understanding your audience: **discogs.com**

Executive Summary

Discogs.com is a website with a fractured identity. While it was built to serve two primary functions; a database and a marketplace, the site is muddled with other fuzz and shiny crevices that can confuse the user. Built for a niche audience, the site fantastically serves its loyal primary users but can often alienate new users and visitors. Intended for hobbyists and music-lovers, the website needs to hone in on what makes it so fantastic for its dedicated users, but leave the door open for new friends.

To understand this further, researchers at Quinnipiac University conducted UX research methods to gain a deeper understand of the sites audience and identity. To capture such insights eloquently, the researchers relied on an in-depth comparative analysis, an interview, a survey, sentence completion, personas, scenarios, card-sorting, a heuristic evaluation, a usability test, and an icon usability test.

Results of Analysis

After completing a comparative analysis and personas, it was clear that Discogs very successfully caters to their niche audience. However, as growth is a major goal of the site, new audiences and first-time users could potentially be overwhelmed by the site's unclear navigation, muddled identity, and buried features. It was clear that simple tasks like adding a single album to a user's wantlist could be very frustrating given the lack of concatenated information and the individualized itemization of products for each album.

Recommendations

Major recommendations tackle these analyzed themes. The following report breaks the following recommendations down at an in-depth level, and offers context and evidence behind the proposed changes:

- Many of the sites icons should be changed to better portray the pagelink they represent. Specifically "Dashboard", "Wantlist", and "Sign-out"
- Search items should be concatenated to fall under the initial album release or artist rather than spread out by special edition, release date, 2nd pressing, etc.
- "Explore" should be rebranded as "Discover" so that users can better identify with the discovery of new music and products
- Buyers should have the option to sort "Price + Shipping" to make international orders more accessible and narrow seller competition.

Introduction

Discogs is a user-built database of music that also operates as a marketplace for physical music mediums. Users can share and view the production history of music, while also buying and trading records, tapes, and cds online. Per Discogs' about page, "Discogs is an open, supportive environment for people who love music, data, and buying and selling vinyl, cassettes, CD, and more." The Discogs website is a fast-loading site that uses a grayscale color theme with splashes of color to highlight the music content being shared. The navigation consists of a search bar in the left corner, a user account in the far right, and three major facets of the website: "Explore", "Marketplace", and "Community".

Design
The website utilizes a monochromistic style heavily relying on blacks, whites, and grays to allow for user content and media to stick out. This is a really popular technique, especially with many in the web media industry leaning more towards night mode to support younger eyes. This is balance out by large texts. While the home page is designed eloquently, it mis-reflects one important thing; the thematic representation of music products. When scrolling down, album covers are neatly lined on the page to represent different categories of interest. Meanwhile, the idea of this circular vinyl or cd, or tape, seems to be underutilized as an effective storytelling tool. Meanwhile the overall catalog of the marketplace and explore sections feels a bit clunky, but most importantly, familiar. The design definitely captures a feel reminiscent of digging through sleeves of vinyls to find a specific one of desire. It feels old, but works. Still, the design could use a fresh reimagining, and perhaps benefit from some clearer sorting and categorizing visual tools.

Requirements
The website does not appear to profit off of digital advertising, rather, it likely collects most profits from facilitating sales between users. A potential marketing requirement could be embedded into the specific search algorithm's Discogs uses to sort its database, which in turn could likely not be drastically altered at the flip of a switch to support more catered recommendations. This is likely an ongoing software challenge for the team that is constantly undergoing process improvement to match the likes of a Spotify or Apple Music algorithm.

Comparative Analysis

Discogs seems to be a strong competitor regarding its niche audience. The design choices and overall features of the website are catered directly to those in the music trading business / hobby. Meanwhile other websites have a much larger audience which can benefit sellers to a large degree. It is important to note, however, that major retail websites have built on general design choices to befit most products which can often lead to a much different buyer experience than Discogs.

	discogs.com	**ebay.com**	**amazon.com**	**craigslist.com**
Unique Features	• Dedicated solely to vinyl / music exchange • Built on comprehensive database of music	• Huge user-base for pre-owned products • Optimizied for accessibility	• Easy-to-use navigation • Accessible browsing history	• Search by location • Simplified retro navigation
Design Strengths	• Monochromistic stylings (like a record) • Easy-to-use navigation	• Neat clean design with organized metadata • Personalized homepage with deals and recommendations	• Colorful lightweight design with eye-popping navigation • Personalized homepage with deals and recommendations	• Contrasted text and lack of visual needs • Likely familiar navigation for older audience
Design Weakness	• Clunky search algorithm • Outdated catalog stylings • Under-use of thematic bridging	• Simple design leaves less reflective experience • Small text at top of page with loe margin can be hard to identify	• Design could be too complicated or jarring for new users • Advertising takes up considerable space on every viewpoint	• 0 to no accessibility features • Lack of visual reflective experience
Customer base	614,000	182 million	310 million	60 million
Accessibility score	52	95	57	58
Requirements	• 0 to no advertising requirements • Likely not able to request major algorithmic changes due to engineering constraints	• Advertising in algorithm • xfn Partnerships • Design patience to not usurp longtime users	• Fees + competition w Amazon • Design patience to not usurp longtime users	• Advertising in algorithm • Design patience to not usurp longtime users
Core features:				
Wishlist	✓	✓	✓	X
Collection	✓	X	X	X
Recommended	X	✓	✓	✓
Shopping Cart	✓	✓	✓	X
Search	✓	✓	✓	✓

Personas / Scenarios

Discogs has an incredibly niche audience, however there are plenty of users who may be interested in using their services that currently do not. At its core, Discogs is a site built by and for hobbyists, however as vinyl records resurge in sales– new users are sure to stumble upon Discogs site. The following personas and scenarios eloquently outline current users, potential users, and delve into what purposes these fictional persons may have on the site.

