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Magalie Le Gall, Maud Puaud

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Why sketching can help you to implement UX techniques in your library (UXLibsV workshop)

Magalie Le Gall @magalielegall | Maud Paud @mpaud

Sorbonne Université, France | Université d'Angers, France



"In 2015, I failed at a competitive exam and it was personally and professionally a very hard time. I felt the urge to disrupt my habits and to reconnect myself to my creativity, to a different way to communicate with people. In January of 2016, I went on a training course led by Philippe Boukobza about visual thinking and I discovered sketchnoting. It was a revelation. Since then, I use my pen everyday."

— Magalie

"I have always had a very visual memory: from as far back as I can remember, I have always learned my lessons at school by 'photographing' the page in my memory, with arrows, colours... Moreover, I have always loved drawing. I started using visual thinking at work gradually, first by using mind mapping, infographics. Then I heard about the sketchnote, and for me, it went even further than the other techniques I knew. I also attended Philippe Boukobza's training and this allowed me to open my brain to all the richness of visual thinking."

— Maud

Both of us are academic librarians specialising in users' training and pedagogical innovations. Most of the time we talk to students about the current context of literature search. In an uncertain and complex world, where we face infobesity all day long, where we are submitted to a constant emergency, where we fear to miss something, visual thinking is key.



Visual thinking is a wonderful toolbox you can use to apprehend and tame the world's complexity:

- 'Picture superiority effect': the fact that pictures and images are more likely to be remembered than words
- The more visual information becomes, the more likely it is to be recognised and retained.
- 'The big picture.' Always think that the brain likes to have a general view of what it is learning: simple and global visual perception is linked to a positive emotional state. That is why we like to take a step back and contemplate a landscape from a viewpoint.

The most common misconception about visual thinking is to believe it's about using fewer words and more drawings. Visual thinking is not illustration and has absolutely nothing to do with your drawing skills. You can use only words if you want (e.g. by using different text styles, boxes and arrows rather than drawings), but it's a different way of thinking, non-linear and holistic, as opposed to written text, which is mainly linear. Eva-Lotta Lamm, who is a designer, visual thinking expert and trainer, says 'words and images are two best friends' (Lamm, 2018).

Both of us have experimented with using visual methods effectively in groups, as we did in our UXLibs workshop. It can be empowering (everybody can), stimulate collective intelligence, create a shared language, make thinking more tangible, and produce original and unusual connections.



An example of visual thinking using words.

Start with why: why visual thinking is a powerful help to UX design

Visual thinking is very useful in UX practice because:

- Pictures tell us stories, just like UX methods do, and are easier to share.
- Pictures can speak more than words, have a greater impact. They help with communication thanks to our natural ability to understand visual information.
- Pictures solve problems: drawing supports the thinking process. Eva-Lotta Lamm says, 'I draw before I know.' It gives you an overview and reveals hidden patterns and relationships.
- Pictures facilitate understanding, memorisation, empathy, and engagement.

As a tool for research

Visual thinking can help you when you want patrons to talk about their practices or perceptions. When you ask someone to express themselves through an image, it is much easier to express things that you would not just say with words.

The cognitive map is a well-known UX method, but there are many other ways to make users talk with visual methods (e.g. photos, drawings). It is a good basis



for an interview. For example, in the workshop, we used a method derived from an exercise we learned from Philippe Boukobza. This method uses cards from the Dixit game, which are illustrated in a very dreamlike and metaphorical way. Participants were asked to pick a card that best represented their perception of the library.

During a test of this method with patrons, we received a very interesting piece of feedback. A user had chosen a card representing a rabbit locked in a cage, guarded by a soldier: we were a little disturbed to hear the library compared to a jail! Nevertheless, he explained to us that it had nothing to do with the comfort of the place or whether it was pleasant or not: the library was for him the place where he could force himself to work, under the eyes of others, and that he came to the library for that purpose. He did not want comfortable sofas and distractions, but a hard chair and the look of his classmates to force himself to work!

Share your experience or your research with others

One of the problems that can occur in UX research is that it can be difficult to share it with people who were not present during the interview or observation. We can always describe the situation or transcribe the words, but one essential dimension is missing: empathy.

