

HW2:
Heuristic Evaluation of Ice Geckos

Start Page

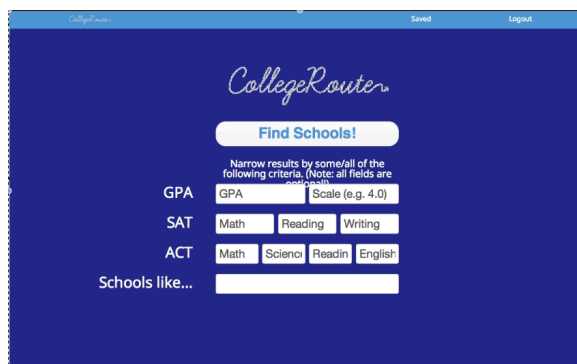
Top

- “Saved” missing dropdown arrow



Assuming the “Saved” feature shows the user a list of saved searches, the use of a drop-down arrow next to it would provide an affordance that would presumably increase the interface’s learnability. However, the feature is fine if clicking on “Saved” takes the user to another page.

- Good: Use of Fitt’s Law



Placing the “Logout” option at the top-right corner of the page provides high usability in reaching the feature.

Center

- Good: Button highlight and cursor change on hover

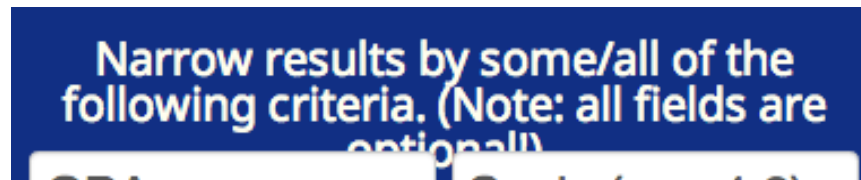


On Mouseover:



These changes provide good feedback to the user and proper information scent to the button by signaling to them that an action will ensue when they click on the button.

- Instructional text is partly hidden (Chrome only)



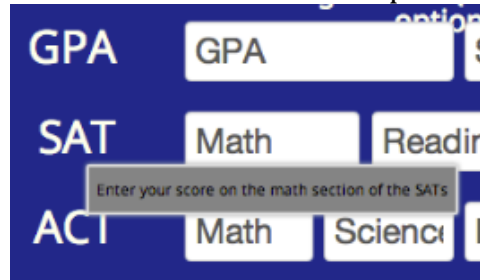
- As shown, part of the instructional text on how to use the interface is hidden behind the following input text forms, thereby presenting a usability issue for the novice user. This may be a browser issue as it only occurs while using Chrome and not Firefox (Mac OS X).
- Good: Instructional default text values in text inputs

GPA	<input type="text" value="GPA"/>	Scale (e.g. 4.0)		
SAT	<input type="text" value="Math"/>	<input type="text" value="Reading"/>	<input type="text" value="Writing"/>	
ACT	<input type="text" value="Math"/>	<input type="text" value="Science"/>	<input type="text" value="Reading"/>	<input type="text" value="English"/>

The text inputs on the page (except “Schools like...”) have text specifying what information the user should provide for that input as default text set; e.g., “Math” signaling where the user should input their Math score for the

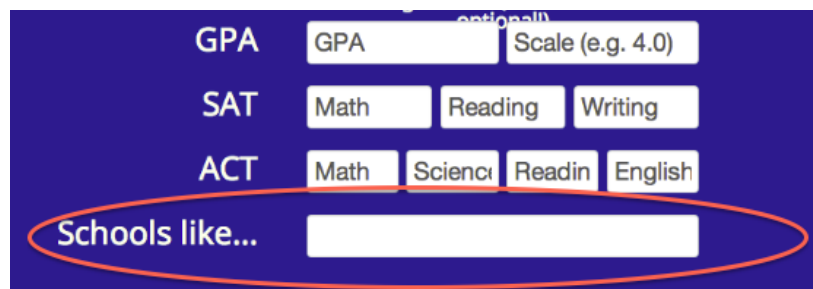
appropriate test score. This adds to the interface's learnability as it provides the user with guidance and information scent.

- Good: Additional instructional text on hover over text inputs

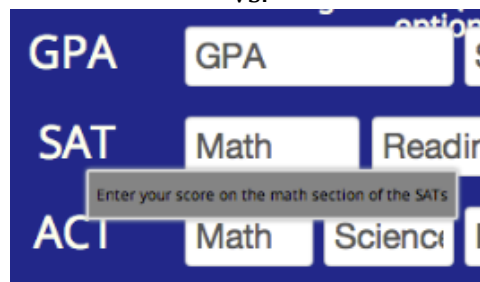


When the cursor hovers over a search text input (except “Schools like...”), instructional text specific to that input appears below the text input. This adds to the interface's learnability as it provides the user good feedback and guidance.

- Missing the above two features for “Schools like...”



vs.



Unlike the rest of the text inputs on the page, the text input for “Schools like...” fields does not have default text or instructional text below it on a mouseover, breaking with internal consistency. As a result, this section lacks the level of user feedback and guidance the other fields possess. This also may affect the interface's safety in addition to its learnability since it is not clear what the similarity between schools is based on (e.g. test scores for admission, location of school, etc.)