Vinyl Newbie

Zachary
Male

Demographics

- 27 years old
- Detroit, MI
- Freelance Graphic Designer

Short Description

- Young, artistic-minded designer who decided to experiment with new hobbies and passions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Values

- Prefers quality over quantity
- Likes to support small and independent businesses
- Easy online shopping experience

Goal

- Wants to build a new record collection in a cost-effective way, starting with current favorites with the hopes to add in some classics

Technology

- Primarily uses cellphone to access websites and apps
- Secondary device is an iPad, this user does not typically use a computer outside of work / graphic design
- Highly technically adept, can figure out most websites / accomplish digital goals quickly

Cassette Expert

Discogs®

Ruth
Female

Demographics

- 52 years old
- Hamden, CT
- Bookstore Owner

Short Description

- Seasoned collector who cares deeply about the quality of the things she touches. Incredibly materialistic finding joy in the hobby of collecting and sharing knowledge.

Values

- Prefers older niche music
- Likes when transactions have a human touch
- Prefers to buy things in-person

Goal

- Wants to continue growing cassette collection and also sell physical music products in her store. Wants to have access to a larger catalog of products for her customers.

Technology

- Primarily uses computer to access websites and apps
- Secondary device is an iPhone, this user typically uses Edge and Microsoft office products
- Average technically adeptness, can understand just as many websites as she struggles to navigate

Modest Collector

Discogs®

Dana
Female

Demographics

- 34 years old
- London, England
- PhD Student [Typography]

Short Description

- A die-hard music lover who keeps to herself. Isn't super involved in the music community but enjoys a small collection of vinyl records with sentimental or unique value

Values

- Unique items with "character"
- Likes to hunt for music for the experience
- Guiding hands and helpful people

Goal

- Wants to have an avenue to physically own music that is sentimental to her. Looking to expand her small record collection at a reasonable price for niche music.

Technology

- Primarily uses Android phone to access websites and apps
- Secondary device is a computer, this user typically uses Google products
- Not very technically adept, typically takes a long time to harness new digital media skills but enjoys the learning process

Scenarios

Zachary, 27, a freelance Graphic Designer, has recently picked up collecting vinyls as a hobby during the COVID-19 pandemic. He's highly technical and uses his computer daily for graphic design projects that he does for an online site called Fiverr. Due to this, he is very well-versed with consumer-to-consumer transactions in an online setting. He also has a tight pocketbook, and wants to buy vinyls in a cost-effective manner.

Logging on to Discogs.com Zachary is blown away by the incredibly large catalog and the fantastic community. Zachary wants to purchase the latest James Arthur album "It'll All Makes Sense in the End". Searching for it, he is given a few different editions to choose from. After landing on what he thinks is the right copy he sorts by price. Frustrating to him, he sees that the cheapest option is actually much more expensive with shipping from the UK. He sifts through the results before finding what he thinks is the cheapest option with shipping, and purchases it.

Ruth, 52, a bookstore owner, is a seasoned collector who cares deeply about the quality of the records in her stash. She prefers older music and is very attentive to the specifications, edition, and quality of the records that she purchases. She wants to begin selling records in her store, but she knows others won't have as much an affinity to specifications as she does. Considering he recognition of the resurgence of vinyl records in popularity, she wants to offer options to her customers.

Logging on to Discogs.com Ruth is very confused by what she is looking at. A customer has asked if she can purchase a single copy of "Let it Be" by The Beatles. Searching for it, she finds thousands of copies in various condition and various pressing. Unsure what her customer is looking for she sifts through the records only to realize there are too many options to choose from. She accidentally purchases 20 copies of the special edition pressing by clicking "Add to Cart" on the main album page, inadvertently adding all the for-sale copies to her cart.

Dana, 34, a PhD student studying Typography , is die-hard music lover who keeps to herself. She isn't super involved in the music community but enjoys a small collection of vinyl records with sentimental or unique value. From a young age, Dana can remember going to Grateful Dead concerts with her father, and since been gifted a record player for her Birthday, she wants to start a modest collection.

Logging on to Discogs.com Dana wants to start building a wishlist of records that she finds dear to her heart. She begins by searching for "Ooh La La" by Faces. After clicking on the album she most recognizes, she clicks "add to wantlist". Later, she checks her wantlist to find that she added over 300 copies of the album. Frustrated she removes all the unnecessary copies which represent the many editions of the album by bulk select.

Interview

Script

"Hi there and welcome. My name is _____ and I am _____. I have been tasked to understand how I can best improve the interface and navigation of Discogs.com to serve the site's users. More specifically, I'm hoping to understand how the organization and processes that Discogs use best resonate with their users. This interview should take no more than 45 minutes and you are free to leave at any time.

Per Discogs' about page, "Discogs is an open, supportive environment for people who love music, data, and buying and selling vinyl, cassettes, CD, and more."

As this is a project for class, I am not affiliated with Discogs in any form. Please feel free to be as honest and candid in your responses. Your honest opinions will better serve my work and recommendations. I will also be recording this session so that I may transcribe our discussion for analysis at a later time.

