Usability test
of

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Objective

To test new users first encounter with Banshee, the users will be avid computers users. The users will be tested in everyday tasks. Each problem will be analysed, to figure out how much the user was delayed due to usability problems. The goal is to find usability problems, and suggest solutions to the problems, in order to make Banshee a more user-friendly media player for new users, as well as existing users.

Methodology

Participants

2 participants recruited from my social network and they share these characteristics:

- Male, age 30-34
- Avid computer users
- iPhone user.

The are the individual characteristics:

User 1:

- Windows and Linux (Ubuntu) user
- Listen to some music on his computer with iTunes or Rhythmbox
- Buy I little music from iTunes and TDC Musik (a Danish web store)
- Listen to one podcast
- Moderate level of interest in technologies.

User 2:

- Mac user with some experience with Windows
- Listen to some music on his computer via iTunes, but use streaming services more, like Last.fm, Spotify and Grooveshark.
- Almost never buys music.
- Listen to a few podcasts
- High level of interest in technologies

Technology

The test was conducted on a computer running Ubuntu 10.10, and Banshee 2.0 installed from source, the relevant codecs was installed. No music was imported into Banshee and Ubuntu was started in default configuration. Ubuntu was using UK English as language.

The screen and sound was recorded with recordMyDesktop[1].

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1 http://recordmydesktop.sourceforge.net

Process

The tests was conducted at the users home, and the session lasted about one hour per user. I was taking notes as well as leading the test session. The test was conducted in Danish as it was the native language of both the users and .

The test session was split in for parts:

1st part: Introduction to the test.

Where the user was told:

- That it was the software that was being tested, not them.

- The test-leader (me) would not help them if they got stuck, unless the problem would mean that the test could not be completed, understood in the way that a task where depending on a other task.

- They should say what they where thinking and what they where doing, as it was a think-out-loud test.

- I could ask them questions during the test, like: "what would you do now", "what are you looking for" and so on.

- The user had a document on the desktop with the task, they could read during the test. I would also readout the tasks during the test.

2nd part: The users characteristics

The user where asked asked the following questions:

- At what level would you consider yourself as a computer user.

- Do you listen to music and podcasts on you computer and/or Phone?

- What operating system and music applications do you use?

3rd part: The test

The user had to complete the following tasks:

1. You have just found out about Banshee and you have installed it on your computer. Now you want to import your music. Your music is on a USB stick, on your MP3 player, and some on a CDs. How would you do it?

2. Please play some music, with shuffle, repeat and rate song.

3. You would like to make a playlist for a party, please make one, and add some songs to is, and start playing that list.

4. Now, you want to get your favourite podcast. How would you do it?

5. Now, you want to add a radio station you often listen to. How would you do it?

6. You want to buy music. Where would you go. How would you find a title you want?[2]

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2   As Amazon MP3 Store is not supported in Denmark, Ubuntu One Music Store was used.

4th part: Comments

After the test the users was asked about general comments about their experience with Banshee as well that the test it-self.

Research findings

The video and notes was analysed the the goal of finding usability problems, each problems rated with the following rating scale[3]:

1. Cosmetic problem only: need not be fixed unless extra time is available on project

2. Minor usability problem: fixing this should be given low priority

   Delay the user less than 2 min. in fulfilling that task

3. Major usability problem: important to fix, so should be given high priority

   Delay the user for more than 2 min. in fulfilling that task

4. Usability catastrophe: imperative to fix this before product can be released

   Make it impossible for the user to complete the task

The problems is described individually, covering how each user encountered the problem and what could be done to solve the problem.

Missing external drives in "Import Media to Library" menu (task 1)

Description: User 1 chose the "Media – Import Media" and looked at "Import from" drop-down menu and was expecting the USB stick to show up, when that wasn't the case, he went to "Choose Folders..." and selected the USB stick from the file chooser.

Rating: 2

Solution: Make external storage like USB sticks show up in the "Import from" drop-down menu in "Import Media..." dialogue.

No indication for missing Music (task 2)

Description: When user 1 wanted to play some music he played some music that he had imported from the USB stick. However noting happened, the music did not start playing. He never really understood what went on, and he became very frustrated and said this would have been enough to dump Banshee and look at other programs. The problem was that the music was on the stick which was not connected to the computer any-more. Banshee did not indicate in anyway that, that tracks wasn't available any more.

Rating: 4

Solution: "Import Media.." should actually import the music, meaning copy the music to the users home directory, not just add it to the Banshee database. Besides that there should be some indication of a track is gone, for example a "!" in the track list (like iTunes) or an "playlist" with missing track like Rhythmbox.