Search Page

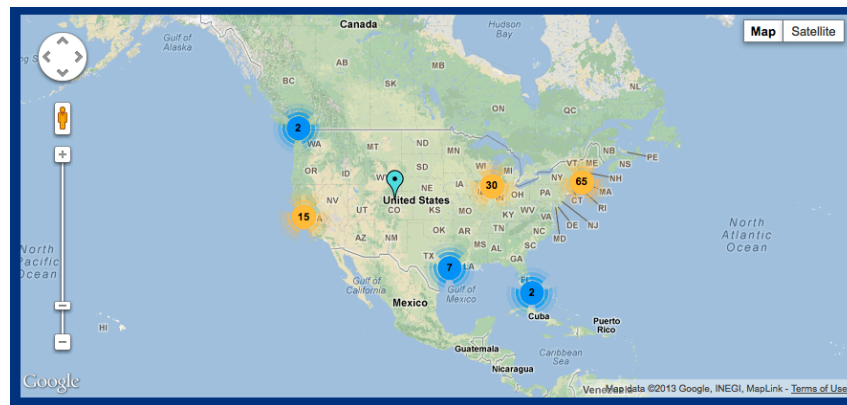
Page

- “Plan Trip” Button – greyed out?



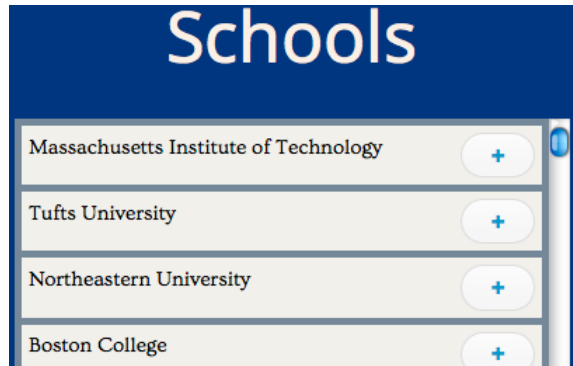
When the page loads, the “Plan Trip” button is greyed out. It was later made clear that the user is supposed to select a school before being able to plan a trip. However, this may suggest that the learnability of the interface could be boosted to avoid this lapse of time. This could perhaps be done by the addition of instructional text.

- Good: Use of Google Map interface



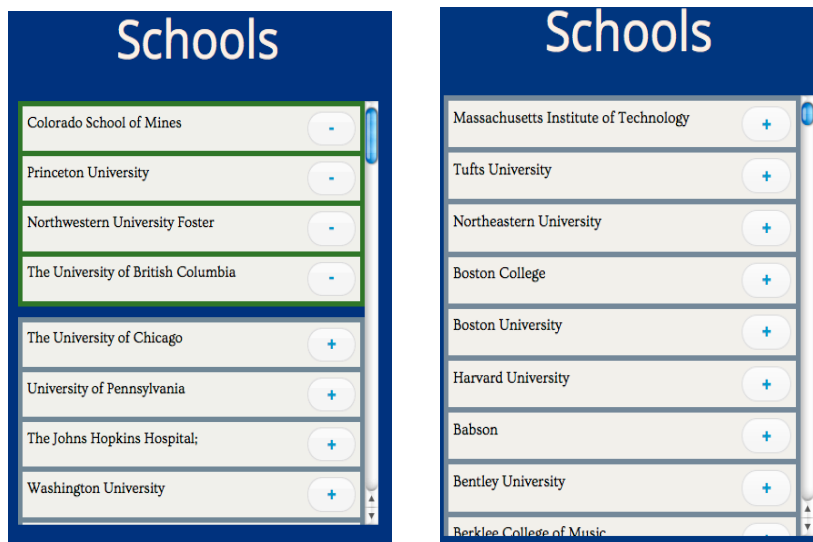
The incorporation of the Google Maps aids the interface’s learnability and usability by providing an explorable interface that is popular among most users (presumably).

- Ordering of Schools is unclear



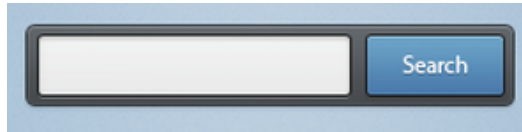
The order in which the schools are listed is not apparent. This presents an issue in usability when the user is searching for a school in the list since it presents difficulty in locating a school. For example, if the schools were listed alphabetically, the user would know he/she would find “Wellesley” near the end of the list. (Image taken when page is done loading.)