Feel free to stop me at any time should you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you so much once again, let's begin"

Warm-Up

1. Tell me a little about yourself, and your relationship with music.
   a. What is one of your all-time favorite songs?
2. When you use the internet, are there any challenges you face when trying to buy the things you really love?
3. In your words, can you tell me a little about your understanding of Discogs, and what your impression of the website is?

Body

1. If you were to use, or do use Discogs, what would be the major features you would most often use?
    a. Why would you not use x feature?
    b. Have you ever purchased a CD or Vinyl record online before?
2. How would you describe your past or current experience with purchasing hobby-related items online?
    a. Have you ever sold anything online?
    b. What sites do you sell on? Do you have any frustrations?
3. If you were to buy a vinyl record online, what features and information would you like to be available to you?
    a. What do you think would be the most important features to others?
4. Imagine you had to give an awesome review about something you purchased online. Can you walk me through all the steps from finding the object to leaving the review, and what that would look like at the best service level?
5. What improvements would you make to the site design and/or layout?

Cooling-off

1. If you had an hour with the director of Discogs, what questions might you ask them about their website and line of thinking?
    a. What are some wants and needs would you suppose that director could have?
2. When you buy things online, do you more often use your phone or your computer?
    a. If phone— do you use an app more often or a browser?

Wrap-up

"That will conclude the interview. Thank you so much for your time, your insight will be an invaluable piece to my project going forward. Should you have any questions or wish to have any comments redacted please feel free to reach out to me on any medium. If there is anything I haven't asked you that you feel would be valuable for me to know, please don't hesitate to share. Thank you once again."

Survey

1. Do you consider yourself a hobbyist?
A. Yes
B. No

Not everyone being interviewed is going to be a collector— additionally, Discogs offers services more than just Vinyl. This question is a good lead in question that will help researchers get a better understanding of surveyees and can help drive design decisions for broader audiences should they not be a hobbyist.

2. If yes, how many years have you been a member of that hobby?
A. 1-2 years
B. 2-5 years
C. 5-10 years
D. 10+ years
E. I am not a hobbyist

It's good to know what kinds of collectors we're speaking with. How can Discogs create good design choices that don't scare off new collectors but honor longtime ones?

3. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
A. Some High School B. High School
C. Bachelor's Degree D. Master's Degree E. Ph.D. or higher
F. Trade School
G. Prefer not to say

Switching to more demographic info here. This will give researchers a gauge of the average record collector and help drive some of the copy used on the website. Of course, prefer not to say is an option to protect the user's private information.

4. Are you married?
A. Yes
B. No
C. Prefer not to say

Many hobbyists are single, so it's good to know what the differences are when it comes to fostering a hobby next to someone who may not share the same hobby. Similarly what if a spouse or partner wants to gift a record to someone? Can Discogs account for 'visitors' in design choices? Of course, prefer not to say is an option to protect the user's private information.

5. What is your annual household income?
A. Less than $25,000
B. $25,000 - $50,000
C. $50,000 - $100,000 D. $100,000 - $200,000
E. More than $200,000
F. Prefer not to say

A pretty salient one for the art of design considering the sale of goods. Of course, prefer not to say is an option to protect the user's private information.

6. Where do you buy most of your non-essential products?
A. Online directly from seller
B. Online from major distributer (like Amazon)
C. Brick + mortar shop
D. Major retailer (like Walmart)

This is a great question to understand what is appealing to most collectors. Do they prefer the actual experience of let's say, going to record shops? If so, how can Discogs replicate it? Or, do they enjoy the ease-of-use of a site like Amazon? How does Discogs replicate that? Good insights.

7. Have you ever sold products online?
A. Yes
B. No

Of course, Discogs is also home to sellers. To best understand site changes and adhering to their audience, Discogs must also understand their sellers.

8. How often do you sell products online?
A. More than 10 times a year B. 5-10 times a year
C. 1-5 times a year
D. I only have a few times
E. I don't sell products online

It's good to know how serious sellers are. It might be good to understand what longtime sellers value (next question) vs what new or first-time sellers need.

9. When selling products online, which kinds of sites do you use?
A. Custom and/or used goods distributor (like Etsy, Mercari)
B. Personal website
C. Massive distributor (like Amazon, Walmart)
D. Social media
E. Other

Similarly, it is good to understand what features sellers best gravitate towards. A seller who uses Instagram may prefer easy access to their audience vs a seller who prefers the functionality and automation of Amazon.

10. I would consider myself a _____ consumer.
A. Vinyl record
B. CD
C. Cassette tape
D. None of the above

Now it's time to get to the brass tax. It's best researchers understand what products users are specifically interested in. Vinyl remains the best-seller, but that doesn't mean the market is only Vinyl.

11. My favorite kind of music is...
A. Indie / alternative B. Rock
C. Pop
D. Rap
E. Electronic
F. Other

There are many styles of music that don't have huge followings in the physical product community. In terms of the audience, it will be much easier to cater to an indie/alternative or rock crowd than a pop or electronic crowd. Still, what insights or needs do these consumers have?

12. Please check all the mediums you use to listen to music
A. Through a physical product (ie. Vinyl, CD)
B. Through a streaming service (ie. Spotify)
C. Through the radio
D. Other
E. I don't listen to music

Good to understand what mediums people gravitate to. Most music listeners don't listen to just one medium of music, so it can be beneficial to understand what are the draws or successes of the different mediums.

