of using Alma. From the interview with founders, we realized the most common user intention was finding teammates. Thus, suggesting some criteria according to users' profiles or search history is necessary to accelerate common search flows. For now we are limiting these suggested criteria to the courses users are currently taking as this is the most common starting point to use search in Alma. Furthermore, it also adds a level of intelligence to the website.

(6) After adding a tag, users can quickly change its filter category and keyword. To change the filter category, users can simply click on filter category and select a new filter category in the drop-down menu. To change the keyword, users simply edit the text inside the tag.

In the original design, a tag can not be changed once added. The only way is removing it and adding a new tag. Our new design facilitates this process.

(7) With above improvements, both single-filter search experience and multi-filter search experience are refined. To conduct a single-filter search, users can type anything they want to search and press return, and the results will show up instantly. Users can also simply click a suggested search tag to start to use search if they want to. To conduct a multi-filter search, users can type more keywords to the right of existing tags to construct a compound query. With this redesign, we also support multi-keyword matching for one filter category, which was not implemented in the original website and complained about in the original usability test.

This design is inspired by the 80/20 rule. As a result, users are able to conduct a common single-filter search in the fastest way, and an advanced multi-filter search conveniently. Furthermore, the transition between a single-filter search and a multi-filter search is intuitive, seamless and progressive.

Search Results / Recommendation

(1) We add a sorting functionality, where user can sort search results by profile similarity, the alphabetical order of first names or other criteria. We preserve the original feature of Alma to recommend friends: when there isn't a search query applied, the homepage will default to showing all users sorted by profile similarity, which serves as a ranked list of recommended friends.

In the usability tests, we received many feedbacks about the randomness of original website's search results and realized one key feature was missing: sorting. As one common user intention is finding friends, it would be beneficial to show similar people to help users find friends. Showing recommendations as default search results is both functionally and logically coherent.

(2) Commonalities are now shown in the search results in the form of tags. Visually a shape similar to the tags in search bar are applied to these tags.

We received many user feedbacks saying there were too little information about the users in the search results. Surfacing commonalities help users understand search results and move onto next steps (search query refinement or contacting users) more quickly.

(3) "Add friend" and "Message" buttons are added to each search result.

The end goal of using Alma is to make contact with fellow students. Call-to-action buttons such as "Add friend" and "Message" buttons are helpful shortcuts once users become interested in a search result. We put these buttons at a more prominent position on the page for easier access.

Others

(1) We designed a new logo and background pattern.

As Alma is marketed as a "social-academic college network", we use elements such as a magnifier and links to represent this core idea: searching for a connection. The background image connects to the pattern presented in the logo while making the website look more active and energized.

(2) We kept the basic tone of original color scheme and fine-tuned it.

We consider the blue color scheme as an important visual identity of Alma, hence didn't intend to dramatically change this color scheme.

(3) Font Raleway is used for all text except for the logo.

The typeface we chose for Alma has a warm style and helps to identify Alma as a youthful, social brand.

Conclusion

Reflection

The process of redesigning Alma was full of challenges. At the start, we spent a lot of efforts to identify the appropriate overarching goal of the redesign that hopefully would deliver the best value to the platform. When evaluating the existing design, we tried to look beyond the look and feel of the existing design, but also analyzed what the original design did insufficiently at meeting user expectations and how we could re-implement them to make to better achieve Alma's high-level goal of empowering students to search and connect with fellow students efficiently. We also did our best to base our design decisions on user analytics, drawing data and observations from tests and interviews. As a result, we have attained a reasonable level of confidence in the effectiveness of our redesign.

Next steps

Going forward, we hope to keep in touch with the founders and show them our polished design. It will be interesting to hear about their opinions about the outcome of our redesign, and hopefully it would inspire them to reconsider some of Alma's existing features. Regardless, a wealth of lessons have been learned through this project and hopefully we contributed positively in making Alma a more effective and enjoyable social-academic networking platform.

