

HW2: CollabDesk Heuristic Evaluation

I did not discuss this assignment with anyone.

Below are 16 positive features and problems, which are listed from most severe to least severe.

1. Positive feature: The user's name and picture are displayed in the right-hand corner of the screen. This is helpful because users can clearly see whether they are logged in correctly.

Usability Heuristic: Feedback

2. Positive feature: A user can use the keyboard to compose/reply to a message, including tabbing between input fields and using tab/enter to turn the Note, High Priority, and Alert Captain options on or off. This gives the user freedom to choose whether to use the keyboard or mouse (or a combination of both). This also increases efficiency because moving between input fields with the keyboard is faster than with the mouse.

Usability Heuristic: User control and freedom, Efficiency of use

3. Problem: After a user submits a reply, and then searches for the contents of that reply, no search results are displayed. For example, I submitted the following reply:

Re: East Elevator down

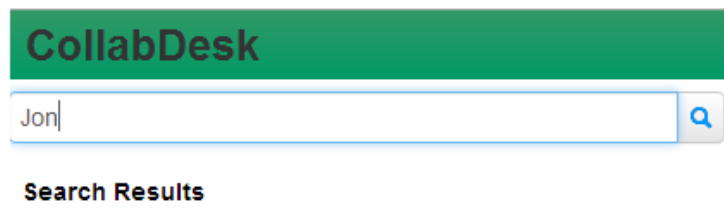


Julie at 1:07 PM on Mar 19

Will Jon be fixing this?



However, when I search for Jon (which is in the body of my reply), I get no results:



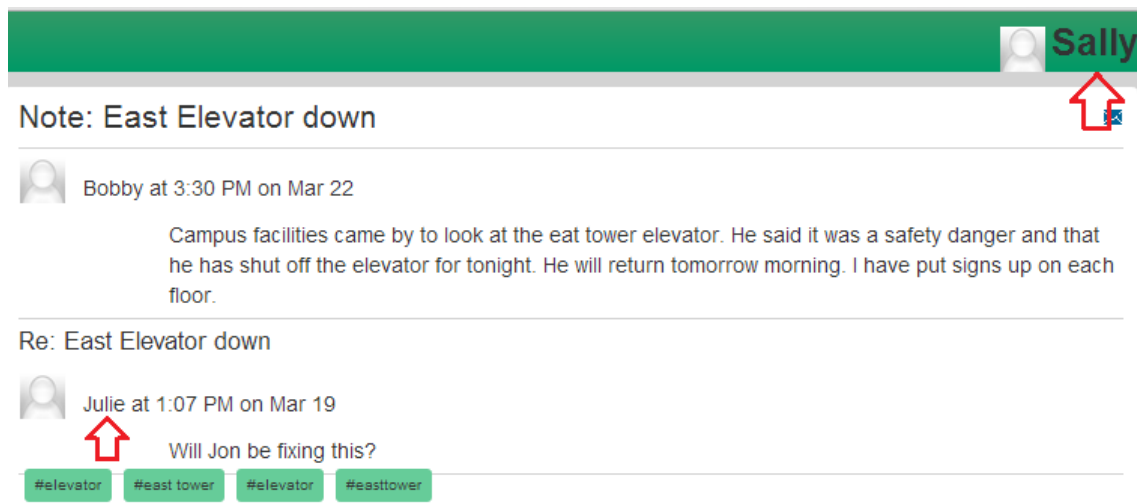
↖ No results shown

This presents a problem because the typically user will likely reply to threads and then search for those replies later on. Users who cannot locate their replies through the search function may be unsure about whether those replies were actually submitted.