13. Where did you learn the bulk of your knowledge on how to collect, care for, and use your hobby?
A. Human interactions
B. Online resources
C. Combination of both
D. Other
E. Not applicable

Could be really good to understand how users like to gain their information— this may help in design choices to best understand how to bring in new users and expand the audience.

14. When purchasing non-essential products online, do you typically buy new, used or a combination of the two?
A. New
B. Used
C. Combination of both

Long-term users may be okay w the understanding of "MINT", "NEAR MINT", "GOOD" etc. But new users may just want to know if it's been played and what condition in layman terms it's in.

15. How often do you read the specifications of the products you purchase online?
The specifications don't matter to me
                              [Slider]
               The specifications are very important to me

This one should be interesting. As a vinyl collector myself, I don't really care. I don't want my own biases informing the design choices if they are considered essential for most collectors.

16. If you are a physical music product collector, what drew you to collecting them? (Select all that apply)
A. Superior sound
B. Being able to collect my favorite records physically
C. Supporting the artists in a more direct fashion
D. Fascination of old technology
E. The 'ritual' of cuing up and playing an album in it's entirety
F. I enjoy inconvenient and expensive methods of listening to music
G. Other

In terms of bringing in new users this question could offer some really valuable insight. How can Discogs tailor their design to honor longtime collectors but use the core points that attracted them to the hobby to spark interest in new users.

17. Have you ever ordered a non-essential product that was damaged on its route to you?
A. Yes
B. No

This question is to understand the overall shopper experience. How could this play into some users worries about purchasing from peers online?

18. Have you ever visited Discogs.com?
A. Yes
B. No

It will be good to understand how known or visited Discogs is, especially for those invested in the hobby. How can Discogs use good design choices and site usability (like SEO) to promote the site and draw in users who may not even be invested in the hobby.

19. Do you actively seek to try out new hobbies
A. All the time
B. Sometimes
C. Not often
D. Never

It will also be good to understand how receptive new users may be to collecting vinyls. If they are open, it will put many of their previous answers into context and help Discogs focus which features are most important to a new collector.

20. What is one word that comes to mind when you think of vinyl records?

The only short answer question included (one word). This should help with displaying Discogs brand throughout the website. How can Discogs best use the core elements of records to attract users and those who are potential users?

Card Sorting

Card-sorting was used to try and understand how users of Discogs would best organize the major headings in the navigation. After initial insights and thoughts from the comparative analysis, it was imperative to understand how users would naturally navigate the site. To capture this, cards were created and shared with participants through the use of an online service called OptimalSort.com. Participants were met with the following script (blanks added so that this may be re-used).

Script
"Hello and welcome.

My name is _____. This is a study utilizing a card sorting method for research regarding the website Discogs.com.

I am _____. Thanks for agreeing to participate. This activity should take no more than 5-10 minutes of your time.

Discogs is an open, supportive environment for people who love music, data, and buying and selling vinyl, cassettes, CD, and more. I am affiliated in no way to Discogs.

After you are finished, I will be analyzing your response to understand how structural changes can heighten the website's user experience. Your response will help me to organize the content on the website and complete a justified design recommendation.

More on how this activity will work on the next page...

Step 1
Take a quick look at the list of items to the left.
We'd like you to sort them into groups that make sense to you.
There is no right or wrong answer. Just do what comes naturally.

Step 2
Drag an item from the left into this area to create your first group.

Step 3
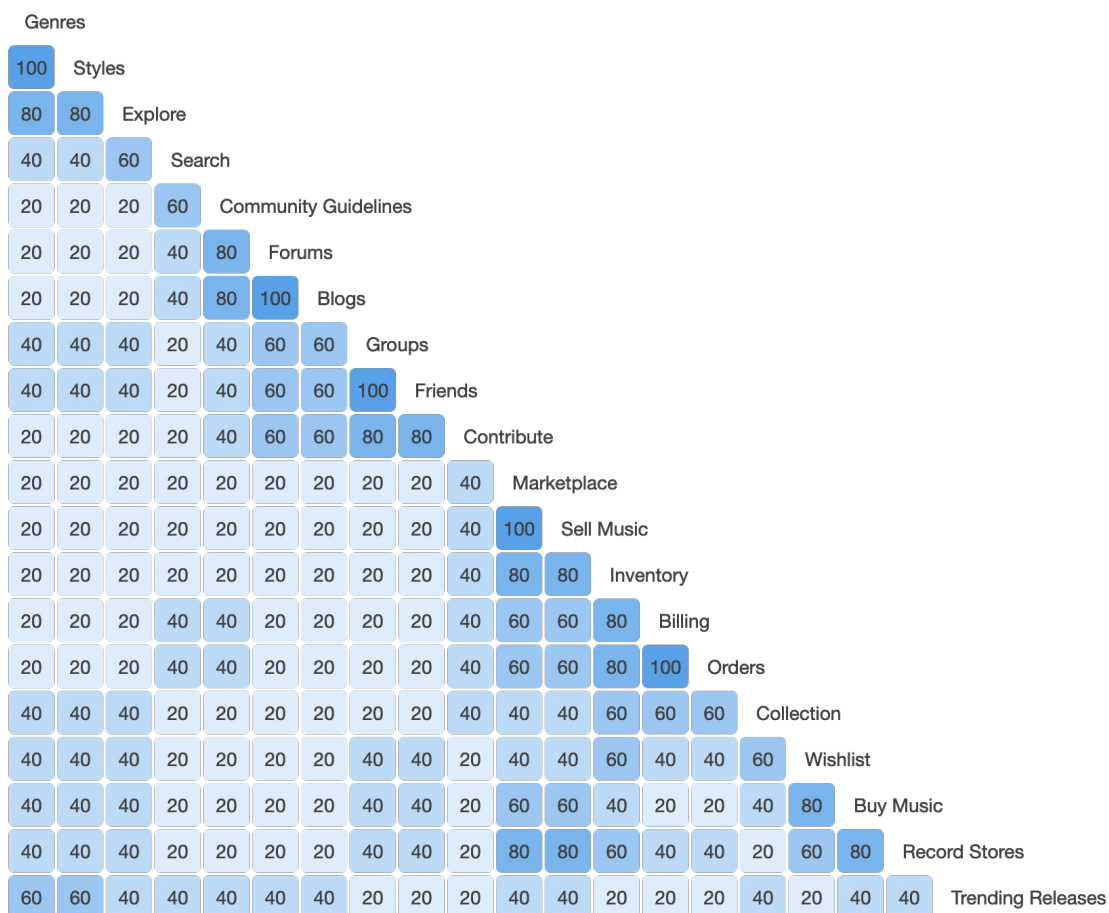Click the title to rename your new group.