References

[1] Medlock, M. C., Wixon, D., Terrano, M., Romero, R., & Fulton, B. (2002). *Using the RITE method to improve products: A definition and a case study*. Usability Professionals Association. Retrieved from <https://docs.google.com/file/d/1eAO66gukyO3K3Al4mKcoyzVEnEGabGF-/>

Appendices

Appendix A. Raw Usability Study Observations

Participant 1: Amy, previous user

Observations:

- It's weird that it always shows only 4 random people.
- I haven't updated my dorm, but I basically don't need that feature since I know most people.
- I can add classes that aren't being taught that quarter, which is obviously problematic. Nobody is even in the same classes as me apparently.
- Sections feel narrow and unnecessary.

Participant 2: Nick, new user

Observations:

- sign up page is easy to get to but too cluttered
- push notifications are too much
- accidentally clicked out of start up box and not sure where to go next
- languages option?
- I don't like choosing from a list of interests, it's very tedious, nothing is organized and it's also mandatory to choose things like sports
- unsure what clear and search buttons do
- didn't realize the top buttons were to change my profile, I thought they were for something else like searching because of the search bar
- weird notification box at corner

Participant 3: Yongshang Wu, new user

Observations:

Register

- The YouTube video in homepage starts playing automatically
- Have to re-enter password if anything goes wrong
- Received 10-20 junk mail from Alma last quarter
- Find the email address has been used. Want to reset password but get 2 email, and only one of them works
- Safari auto-fills the username instead of email, and a wrong password
- Totally takes 5:16
- Setup
- No profile picture
- First try "cs224n" but fail, then search "cs 224n"
- Didn't notice he should enter courses in current quarter
- But can add courses not in current quarter

- Complain when entering dorm
- Think there are so many to enter
- Didn't notice he should enter at least two interests, but passed
- Didn't realize he should click "Add" after selecting an interest
- Didn't realize he could skip club
- After finishing the setup process and refreshing, the setup window appears again

Campus search

- Notice he can choose multiple tags
- Can not sort results
- Not much information, too much empty space

Dashboard

- Didn't find out how to return homepage, and then clicked "clear"
- Only 4 recommendations for each category
- No Chinese / Mandarin in language settings in profile
- Find himself in dashboard

Matches

- Think it is a way to add friends
- Consider it a good feature

Messages

- Bad UI
- See notifications in both "messages" and "notifs"
- Notifs won't close when clicking other place

Competitor Observations:

Facebook:

Search

- Enter "Stanford computer science"
- Find place / page / ... but don't find people
- Then realize he should choose people in the menu bar

Find friends

- Find it very quick

Messenger

- Need to be friend first

LinkedIn:

Search

- Enter "Stanford computer science"
- Think the result is much better than Facebook

People you may know

- Find many people he already knows

Messaging

- Need to be friend first
- Mix up InMail and message

Participant 4: Xinyu Xu, previous user

Observations:

Register

- Takes 01:05

Setup

- Didn't find her courses in ChemEng
- Think it asks too much about private information
- Didn't understand the difference between interests and hobbies at first
- Didn't notice she should click "Add"
- Takes 5 min

Campus search

- After checking people's profiles and clicking return, go back to homepage rather than search results
- The result is not sorted alphabetically

Dashboard

- Don't know how to return homepage at first
- Find someone she already knows
- Find herself in dashboard

Matches

- Don't understand this feature
- Think she should enter keywords, while actually she should enter names

Message

- What if there are duplicated names?

