

little things matter

Alan Dix

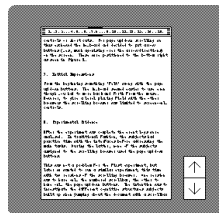
<http://www.hcibook.com/alan/topics/widget/>

design is difficult

little things matter

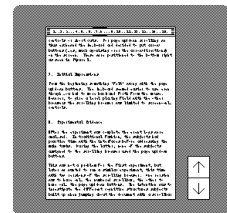
a design story ...

- documentation browser
- numbered scroll bar
- page-up/down buttons
- ... on screen only ...
- but ...
- no-one used the buttons
- ... why?



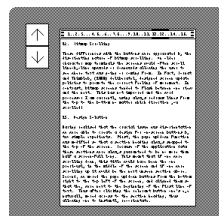
a design story ... ctd.

- text jump scrolled
- eye focus on buttons
⇒ disorientating
- ... can we put it right?



a design story ... ctd.

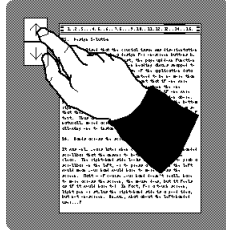
- section head at top
- scroll buttons at top
- opposite section head difference?
... amazing!



still looks wrong why?

hands across the screen?

- ✗ guidance
- ✗ appearance
- ✗ instinct
- ✓ behaviour
- ✓ analysis
- why questions



let's look at scroll bars

scroll bars are simple ...

Scrollbars may look different, but are basically the same. They just sit on the right hand side of the screen. You press the up button and the screen goes down, you press the down button and the screen goes up ... hey wait a minute

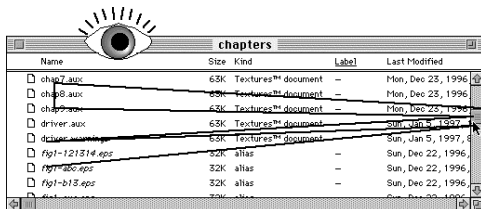


always on the right?

- well usually ...
- but is it right?
- or should it be left?



watch the birdie



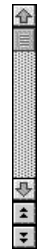

a little history

- Xerox Palo Alto Labs
 - hotbed of computing research
 - programming environments (Lisp, Smalltalk)
 - Xerox Star (late 1970s) - 1st office GUI
- Apple
 - Lisa - technology from Star, but too expensive
 - Macintosh - birth of popular windows interfaces
- Microsoft
 - may get there someday ...


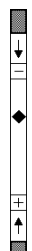
Star and scrollbars

- pre-Star (Smalltalk etc.) on the left
- Star - scrollbar on the right
 - to avoid visual clutter and ease text reading
- Star scrolling
 - page at a time - not continuous
 - very different model
- what is right - left or right
 - ... just hands across the screen?

up or down

- 
- Option 1 - normal today
 - arrow up = screen down & scroll handle up
 - Option 2
 - arrow up = screen up & scroll handle down
- which is right?
no easy answer
do an experiment!
- 

Star team did it

- 
- Option 2 - won
 - so we have the wrong kind of scroll bar!
 - why?
 - two versions of Star interface
 - before and after experiments
 - Xerox passed designs to Apple ...
 - ... but gave the wrong one
- 

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- A. Dix. **Hands Across the Screen - why scrollbars are on the right and other stories**. Interfaces, Spring 1998.
- A. Dix. **Sinister Scrollbar in the Xerox Star Explained**. Interfaces, Summer 1998.