Step 4
Add more items to this group by dropping them on top of it. Make more groups by dropping them in unused spaces. When you're done click "Finished" at the top right. Have fun!
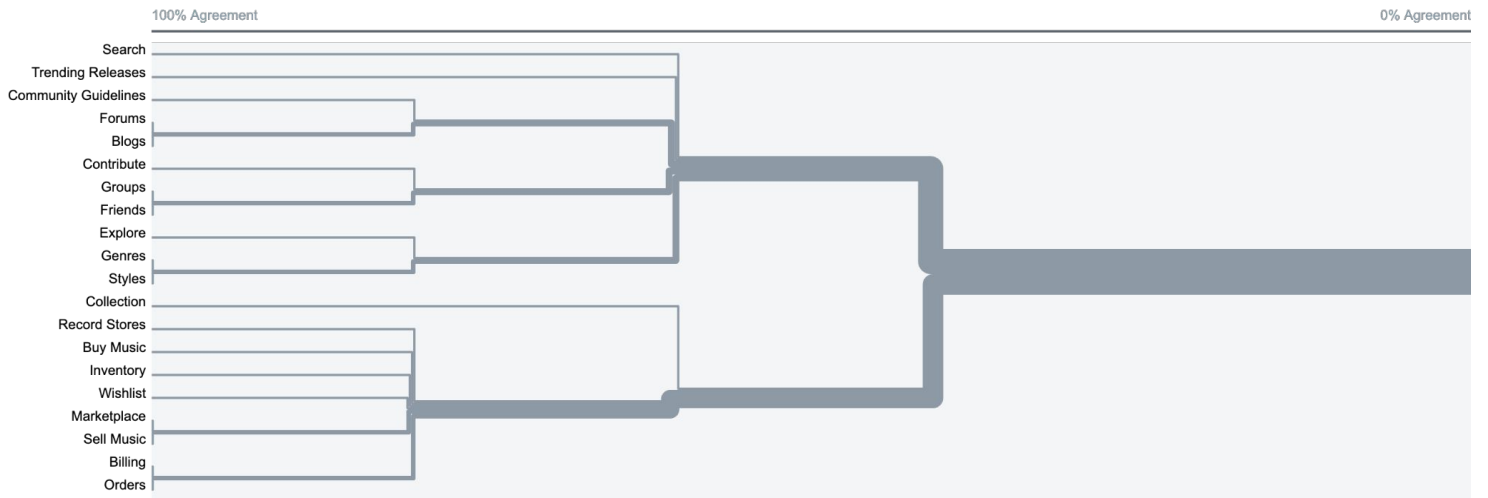
understanding your audience: discogs.com

Cards

1. Record Stores
2. Billing
3. Inventory
4. Community Guidelines 5. Explore
6. Contribute
7. Genres
8. Styles
9. Trending Releases
10. Marketplace
11. Buy Music
12. Sell Music
13. Groups
14. Forums
15. Blogs
16. Friends
17. Search
18. Wishlist
19. Collection
20. Orders

Results

Row	G	St	Ex	Se	CG	Fo	Bl	Gr	Fr	Co	Ma	SM	In	Bi	Or	Cl	Wi	BM	RS
Genres	100																		
Styles	80	80																	
Explore	40	40	60																
Search	20	20	20	60															
Community Guidelines	20	20	20	40	80														
Forums	20	20	20	40	80	100													
Blogs	40	40	40	20	40	60	60												
Groups	40	40	40	20	40	60	60	100											
Friends	20	20	20	20	40	60	60	80	80										
Contribute	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	40									
Marketplace	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	40	100								
Sell Music	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	40	80	80							
Inventory	20	20	20	40	40	20	20	20	20	40	60	60	80						
Billing	20	20	20	40	40	20	20	20	20	40	60	60	80	100					
Orders	40	40	40	20	20	20	20	20	20	40	40	40	60	60	60				
Collection	40	40	40	20	20	20	40	40	20	40	40	60	40	40	60	60			
Wishlist	40	40	40	20	20	20	40	40	20	60	60	40	20	20	40	60	60		
Buy Music	40	40	40	20	20	20	40	40	20	80	80	60	40	20	20	40	80	80	
Record Stores	40	40	40	20	20	20	40	40	20	80	80	60	40	40	20	60	40	60	80
Trending Releases	60	60	40	40	40	40	20	20	20	40	40	20	20	20	40	40	20	40	40