Competitor Observations:

Facebook

Search

- Don't know how to search

Find friends

- Find it quickly in homepage

Messenger

LinkedIn

Search

- Find My Networks and Find Connections first
- People you may know

Messaging

- Don't realize she can send message at first
- Mix up InMail and message

Participant 5: Anonymous, new user

Observations:

Landing page

- Liked the edgy/clean design
- Icon weird b/c not compatible w/ the whole design
- Like the "Interesting" intro video - - but should have no sound in case user is in library
- "Would you want to use it?" -- I won't use this b/c I prefer to make Chinese friends / teammates
- Icons are not consistent / not professional
- Good to reiterate on register/login

Register page

- School - can be prefilled
- Is it really necessary to fill your class year?
- Ok button color is weird

Login page

- User name wrong ---- this is a software bug

Dashboard

- Red text to warn user to fill in required is necessary for search
Pick courses: Hard to input courses courses -- the UI could be smarter / less strict; Should Validate data before i click "add" button
- Pick Dorms - does include grad student dorm -- poor diversity --- had to choose "off campus" to move on. Home allowed China which is good. Repeatedly ask me to add information is Annoying.
- Pick interests: No "Design" in dropdown menu -- but this is probably ok
- Pick workplace: No "IBM" in dropdown menu
- Pick social networks: why do you need to know facebook? -- might want to import my contacts? -- but not imported into dashboard (so it doesn't really matter)

Profile dashboard

- No gender - but may not be good
- Message - UI is weird
- Notif - notif from Jan 28 --- why so old!
- Good features - You can click on clicks to do the search; edit profile

Task Flow for Finding project teammates:

- I want to Search by course -- "this is simple enough"
- I like they allow multiple search criteria (tags design)
- "What if best teammates?" - I need to search by grade year --- cannot add multiple grade years / majors etc.
- I also want to search by language
- Interests don't matter - b/c I won't social within team a lot
- Like the turn off desktop notification button
- Dislike the chat preview -- duplicate - confusing at first

Discussion:

On a scale 1-10, how desirable would you rate a social-academic website as such.

What is the most useful feature? What you hate most? What doesn't matter if it doesn't exist?

Like most: Search (rare in SSN - valuable)

On a scale 1-10, how enjoyable would you rate Alma. Why?

7-8

- It doesn't really fit my needs. I usually know a friend first (won't be online), And then find teammates from these persons.
- Online friending doesn't fit my personality.
- I won't keep in touch with friends at Alma. I'd use Wechat / in person.

On a scale 1-10, how likely would you recommend others to use Alma

I won't recommend b/c i won't use it

2-3

Can you think of other similar products?

Piazza for finding teammates. Facebook for friends. There is nothing two special about this website that's irreplaceable.

In terms of usability, compare to Facebook. Would you rather use Facebook for connecting with friends?

Facebook design is too clutter; but more used to it. Facebook / Piazza (easy to replace).

Color stanford. Not novel. Different from landing.

Participant 6: Anonymous, new user

Observations:

Landing page

- This is sleek
- Like the register / login showing twice
- Icon is ugly / not consistent
- Video Demo not necessary - not clear what it's doing

Register page

- Major dropdown menu position not consistent

Dashboard

- Welcome Popup: the text is too long - "I will skip this whole thing"
- Pick course - have trouble entering courses correctly. Must select two courses - not sure why
- Pick Home - not sure which domain it is about - show some US states first then some countries
- Pick Interest - must have 2 - not sure why. Super confusing.
- "The setup process is Too long! I just want to find teammates"
- Popup is annoying it shows too many times
- Like the icons, hover effect, consistent colors, it's obvious what to do

Task Flow for Finding project teammates:

- I want to pick course -- not sure where prefilled courses has gone?!! Ideally it should use what i just entered!

- If UI is smart and can pull data from stanford course, after i enter course name it should automatically show term the course is offered
- "Mandating two courses so annoying"
- "Clear / Search" buttons - not sure what to do w/ this
- Duplicate search bars
- After clicking on "search" the dashboard doesn't seem to be changed
- "Now I am really getting Stuck and not sure what to do. The two courses requirement keeps popping up but i just want to find teammates for one course!"
- User Quits / gives up
- "My Brain hurts!"
- "Alternatively, i'd use piazza / TA to find teammates". I care much if they share interests with me to be my teammates, but i'd probably do a personality check."