By using visual methods, such as a storyboard or empathy map, you can really put yourself in your user's shoes and understand what they are going through. It is not just a matter of describing a user's journey but of making them a real person, a character with emotions and feelings, so that we can identify with them. Representing a particular user visually, giving them a name and a face, will help create empathy (and yes, even if they look like a stick figure!).

Summarise and map your ideas

Drawing your ideas can help you to understand hidden connections: mind mapping is very useful, for example, to organise and clarify your ideas. Sometimes, the solution just 'pops out' from the paper. We can use it to build a synthesis of a research or the steps to prototype a new service, for example. It is also very useful in meetings to write important points on a wall or a whiteboard to have them always in sight. If you can represent them visually, it's even better.

At Sorbonne Université, we developed an introduction to the library of Clignancourt through 90 minutes of recreational activities and puzzles. We sketched posters to help the students, and guidelines with boxes, bullets, icons and arrows to assist the teaching librarian. Colleagues are reassured because everything

they need to think about is in front of their eyes on one sheet of paper and they have a global point of view of the course of the session.

Help to design a new service or product

Visual thinking can also help to create new things: drawing a design for a new service or interface before creating it in real life is very useful. The drawing is already a minimum viable product (or prototype), which can be submitted to users for feedback.

At Université d'Angers, we worked to create a service named 'Appointment with a librarian,' which would offer personalised research assistance, a service that was previously provided in an informal and unorganised way. After conducting research with users and thinking about what we could change or improve, we modelled the service with a storyboard to share it with the rest of the library team: the first phase was in draft form, with sticky notes to move around, and then we proposed a clean version in a meeting. This clean version is still useful to us: we have archived it in the library's online procedures, and everyone can refer to it.



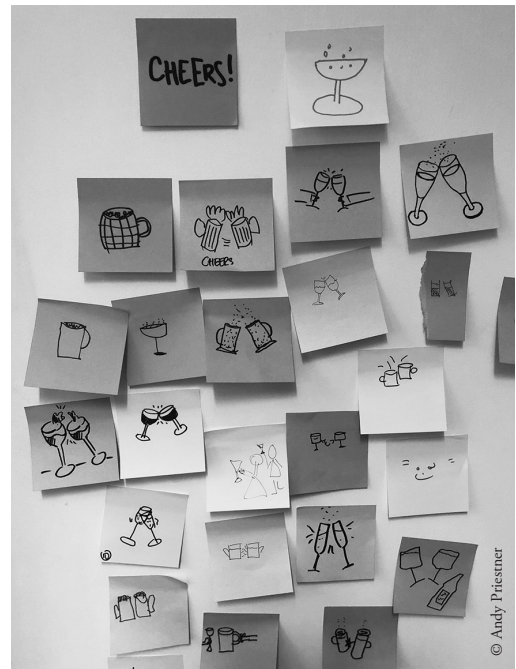
How can I begin?

Build a visual vocabulary

Visual language is precisely that, a language, and like any new language, you must acquire a little bit of vocabulary. It was the goal of the ‘Graphic Jam’ exercise in our workshop: represent abstract terms with drawings.

Here are some tips to get started:

- Use basic pictures: they are easier to draw and the goal is to clarify information, not to complicate it!
- Make a list of the terms or concepts that you use the most. Do you have an idea of how to represent them visually? Don’t hesitate to type the term in an image search engine (followed by the term ‘icon’) or search in the very useful image bank *The Noun Project*. You can also use the *Bikablo*® series of books from Neuland, or other visual dictionaries.
- Use a small notebook where you will progressively make a note of icons that you like and their meanings. This will be your visual library: you will translate your ideas faster.
- Copy good ideas wherever you see them (advertisements, infographics, social media, etc.) and do not be afraid of plagiarism! Analyse other people’s work and pick up different ways to draw things.
- Practice, practice, practice!



Don't try to draw beautiful things but useful things and, please, accept your mistakes

“I can’t draw, I’m not an artist!” Yes, you can draw! You just need to awaken your grade (primary) school skills: “The only demographic group who really knows they can draw is in Kindergarten today. Wait a minute... weren’t you once in

Kindergarten, too? The fact is, we are all born excellent visual thinkers. If you're visual enough to walk into a room without falling down, you're visual enough to solve problems with pictures.' (Roam, 2014)


So reassure yourself, you don't need to be good at drawing; if you are able to draw squares, triangles, smileys and stick figures, that will be fine. Your drawings don't have to be perfect to be effective. You will quickly notice that being able to draw well does not automatically translate into being able to make good sketchnotes. The objective is to make sense through the simplest images you can and to develop the ability to synthesise, to filter ideas, to capture the essence and to organise ideas between them (big ones, supportive ideas, examples...).