Usability Heuristic: Visibility of system status

Severity: Catastrophic

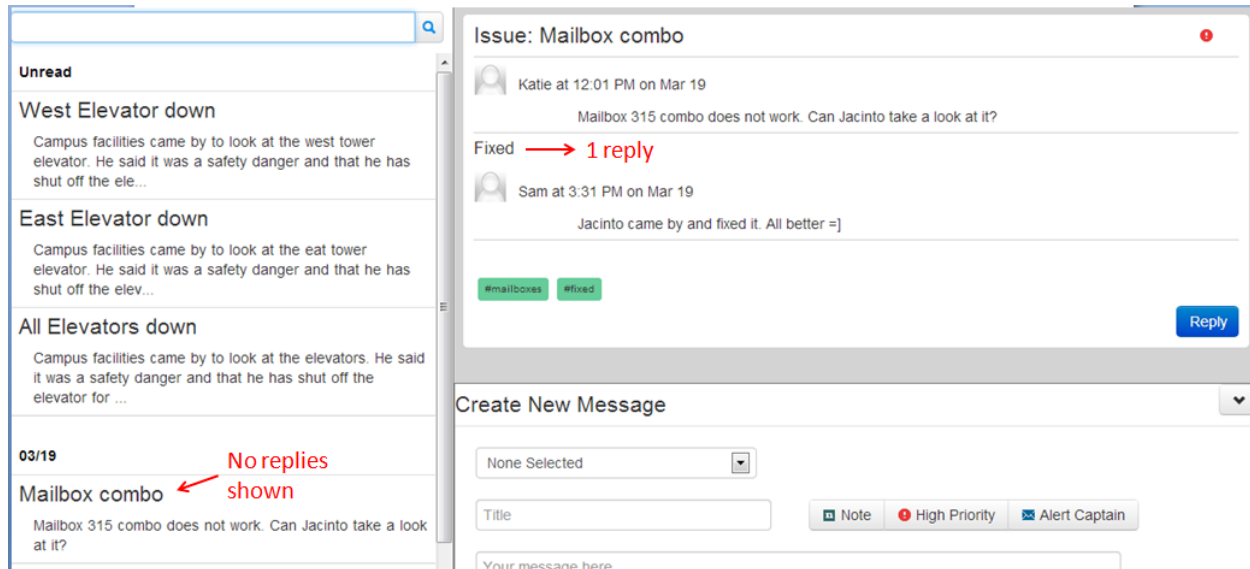
4. Problem: When the user is logged in as Sally, the messages posted that are posted are from Julie, as the arrows in the following screenshot show:



Usability Heuristic: Consistency, Feedback

Severity: Catastrophic

5. Problem: The number of replies and the content of those replies are not displayed in the left preview pane of messages. In the following screenshot, the message with subject "Mailbox combo" is shown in the preview pane, but the reply is not shown. The user only sees the reply by clicking on the message and seeing the full contents displayed in the right-hand window. This is an efficiency problem because users must click on messages individually in order to see whether the messages have replies.



Usability Heuristic: Flexibility and efficiency of use

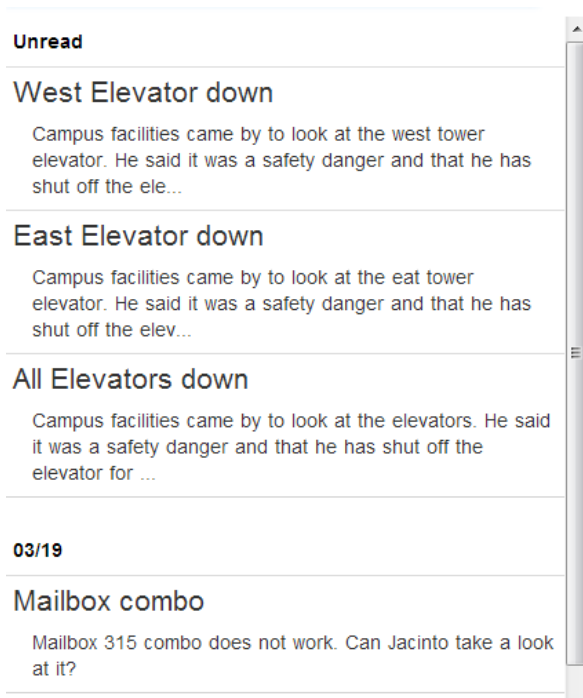
Severity: Major

6. Problem: There is currently no outbox, so a user cannot see a list of messages that he sent. Currently, a user has to look through a list of all messages in order to find the ones that he sent. This is inefficient for a user who wants to quickly locate sent messages.