- Distinguishing between Selected and Unselected Schools



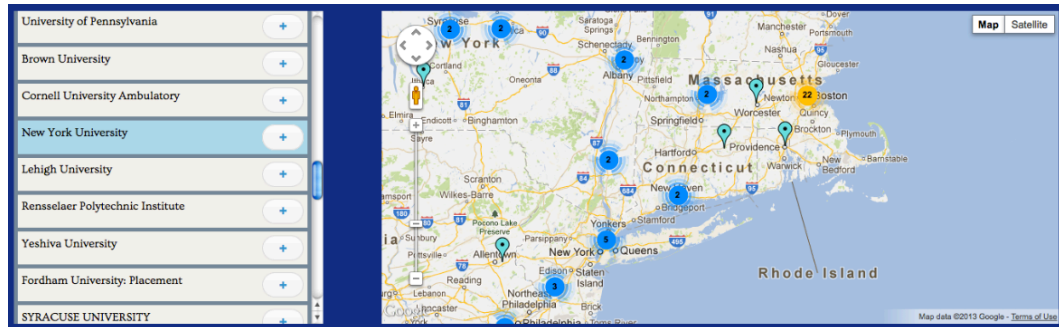
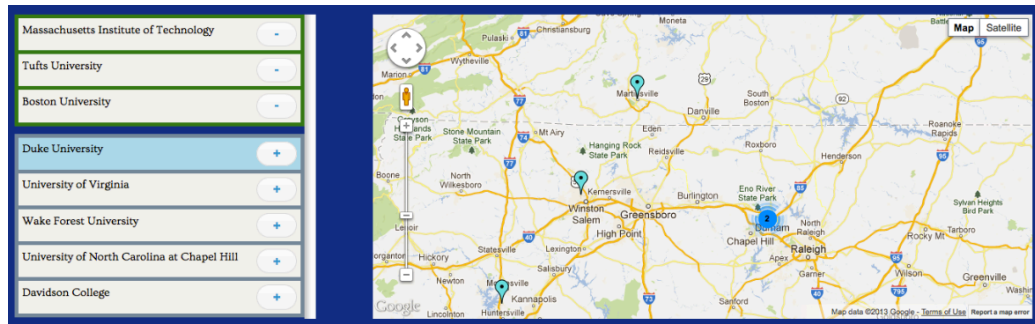
- While there are some distinguishing features between the list of selected schools and the list of remaining schools, the differences may not be enough for proper visibility. The outlining in green is not obvious with a blue background. Also, the toolbar encompasses both lists, making the boundary between the two unclear.

- Additional Search for Schools is Missing



Currently there are two methods for the user to search for a specific school: through the use of the map and searching through the list. The user's control and freedom could be increased by through a text input form as an additional search option. This would increase the interface's efficiency through the use of a shortcut.

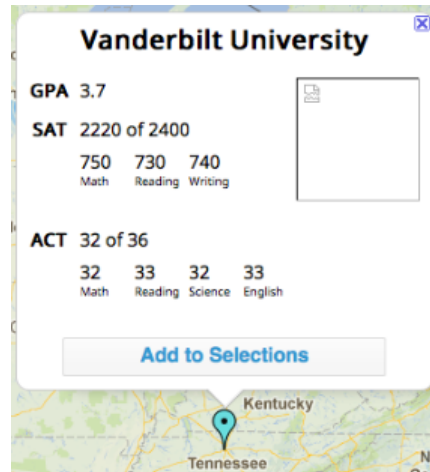
- Unclear School List dependent on Map View



Unless the user focuses the map on an area that causes a change in the visible entries of the school options, the user is not made aware that the map restricts the school options. For example, someone looking at schools in the East Coast and with the map currently focused on the Boston Area could accidentally restrict his/her school options and therefore accidentally restrict his/her trip to the Boston Area and not include schools in New York.

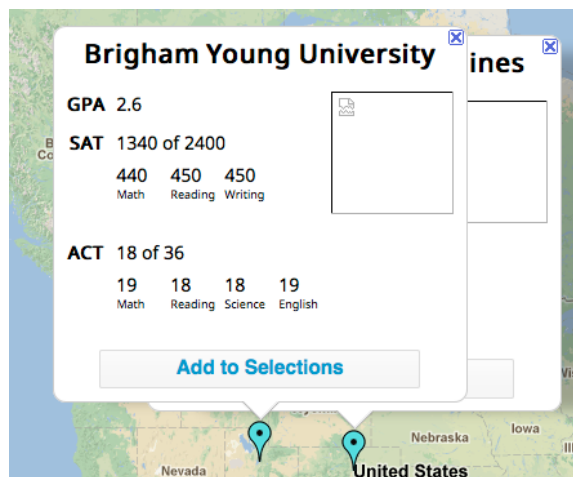
Map

- Good: Informational School Pop-Ups



The school pop-ups on the map provide the user with quick access to information on the school. This feature adds to the user's efficiency.

- School Pop-ups don't close when move to another



Although the pop-ups provide useful feedback, they break the rule of dialog closure. In order to close a pop-up, the user must press its x button. Clicking a nearby pinpoint can result in the pop-ups overlapping and easily leads to the cluttering of the map interface. Instead, the efficiency of the feature could be boosted by having the pop-ups close when another is open or at a timeout since the last mouseover.

- Missing Feedback on Hover over School Pinpoint on Map

The information scent of a pinpoint on the map is restricted to a cursor change. A user in search of a specific school in the area can easily click on the wrong school repeatedly. The safety of the interface could be increase through the use of feedback. These mistakes could prevented by the addition of text naming the school when the cursor hovers over/near the respective pinpoint.