Finally and most importantly, don't worry about mistakes: they are a fundamental part of the learning, testing and improving process. 'Own your mistakes, life is not perfect, neither should be your sketchnotes' (Gary Barber, n.d.). Mistakes (crossing-outs, stains, bad proportions, wobbly shapes, etc.) in your visuals will bring something unexpected and very personal and will be such a great creative exercise. Please, be happy to make mistakes and have fun playing with drawing!



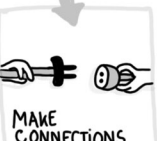
SKETCHNOTING for us

By magalie LE GALL






GET AN OVERVIEW




MAKE CONNECTIONS



COMMUNICATE BETTER

and have a lot of FUN!



@magalielegall

What is it?

SKETCHNOTES ARE VISUAL NOTES
THEY COMBINE drawings, text AND type, boxes, arrows AND shapes TO ENHANCE IDEAS, EXPRESS CLARITY AND HELP UNDERSTANDING



How does it work?


First of all,
ARE YOU ABLE TO draw this?




YES?

THAT'S GREAT! GOOD NEWS,
YOU'RE ABLE TO SKETCHNOTE! 
Come on, let's do this!

ANATOMY of a SKETCHNOTE



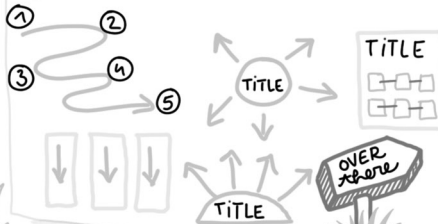
Examples of BOXES, DIVIDERS, ARROWS and BULLETS



1 CONTEXTUALIZE your SKETCHNOTE



2 STRUCTURE



GROUP IDEAS WITH BOXES, COLOURS, NUMBERS, MILESTONES. GUIDE ATTENTION AND MAKE SENSE WITH ARROWS AND LINKS. SEPARATE WITH BULLETS.

Don't forget your signature!

Why is it useful for UX?

TO synthesize, TO explore IDEAS, TO map THEM AND analyze EACH STEP OF A PROCESS, TO connect ALL THE THING TOGETHER

they give you FLEXIBILITY and they are ATTRACTIVE



3 HAVE FUN WITH *typo* AND EXPLAIN WITH TAGS AND TEXT

4 ADD ICONS AND PEOPLE!



Sketchnotes reconnect everybody with his/her inner creativity, they tell you that fun is a really good way to understand the world around you

“The most important skill is not drawing but listening, observation and analysis, just like UX methods! It talks about people”

MAGALIE

MAUD

We love it because

What will be your BABYstep?

It's TIME TO MAKE A COMMITMENT WITH yourself!

Great REFERENCES



MIKE ROHDE



EVA-LOTTA LAMM



CHRIS SPALTON

London
MAUD PUAUD AND
MAGALIE LE GALL
UXLIB 12 - 18th JUNE 2019



Focus on two visual techniques

1. Sketchnote

Take a look

Sketchnotes are rich visual notes created from a mix of handwriting, drawings, shapes and visual elements like arrows, boxes and lines. The word 'sketchnote' was used for the first time in 2007 by the American Mike Rohde (2013, 2014), who felt frustrated by all the linear notes he was taken. When you sketchnote you need to listen more intently and be focused on capturing the big ideas. Mind and body are working together. The motto is: ideas, not art! Even the roughest drawings can express ideas effectively.

Sketchnotes are useful for UX to synthesise, to explore and map ideas, to analyse and connect each step of a process, to have a shared language with your patrons and colleagues. And they are attractive!