100% Agreement   0% Agreement

Search
Trending Releases
Community Guidelines
Forums
Blogs
Contribute
Groups
Friends
Explore
Genres
Styles
Collection
Record Stores
Buy Music
Inventory
Wishlist
Marketplace
Sell Music
Billing
Orders

Analysis

Upon completing the card sorting activity with 6 individuals in an open category setting, there were some interesting findings. Largely, it seems the organization of navigational items across discogs is working successfully. Most participants paired key navigational items together—even if their self-written category name was different. Looking at the above similarity matrix, it is interesting that while most items were similar, the one that stood out as out-of-place was "Contribute" with respondents finding this to fit better with more community-based words like "Blogs" and "Forums". It is suggested that Discogs make this structural change by moving "Contribute" to the dropdown under "Community".

Recommended Change

Search
Explore
- Genres
- **[DELETED "Contribute"]**
- Styles
- Trending Releases
Marketplace
- Buy Music
- Record Stores - Wishlist
- Sell Music - Orders
- Inventory
- Billing
Community
- Community Guidelines
- Forums
- Friends
- **[ADD "Contribute"]**
- Blogs
- Groups
- Record Shops

Sentence Completion

Summary

Four participants were administered the sentence completion test. All four participants were closely related to the researcher and agreed to participate over text messaging. All four participants will remain anonymous.

- Participant 1 is an accounting student at Wayne State University
- Participant 2 is an environmental activist
- Participant 3 is a legal specialist for a large tech firm
- Participant 4 is a business student at Ferris State University

The researcher sent all 5 sentences to the participants over text and received their responses over text.

The researcher was intending to test initial perceptions to Discogs.com (Discogs). In all cases, the participants were not previously aware of the website. Additionally, all participants are outside of Discogs base audience.

The participants all returned all 5 sentences. Many overlaps were seen regarding their responses, especially when it came to Sentence 5 in which 4 out of 5 participants suggested some more thought towards site identity. While it seemed many resonated with how Discogs supports its users, it lacks in the draw of a new audience by polarizing new visitors with the assumption that the site is easily digested.

The major findings were:
- The home page should be reformatted to include a landing with a brief statement regarding the website's functionality
- The "Explore" tab in the menu should be renamed to "Discover"

Methodology

All four participants had no awareness of Discogs prior to their text session. All participants were messaged the following text message:

Participants were informed:
"Could you check out the following website [Discogs.com] and then freely finish these five sentences? There is no right or wrong answer. You shouldn't need to overthink it or anything, just write what comes to mind."

Participants were then texted the following incomplete sentences:

- Discogs is _____
- Navigating Discogs is _____
- One reason I would use Discogs is _____
- One thing I would change about Discogs would be _____
- One thing I would add to Discogs would be _____

In all cases, participants were able to complete all 5 sentences.

The researcher then thanked each participant for the participation.

Results
Responses shared:

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Discogs is a community designed to bring people together to discuss and explore recorded music amongst each other.	Discogs is a music information database, looks like its primarily a platform to buy & sell vinyls and other music collectables?	Discogs is… a database to discover music	Discogs is… an app to catalog music while also allowing users to track the worth and growth of their physical collection
Navigating discogs is simple and not too cluttered. It's designed to make the community easy to filter through, as well as curate new styles towards the viewer without a lot of unnecessary clutter to go through.	Navigating Discogs is somewhat unclear as a user completely unfamiliar. Not sure what some of the subpages are for, such as "Contribute," I can't see anything unless I create a login.	Navigating Discogs is… straight forward and user friendly	Navigating Discogs is… easy. The bottom task bar allows for users to quickly and efficiently navigate within their account
One reason I would use Discogs is to explore some music that is not in my normal comfort zone.	One reason I would use Discogs is to compare prices for a vinyl of Kate Bollinger's most recent album lol.	One reason I would use Discogs is… to buy or sell music in my collection	One reason I would use Discogs is… to discover new music based upon my existing favorites
One thing I would change about Discogs is I would put the mission statement of the website on the front page. Something brief so I understand what the website is when I first travel to it, rather than switching to the community tab to understand the goal of the website	One thing I would change about Discogs is making those "Explore, Marketplace, Community" tabs a bit bigger/move them to the landing page since I kinda missed them when scrolling through all the info on the first page.	One thing I would change about Discogs would be… moving the discogs 101 tab higher on the home page	One thing I would change about Discogs would be… the design of the artist overview pages
One thing I would add is an "About Us" section, highlighting why there was a need to bring to the community together and how Discogs fills that role.	One thing I would add to Discogs would be an "About Discogs" or single sentence on the landing page that says what Discogs is, I'm not even super sure my guess for Q1 was correct hehe.	One thing I would add to Discogs would be… a short description of what the site is for as one of the first things you see on the page	One thing I would add to Discogs would be… more images and color to build to the aesthetic of the app

Researcher observations and notes:

Sentence 1
While buying and selling remain core functions of the website, it was interesting to see many users regard the website as more of a discovery tool or catalog. This function is also core, but both are salient features to the site's success.

Sentence 2
Most users found that Discogs was easy to navigate despite not having any specific tasks other than to click around.

Sentence 3
This seemed to even out the responses to sentence 1. Half of the participants aligned more with Discogs database experience while the other half found themselves more drawn to the marketplace.

Sentence 4
Quite a few muddled insights here. It seems that most changes were reliant on the aesthetics of the website.