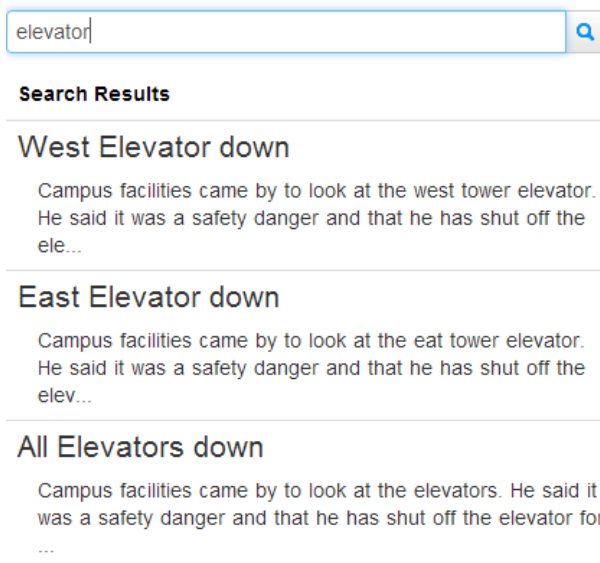
Usability Heuristic: Flexibility and efficiency of use

Severity: Major

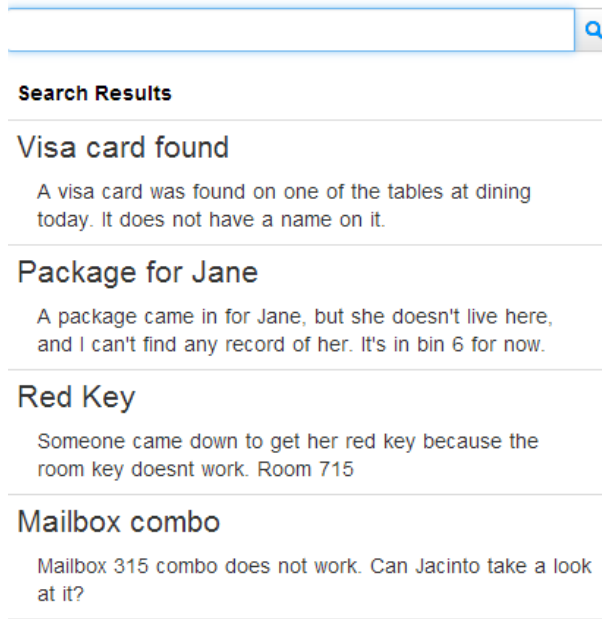
7. Problem: When the user manually clears the search box, he is not brought back to the original preview window showing unread messages. The original preview window, which organizes messages based on read/unread and date, is shown below:



I searched for “Elevator” and got the following results:



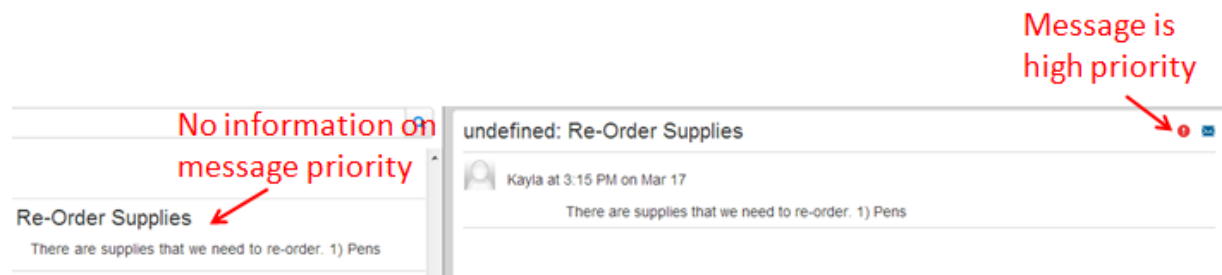
Then, I manually deleted “Elevator” from the search box and got the following screen. This screen is not the same screen as the original preview screen because it does not organize messages based on read/unread and date. I could not find a way to return to the original preview screen after doing a search.