Anatomy of a sketchnote

- **Title:** contextualise your sketchnote. It can include an event name, speaker name, date, location and topic.
- **Typography:** useful to emphasise ideas, create a hierarchy and structure.
- **Handwriting:** adding a detailed description or information if it's needed. Be careful about legibility.
- **Diagrams, drawings and icons to support your big ideas**
- **Dividers:** rules, dotted lines, etc. - they help you to separate ideas from each other visually, creating order and structure.
- **Arrows:** they point out details and help focus your attention on specific drawings, typography or text. They make a connection between multiple ideas.
- **Bullets:** they identify a series of ideas and highlight these ideas among drawings or text.
- **Containers:** they connect various elements together.
- **Your signature:** this is important when you share your sketchnotes on social media.
- **Negative space:** think about putting little pillows between your ideas (Agerbeck, 2012).
- Finally, **sketchnotes are personal**, they don't have to be neutral; you'll obviously reveal what you were hearing and thinking during the creation process. You can make comments, use humour and play with graphical elements. Put your own personality in your sketchnotes.

2. Storyboard

Take a look

You may already be familiar with the concept of storyboards from films, animations, or comic books. A storyboard is a visual representation of a user's story through images.

Storyboards can be used in different ways throughout the UX process:

- they help to understand users' current motivations and experiences, to share their stories. If your team or stakeholders are not involved in the user research (it's better to involve them, but we do not always have the choice), a storyboard can exemplify how your patrons interacted with your service, your website, etc. Visual representation can make your story memorable

and create more empathy. You can include quotes from your user in speech bubbles.

- they help to explore and imagine the user experience with a new service or product: it's a kind of visual prototype that can be presented to users and teams to gather their reaction. A storyboard helps you to design your 'new visual experience.'