Sentence 5
This seemed to highlight a gaping hole. 3 out of 4 participants reported that some sort of landing with an "About" regarding the website would be beneficial for new audiences to understand and contextualize what the site is and how it functions.

Recommendations

Change	Justification	Severity
Reformat the home page to include a landing with a brief statement regarding the website's functionality	3 out of 4 participants reported that some sort of landing with an "About" regarding the website would be beneficial for new audiences to understand and contextualize what the site is and how it functions.	High

Change	Justification	Severity
Rename "Explore" to "Discover"	Many participants felt more aligned with the idea of discovering new music rather than exploring music. This verbiage will better align with user impressions.	Low

Icon Usability Test

Summary

Three participants were administered the icon usability test. All three participants were closely related to the researcher and agreed to participate either over text message or verbally at work. All three participants will remain anonymous.

- Participant 1 is a trust & safety analyst at a major tech firm
- Participant 2 is an investigative analyst at a major tech firm
- Participant 3 is a software engineer at a major tech firm

The researcher shared a Google Document with each participant with clear instructions at the top and asked the specialists to complete the responses.

The researcher was intending to understand the efficacy of the icons used throughout Discogs.com (Discogs). In all cases, the participants were not previously aware of the website. Additionally, all participants are outside of Discogs base audience.

The overwhelming feeling from all participants was that the icons used by Discogs do not have immediately clear definitions. Aside from the "List" icon and "Collection" icon, the other icons tested have little to no usability in the format Discogs intended them to be used. Previous research shows that labeling icons only benefits certain audiences too, so it is essential that the icons are updated to reflect ease-of-use.

The major findings were:
- The dashboard icon reads more as "Speed" or "Progress" and should be changed to reflect something more related to the user.
- The wantlist icon is completely unrelated. Users attribute this icon more to "Show Password" or "View".
- The sign-out icon reads more as "Power" or "Off".

Methodology

All four participants had no awareness of Discogs prior to their text session.

Participants were shared a document with the following instructions at the top:

"I want to make this immediately clear, we are testing the website not you. There are no wrong answers, no mistakes, no too-long's or too-short's. It's important for you to feel comfortable, so please don't overthink anything.

This activity is intended to measure the efficacy of web icons. Please think of the following icons as if you were in a web environment (ie. on a website) and had to use these icons to navigate to a page.

Activity.
Write three words that each icon could represent as a page link (if you can only think of one or two that's fine!)"

Participants were then shown 5 icons. These icons represented Dashboard, Collection, Wantlist, List, and Sign Out respectively.

In all cases, participants were able to provide 3 words for each icon

The researcher then thanked each participant for the participation.

Results
Top associations for each icon:

Icon	Top Associations	Actual Pagelink
	Speed, Speedometer, Progress, Performance	Dashboard
	Options, Settings, Resources, Guide	Collection
	View, Show/Hide Password, Inspect	Wantlist
	List, Options, Categories	List
	Power, Start, On, Sleep	Sign-Out

Researcher observations and notes:

Icon 1
Dashboard was not attributed to this icon at all.

Icon 2
While no participants came up with the word "Collection", in the context of Discogs this likely will still resonate with users.

Icon 3
No participant even came close to attributing verbiage to Wantlist. This eye icon was more seen to have visual-related tasks.

Icon 4
This one was, for the most part, attributed successfully.

Icon 5
Participants most attributed this icon with the idea of turning the power off or on. Perhaps there is a better way to demonstrate sign-out.

Recommendations
Top associations for each icon:

Change	Justification	Severity
Change the sign-out icon to something more resemblant of this:	Participants most attributed this icon with the idea of turning the power off or on.	Low

Change	Justification	Severity
Change the wantlist icon to something more resemblant of this:	No participant even came close to attributing verbiage to Wantlist. This eye icon was more seen to have visual-related tasks.	High

Change	Justification	Severity
Change the dashboard icon to something more resemblant of this:	Dashboard was not attributed to the current icon at all. Participants saw this more as speed or progress	Medium

Usability Test

Summary

Three participants were administered the usability test. All three participants were closely related to the researcher and signed forms that acknowledged the use of a video recording to be analyzed by the researcher and perhaps shared with the class professor, Dr. Ewa Callahan. All three participants will remain anonymous.

- Participant 1 is a practicing family physician.
- Participant 2 is a finance student at Rutgers University.
- Participant 3 is a trust and safety analyst at a major tech firm.

Due to the researcher using a company laptop at the time, they were unable to place any recording software on the computer. To adjust, the researcher used an iPad Pro and recorded the participants completing tasks on his MacBook Pro (2019, 16 inch). Tasks were printed and read aloud to each participant as they navigated the website on the MacBook through a Google Chrome tab.

The researcher was intending to test the usability and accessibility of the website Discogs.com (Discogs). Discogs is a music website dedicated to the record-keeping and trading of music releases and physical music products. Users can interact with a community of contributors to engage in adding to the database as well as buy and sell vinyls, cassettes, CDs, and other physical music products.

In all cases, the participants were not previously aware of the website.

The participants all completed each task, though some had incorrect outcomes to the intended result of task 2. Instead of repeating the task, the researcher took note of these outcomes as the feedback / confirmation given by the website was adequate enough to make the user feel as though they had accomplished the intended task (though incorrect). Varying degrees of frustration were experienced throughout by each participant.