Hidden shuffle feature (task 2)

Deception: User 1 wanted to shuffle tracks, and looked at the toolbar for a shuffle button, and

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3   http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/severityrating.html

eventually clicked the drop-down menu on the "Next" button, and found the shuffle function as clicked "Shuffle by Artist". This lead to a bit of reflection. First of all: he expected that the most used function (as he consider shuffle) would be easy accessible, like having dedicated buttons. The other thing he noted was that the button changed to a shuffle icon, which conflicted with his normal expectation of such a button being a toggle button, where you select shuffle on/off. However he could see some rationale behind making toolbar lean by limiting the number of buttons.

User 2 used some time to find shuffle: tried to click the repeat button, right clicking on tracks and albums and he went for that playback menu and found there. When the "Next" button changed he noted that the button have shuffle functionality build in. He liked that the icon changed depending on shuffle or not.

Ratings: 2

Solution: Make a dedicated shuffle button, but keep the functionality: "Next button change icon on shuffle".

A other possibility is to is to find some way to make it more visible that there is a toggle function on the "Next" button, I have no solution on this.

Trouble finding repeat (task 2)

Note to user 1: Banshee showed a other track and cover, than it played, this had might have something to do with problem of having track in the database that is not on a mounted file system (that tack showed was a track on the USB stick, which was not mounted). This confused the user, but he pointed out the problem and ignored it

Deception: User 1 had one track in the track browser. To repeat songs he looked at the "next" drop-down menu to see if there was a repeat option there, he could not find it, he tried to right click on the track, but eventual clicked on the "Playback" menu, and found it there and choose "Repeat Single". However the track did not repeat as it should. He tried again with the same outcome. The user never saw the repeat icon and text in lowest right corner.

Rating: 2

Solution: It was not possible for me to replicate the problem that the repeat function did not work.

The other problem that repeat button is not located by the user could be because you can't see that the button is actually a button, as it don't look like a button and is at the bottom in a area normally used for status information. So the solution could be to move to the repeat button to Toolbar, next to the other playback buttons.

Can't find playlist (task 3)

Description: The users should make playlist.

User 1 searched though the source browser, but did not find anything, that he thought would give him the option to make a playlist (note: the four dynamic playlists was visible under "Music"). He looked again and found "Play Queue". He wasn't sure whether it was a playlist, and was puzzled by the name, but eventually decided to use that. He dragged the tracks to "play Queue" and played those. However he never made a real playlist.

User 2 looked for playlist in different parts of Banshee's interface. He tried to right click in the source browser and artist browser, but ended up looking at the menu, and found "Media" - "New Playlist". However noting happened, and he used some time to figure out what was gong on, making new playlists and looking for them. He added music to the playlist with right clicking on the

tracks, and adding them. He never found the playlist he made, and ended up using the "Play Queue" instead. The problem was that he never noted the arrow in at the "Music" entry in the source browser, and the "Music" entry did not expand automatically when you make a new playlist from the menu.

Rating: 4

Solution: Make an dedicated entry for playlists in the source browser, called "Playlists". This would also make more sense in they way that playlists should be more generic, and not just relevant to music. A playlist should be able to contain both local music, videos and music from online sources (like Spotify, that might get an extension in the future).

Besides that the the, "Music" or "Playlist" entry in the source browser, should expand automatically when you you make new playlist from the menu.

Easy access to podcast (task 4)

Description: User 1 found the "Podcast" entry in the source browser, he did not notice the "Discover interesting podcast in the Miro Guide podcast directory!" notification. He right clicked on the "Podcast" entry and clicked on "Add podcast", then the "Subscribe" dialogue came up, and he realised that he needed a URL for a podcast, so he searched for via a browser, with a little help, he eventually got the URL, and pasted it into the URL text input.

User 2 found the "Podcast" entry in the source browser, and did not notice the notification about Miro Guide neither. He clicked on the plus icon next to the search box, to add a podcast. He went for the web-browser to get the URL for the podcast he wanted to add.

Nether of the users seem to have expected a podcast directory function.

Rating: 2

Solution: As nether of the users noticed the Miro Guide notification, after they have selected the "Podcast" entry in the source browser, a more aggressive notification could fix that, for example as a pop-up the first time you click on "Podcast", or a button next "Subscribe to a new podcast with Miro Guide" button that takes you to the Miro Guide.

A other option would be to make some kind of integrated custom google search via an embedded browser, that triggers add podcast feed on XML files.

General comments

During the test the users had the following general comments about Banshee:

- Both user liked that like that the interface is so clean and simple

- User 1thought that making a interface so clean and simple, obligates you to make sure that common features are easy to find and access, Banshee have problems with that for example the not that obvious shuffle button and the "hidden" repeat button.

- User 1 thought interface was a bit boring, it would be cool with stuff like: visual effect of playing music, coverflow and more interesting icons.

- User 1 would have liked a "Sort By" functionality for the album browser.

- User 2 was not quite sure what Banshee gave him that the competition did not.