Usability Heuristic: User control and freedom

Severity: Major

8. Problem: The preview window showing all messages does not display whether messages are high priority. For example, in the following screenshot, the right-hand window (with the full message) shows that the message is high priority. However, the preview window on the left-hand side does not show that the message is high priority.

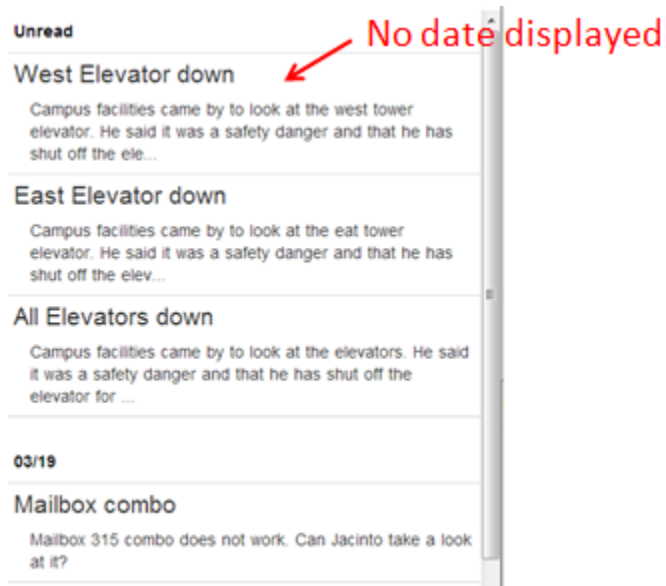


This creates an efficiency issue because the user needs to click on messages individually in order to see whether they are high-priority. Also, if a user only wants to read high priority messages, then he cannot easily identify which messages to read from the preview window.

Usability Heuristic: Flexibility and efficiency of use

Severity: Major

9. Problem: Unlike read messages in the left-hand preview window, unread messages do not show the date on which they were sent, as the following screenshot illustrates:

