The subject of today's design notebook is the Mac OS X feature, Exposé. Exposé is a feature of the OS X operating system that allows users, at a press of a keystroke or wave of the mouse, to see a visual overview of all currently opened windows. This way, users can sort through a mass of windows and locate a specific one.

In the most recent version of OS X, version 10.6, Exposé was given a face lift. So in a desktop instance where you had:

[Diagram 1]

The old Exposé organized the windows like:

[Diagram 2]

Now, in 10.6, Exposé would render the following:

[Diagram 3]
There are a few usability problems that have arisen from the latest Expose. First, to list the changes (as I have observed, maybe not officially):

**Old Expose**
- attempts to position windows close to original positions (action x,y coordinates)
- tries to fill up as much of the screen space as possible so windows size is minimized.
- on hover with mouse, windows are fully highlighted so user knows which window is highlighted.

**New Expose**
- windows laid out in a grid, grid itself is rigid.
- windows are sized smaller than their original size.
- on mouse hover, windows have a blue glowing border around them. DARK BLUE ON DARK GREY!

I have found that since the new Expose has been released, my productivity and utility in using Expose has dropped dramatically. There is increased time in perceiving which window is actually the one desired. This can be attributed to the decreased sizes of window and increase in distances between windows (Fitt's Law).

Since the new Expose had been contributing to productivity loss, I have switched back to the old Expose.
One gripe: I have about the interface, funny enough, is that it may take a little time for first-time users to find the link that takes them to their actual blog. The link is actually on top of the page in the top bar.

There is no actual link that says “Click here to access your blog” or something that implies “I AM THE MAGIC BUTTON THAT TAKES YOU TO YOUR BLOG.” I think the problem is that there is so much information below on the dashboard that new users forget about the top bar and overlook the link to the blog.

Something else noteworthy about the interface is that it primarily is in black, white, and gray. Important things like links or statistics are shown in color. So everything important tends to stand out better on the grayscale background.

Entry #3

The Albertsons located in the Campus Plaza by Campus Dr and California has self-checkout systems installed for customer use. I have actually seen these systems popping up elsewhere too, such as the Lowe’s located in the District. But since their appearance, I’ve been surprised by their robustness and user-friendliness.

Very rough sketch of the entire system.

Paradox: the ugly sketch, but the entire checkout system consists of multiple devices wired together. There is the touch-screen display, a scanning system for beacons, a module for capturing credit cards, a change dispenser, a machine to take in both coins and a receipt printer. And of course, there are plastic bags for the food. There, the only purely physical product in this system. All the customer needs to do is to scan all of the items they put through the scanner, bag them, and pay. Every scanned item is displayed on the touch-screen display so that customer can keep track of the total.

Above is a mockup of the display while scanning. All the important tasks are easily accessible to the user. If an item has no barcode (as pictured), you can look up the item on the computer. The only problem with this...
for the user is that many produce items have variants that make it hard to tell one apart from another (e.g., "large lemons" and regular "lemons"). Since the system trusts the user to pick the correct item, this could potentially lead to erroneous pricing.

The display is simple and easy to follow, which allows most people to intuitively understand how to use the system. Only a few buttons are available to the user, and they are clearly labeled as "Look Up Item," "Finish and Pay," and such. Payments are done by either inserting cash or swiping a credit or debit card, and change is dispensed below such on the side of the display. However, bills are dispensed below the scanner and sometimes I find that I almost forget to get my change. But to prevent this, the system beeps until the cash is picked up.

And to prevent theft, all items scanned must be moved to the bagged area, where the system calculates the weight of all items to ensure customers do not try to sneak out unpaid items.

The robustness of the system impressed me, as I have never had any major problems with the system crashing or errors. But I think the system might be large enough to scare away some first-time users, so it might be a good idea to consolidate some of the devices together (like the credit card reader with the touch display, for example).
I have to admit, although my roommates and I have lived in our apartment for quite a while now, we're still not too sure as to how our air conditioning system works. We have tried fiddling around with the controls and even reading the small instruction manual that comes with it, but all to no avail.

The two temperature gauges being flashed are not too indicative of what it is they are actually representing. If the temperature needs to be adjusted, we would normally use the up or down

Weird How there are two temp scales

-11C 11F

What do these buttons do?

Reset

Help

Next

This knob really doesn't do anything.
Switches, but at times none of the numbers would change. There's apparently a more complex procedure that has to be done involving the hold button, and a few other knobs, but it remained vague even on the instruction manual.

Although we do eventually get it running, the process and the actual interface itself could be a lot more streamlined and definitely a lot simpler. All that is really needed is a way to adjust the temperature if we needed heat, or if we wanted to blast the air conditioning in the apartment.
Design Notebook: Week 1

Parking Permit Dispenser:

- Buy Full Day Permit: $6.00
- Buy One Hour Permit: $2.00
- Buy Two Hour Permit: $4.00
- More Options: 

Orange = interface
Blue = notes

So above is the interface for the self-serve permit dispenser at UCI. I work for parking so I came in contact with this pretty often — people have a lot of trouble using it because of the confusing placement of the buttons. If you notice, for example, the button corresponding to the $2 permit is directly across from the $8 permit. Many people think they are buying a full-day permit when they are buying a one-hour permit. It is very confusing! In the worst case is that the permit is not refundable, which is kind of a problem if an error occurs when trying to buy a $2-40 permit.

Overhead View of Issues:
- Buttons are misleading
- Error rate is very high
- Permit is non-refundable
  (Errors are irrecoverable)
- High cost of failure