The overwhelming feeling from all participants was that, while the website was intuitive in many ways, Discogs lacked in major aspects of accessibility and can be quite jarring to new hobbyists or general audiences. Additionally, Discogs seemed to be too generalized in certain salient aspects, and too specific in other aspects.

Methodology

All three participants had no awareness of Discogs prior to their session. They were each briefed on what length the session would at maximum take (45 min), and were given a form for which they could acknowledge the video recording of the session.

Participants were informed:
"I want to make this immediately clear, we are testing the website not you. There are no wrong answers, no mistakes, no too-long's or too-short's. It's important for you to feel comfortable, so please don't overthink anything."

2 of the usability tests were conducted in what was unfortunately a noisy environment at a kitchen table. 1 was conducted in a private room.

Prior to showing the website to the participants, each participant was asked the following questions:

- What's your occupation? What do you do all day?
- On a scale from 1-10 with 10 being highly technical, what would you rate your technical aptitude, or ability to pick up new technical skills.
- What kinds of sites (work and personal) are you looking at when you browse the Web?
- Do you shop or sell online often? If so, what websites do you primarily use?
- Do you collect anything? What are some important specifications you'd like to know if you were buying something that you (would) collect.

Participants were thanked for their participation and then asked to scroll around the homepage of the website. They were not permitted to click anything yet. Participants were instructed to offer some narrative of:

- What strikes them about it
- Whose site they think it is
- What they can do here
- What the site is for

In all cases, participants were able to identify that there is some sort of music-related database and marketplace, and 2 of 3 were able to identify that vinyl records may be involved.

After, participants were asked to complete 5 tasks. These tasks were scenario-based and both read aloud to the participant as well as placed in front of them on a printed sheet of paper.

The researcher shared:
"For the sake of these tasks and to not burden you into making an account on the website, I have pre-logged into my personal account on the site."

The tasks were as follows:

- You accidentally added "Dunkey's Album" to your collection. Can you find and remove it?
- You are looking to broaden your network with other vinyl lovers. Try adding the top monthly community database contributor to your friends list.
- You are permitted to use the search function here. Imagine this. You'd like to buy me a vinyl copy of "It'll All Make Sense In The End by James Arthur." Can you please find this and add the copy with the lowest price + shipping to your cart?
- You are permitted to use the search function here. You love music and are hoping to add more of your favorite music to your want list. Can you please find and add a copy of an album you enjoy to your wantlist?
- We want to go record hunting nearby. Can you please find the record shop closest to us?

Results
Time taken to complete each task:

Participant	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
1	1:12 min	3:15 min	2:13 min	42 seconds	1:55 min
2	31 seconds	2:22 min	1:11 min	16 seconds	1:30 min
3	19 seconds	6:35 min	1:19 min	18 seconds	1:04 min
Mean	**41 seconds**	**4:04 min**	**1:34 min**	**25 seconds**	**1:30 min**

Researcher observations and notes:

Task 1
Participants oftentimes clicked on the line item itself and hovered the mouse to the right.

Task 2
- Participants often tried multiple different links under "Community" before finally trying / looking under "Explore" for the "Monthly Leaderboard"
- Participants were confused by which 'name' was the username to add. Hard to tell from artist names sometimes.
- Participant 1 typed in the wrong name after looking at the monthly leaderboard instead of clicking on the user's profile.

Task 3
No participant was able to successfully add the lowest price + shipping to their cart, however they all thought they did. [Participant 3 noted this could potentially be incorrect, when challenged to fix it, they did a little scroll before settling on their answer]

Task 4
Participants did this successfully but it is notable that they each added 'all versions'

Task 5
Participants 1 and 3 clicked "Record Stores" under "Marketplace", Participant 2 clicked "Record Shop" under "Community"

Recommendations

Change	Justification	Severity
Add a trash can symbol to the far left of line items in both "Collection" and "Want-list"	Participants oftentimes clicked on the line item itself and hovered the mouse to the right looking for some kind of quick delete button for the single item. It was only when they noticed there was a select all that they could delete the item by using a bulk-only action in the far left.	Low

Change	Justification	Severity
Move "Contribute" and all it's associated links (ie. "Monthly Leaderboard") under the "Community" tab rather than "Explore"	Participants often tried multiple different links under "Community" before finally trying / looking under "Explore" for the "Monthly Leaderboard". Even still, many expressed frustration.	High

Change	Justification	Severity
Consolidate menu to include only 1 "Record Shops" link under "Marketplace" and add "My Location" functionality	More participants clicked "Record Stores" under "Marketplace", the bulk of the time users spent on this task was manually scrolling in on a map rather than linking their location	Medium

Change	Justification	Severity
Clearly distinguish the difference between a username and a musical artist name. Use clear colors to indicate this difference	Participants expressed confusion by which 'name' was the username to add. Hard to tell from artist names sometimes. Participant 3 tried typing in a username to add a friend that was ultimately an artist name.	Medium

Change	Justification	Severity
Add price + shipping as a sorting option in search results	No participant was able to successfully add the lowest price + shipping to their cart, however they all thought they did. [Participant 3 noted this could potentially be incorrect, when challenged to fix it, they did a little scroll before settling on their answer]	Severely High

Change	Justification	Severity
Concatenate all versions under one search result, then neatly display versions per album	All users added over 100 versions of each album to wantlist. Although the task was completed successfully, Participant 2 noted that this is unrealistic and likely not what users are intending to do. Can be very confusing when trying to find a singular album when searching it yields 50 results of the same thing just published in different years or with different art.	High

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