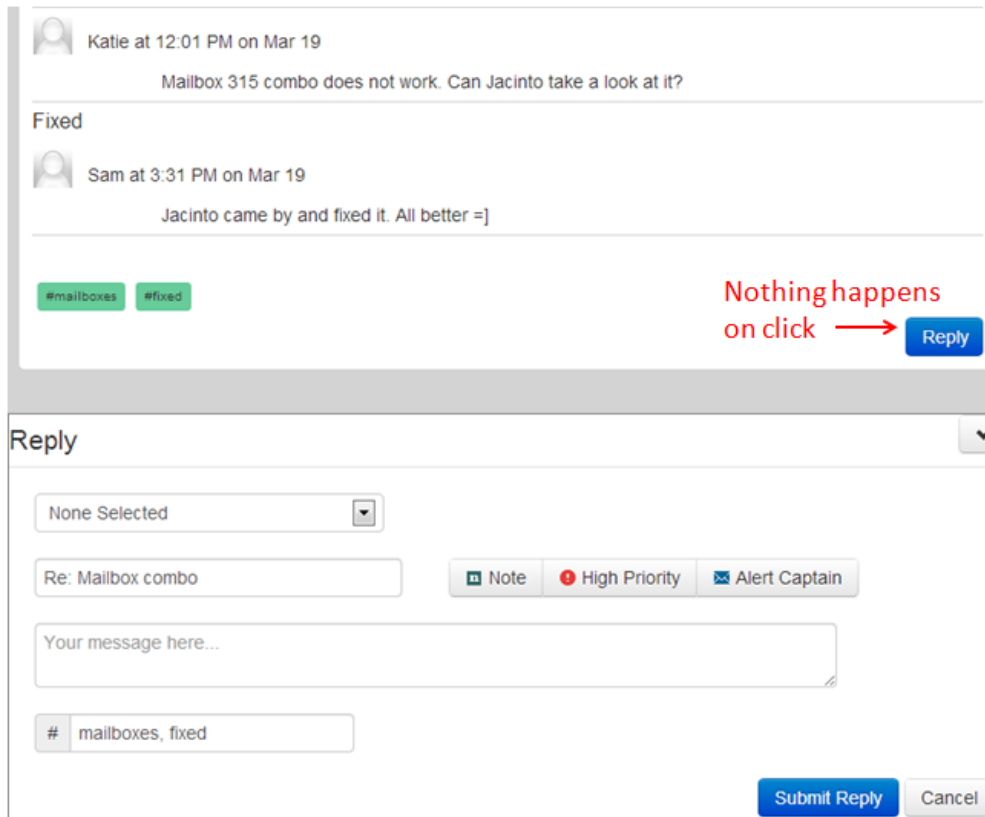


It is unclear whether unread messages are ordered newest to oldest, oldest to newest, or by some other criteria (i.e, sender). Users who want to quickly find unread messages on or up to a certain date cannot do so efficiently.

Usability Heuristic: Flexibility and efficiency of use

Severity: Major

10. Problem: If the user has clicked “Reply” to a message and has yet to write any content in his reply, then clicking the “Reply” button again does not do anything, as shown in the following screen shot:



In general, clickable buttons should bring about some visible action. An easy fix to this problem would be to disable the “Reply” button when it does not cause the UI to change.

Usability Heuristic: Visibility of system status, Feedback

Severity: Minor

11. Problem: The user cannot see a list of popular or recent tags, so if he wants to search for a specific tag, then he must remember the exact name of the tag. This creates a problem because tags are case sensitive and may have complicated spellings (i.e, if the tag is a person’s name), making them difficult to recall.

Usability Heuristic: Recognition rather than recall

Severity: Minor

12. Problem: It is unclear how users should enter tags from the default information given. When a user composes/repplies to a message, he sees the following default:



From this display, it seems that if the user wants to input a tag (for example, mail), he should type “#mail”. However, in order for the tag to be displayed properly, the user should actually just type “mail”. Hence, the “#tags” documentation is misleading. It is also unclear whether multiple tags should be separated by a common, semicolon, space, or some other punctuation.

Usability Heuristic: Help and documentation

Severity: Minor

13. Problem: A user should not be able to submit an empty message, one that lacks both a subject and body. Such empty messages do not convey any information and are thus confusing when they are displayed.

Usability Heuristic: Error prevention

Severity: Minor

14. Problem: Once a user submits a message, he cannot change whether the message is marked high priority. This is a problem for users who mistakenly mark a message high priority. It is also a problem for users who have resolved a problem and thus want to change a message from high priority to low priority.

Usability Heuristic: User control and freedom, Error recovery

Severity: Minor

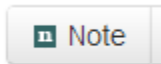
15. Problem: When the user hovers over the Alert Captain button, the pop-up information text is cut off. Although most users can probably guess that the text should say “Automatically email this message to the Desk Captain”, this problem may cause some confusion about the button’s function.



Usability Heuristic: Help and documentation

Severity: Cosmetic

16. Problem: The user cannot tell what the note icon is supposed to be because it is small and not easily recognizable. A potential solution is to make the icon something that users will recognize and associate with notes (i.e, a sticky note, a pen, etc). This will allow the UI to have consistency with the outside world. The current note icon is displayed below:



Usability Heuristic: Match the real world, Aesthetic and minimalist design

Severity: Cosmetic