Task Flow for Networking on Alma:

- User clicked on a person who also likes video gaming. "i want to have more matches in interests". This will provide more incentive if website recommends users of more shared interests with me. "Just having one common interest doesn't really make me want to be friend with him."
- User sent friend request -- "maybe i want to chat w/ this person before i friend him"
- The Matches feature: "i wouldn't use this feature unless i'm too desperate for friends." "i'd probably won't use it after my 1st month here at stanford"

:Discussion:

On a scale 1-10, how much likely would you would you rate a social-academic website as such.

1

What is the most useful feature? What you hate most? What doesn't matter if it doesn't exist? (didn't ask)

On a scale 1-10, how enjoyable would you rate Alma. Why?

3

Typical way of making friends in a new environment?

- 1) People who have a few things common with me (interests, major)
- 2) People who may not share interests with me but have a strong passion about something and i feel like i can learn from them.

Think of other similar products?

Piazza/Facebook

Appendix B. Prototype Testing Feedback

The following prototypes were quick tested during Studio. Observations were jotted down as they came up. Observations are not repeated.

Prototype 1:

- When to enter the search is unclear
- Unsure what to type in, curious about what happens when inputting a specific name
- Clicking tags takes to a list view of all people which is confusing. There should be x's next to each of the categories to remove them. If you wanted to find just CS, you would search just CS.
- How can I edit searches quickly?
- Doesn't like how it doesn't show information about matches except the name
- I want to know more about the users.
- Like the visual representation of tags
- What is chat in the navigation bar? Who does it start chatting with?
- 80/20 violation with search suggestions
- Search bar not going to enter
- How common are reunion searches?

Prototype 2:

- Too many filters are missing
- Add pages for lists of people
- Likes the simplicity, but would prefer more clarity about tags
- A way to filter out by quarter should be added
- Confusion about list view of courses
- Would this find people whose name is design? Or people who are in design?

Prototype 3:

- Having a rate is strange for a filter
- People liked the % match rating when they understood it. What happens if there's low match ratings?
- Too many significant digits

- Sorting is good because there's separation but the menu has extra steps
- Would like autocomplete when typing
- Reminded of Stanford Alumni Mentoring Page
- Add animation for search
- Homepage already shows recommendations, try added closure

Post Lo-fi Prototype Testing

The following test was to examine an upgraded version of Prototype 3. The primary motivations for this test were to check for refixes and see if search box is too complicated since the search interface is advanced.

Participant 1: Anonymous

Observations:

- Homepage: show suggested search like current courses as bubbles under search box since finding teammates is the most common use case.
- Since we're updating search results in real-time, we can as well show result count next to each category in the drop down menu, and gray out the categories with 0 results
- Call to action buttons should be more visible -- this is the end goal of users to use this website.
- Change "Your profiles have 5 commonalities" to "You have in common: ". The exact number is not important.

Participant 2: Anonymous

Observations:

- Wasn't clear that the result count was from people search. It feels like searching for course/major etc

Solution (implemented):

- Change search bar placeholder text to "Search People". Change "suggested keywords" to "suggested search criteria" underneath the bar.
- Add "Search by:" info text the dropdown menu

Participant 3: Anonymous

Observations:

- Without the available categories menu visible, wasn't sure what to type into the search bar to begin the search.

Solution:

- None. This is easy to learn.
- Maybe the label "All" should be changed to "Any".
- Wasn't clear that the result count was from people search because the label text was vague "100 results". It feels like there are 100 CS courses rather than 100 users.

Solution (implemented).

- Change the label to be "100 people" in the dropdown menu

Participant 4: Anonymous

Observations:

- Received pretty positive feedback about the current design flow. They also really liked the bubble pop up!
- Someone asked for a way to clear all searches at once.

Solution:

- Not part of the focus of the design. This is an edge case.