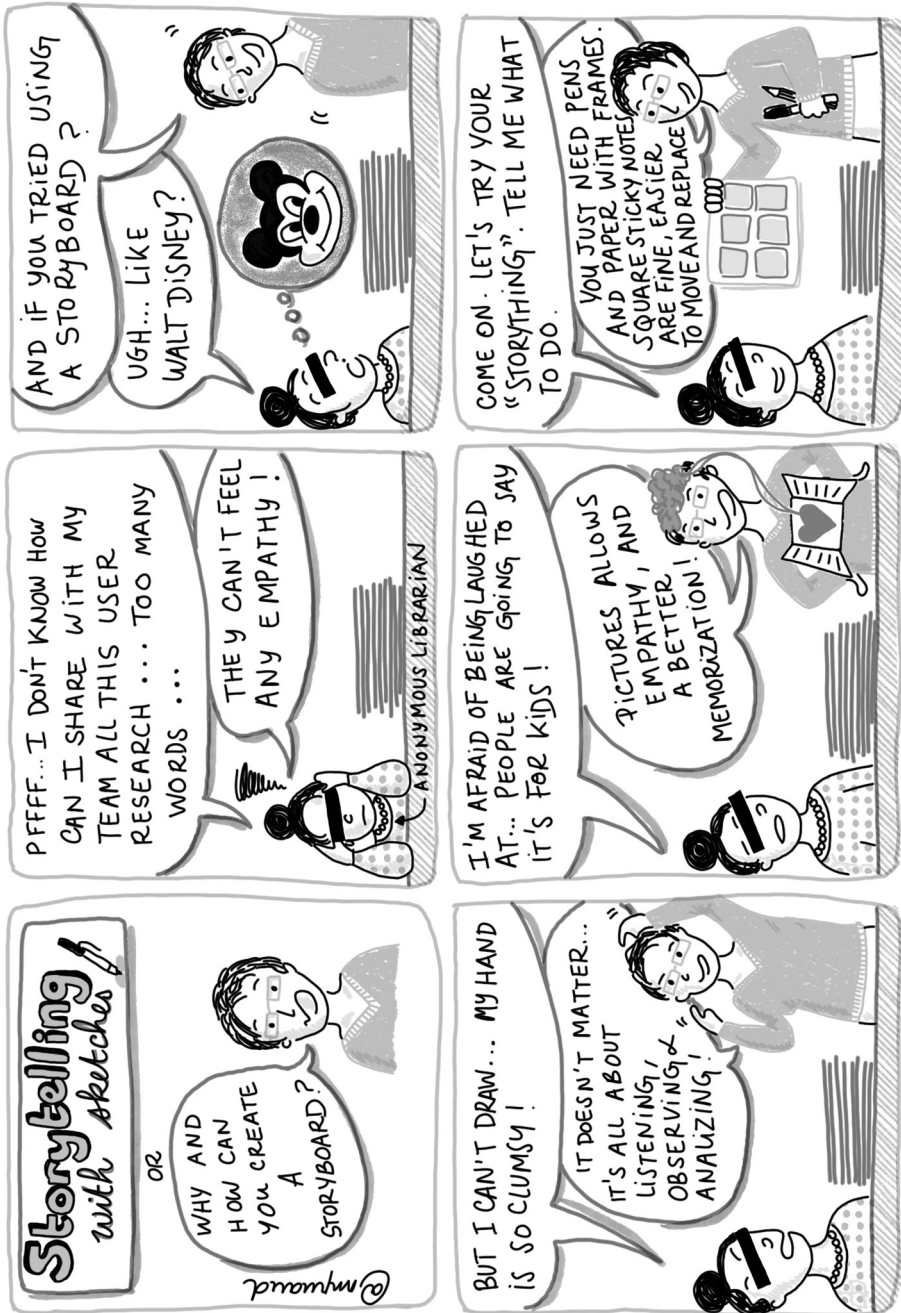
Anatomy of a storyboard

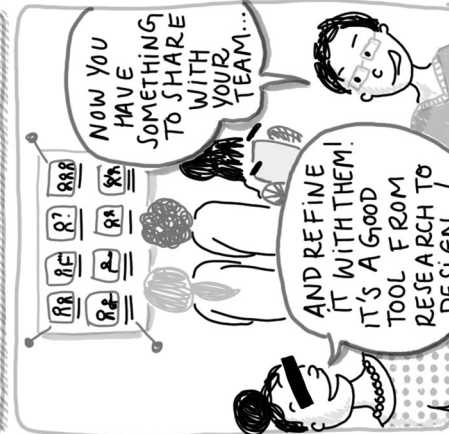
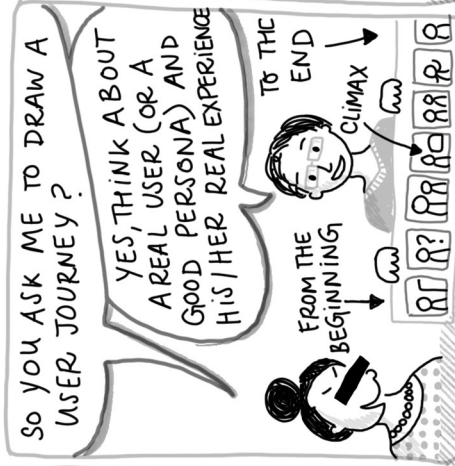
To build a storyboard, you need:

- A basic scenario of a user story (a real user or a persona inspired by your user research).
- Visuals: each step of the scenario is represented visually. The steps can be quick sketches, illustrations or photos. You don't need a high-quality level, stick figures are fine. You can include details such as the user's environment, or speech bubbles.



© David Scott





- Captions: you can add to each visual a corresponding caption to describe the user's environment, his feelings, etc. Be concise, the image is the main content!
- A big sheet of paper with boxes. You can use a pre-drawn template if you want.

If you think: "I'm not a scriptwriter, it's difficult!" This is a story: be narrative.

- First, determine which data of your user research will be used in your storyboard (interviews, observations, usability tests...)
- Then you can begin by describing the user's experience with words, short sentences. Think of a story: beginning/middle/end. Describe what the user does, thinks and feels in the interaction with the service. Divide this story into steps and give them a number.
- For each step, try to imagine:
 - What is relevant for the comprehension of the story (environment, context, speech bubbles...)
 - a stick figure with visible feeling in their face: joy, relief, disgust, surprise... and/or performing an action.

In meetings, you can create storyboards collaboratively with sticky notes, which are easy to move and replace: draw each step on a sticky note and place on a whiteboard or a wall.

Then you can use the storyboard to work on with users and teams, to refine and improve the service.

Conclusion

'A picture is worth a thousand words': this well-known proverb illustrates the ability of our brain to quickly understand images. Visuals allow emotional engagement and make your story more memorable, offer a different perspective and improve communication. Above all, it is a different way of thinking and representing which does not exclude words, just as UX is a different way of thinking and interpreting what we have in front of our eyes, in a non-linear way, by sometimes taking into account contradictory aspects. To your pencils!

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