

Mobile App Development Plan

This assignment is intended to be the most challenging in this course. Choose your partner carefully, and manage your time well. Read the instructions closely.

In this course, we have been exploring current issues in public history, including challenges typically faced by professionals in public history fields and the ways the public engages with history online and off. This assignment asks you to focus on the first group: professional public historians. (For the purposes of this assignment, we are focusing on people who earn income from their work, either as employees or independent consultants—not hobbyists.)

In a nutshell, your assignment is to partner with one other student to **write a development plan for a mobile application that will be of use to public history professionals.**

One example of such an app is the simple Emergency Response and Salvage (ERS) app produced by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. (Learn about this app at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ers-emergency-response-salvage/id513081280>.)

This assignment gives you the opportunity to put your research skills to the test. Among the topics you will need to research or revisit:

- challenges or issues facing professionals in a field of public history (e.g. museums, archives, preservation, cultural resource management, digital history, oral history, historic site interpretation) that could be eased or addressed in part through a mobile app
- mobile application platforms (e.g. iOS, Android, web app)
- mobile application development workflow
- visual design
- budgets
- promotion

Development plan sections

Your final assignment, to be turned in as a printed document in class and e-mailed to me, must include the following sections:

Your app's objective

What problem or challenge is your app solving, and how does it go about doing so in a way that is valuable to professionals? List and describe the app's features and its benefits.

- *Features* are the specific functions an app performs. Among the ERS app's functions, for example, are detailed instructions on how to deal with water damage to photos and artifacts.
- *Benefits* are the results of those functions. Among the benefits the ERS app offers is greater collections health and stability following an emergency.

A typical user scenario

A user scenario describes a typical user and how she would go about using the app. You can be incredibly detailed here, offering different use scenarios for more- or less-skilled professionals, for example, or for professionals facing different challenges. An ERS app user scenario, for example, might describe the steps taken by a museum staff member:

Carolyn, a conservator with a broad theoretical understanding of collections care but little actual experience in remediating water damage, returns to work on a summer Monday morning to find part of her museum's collection in the storage warehouse has sustained water damage from a burst pipe. She opens the app and navigates to the "Stabilization" screen, where she finds a list of actions she can take immediately, as well as cautions for what *not* to do so as to prevent further damage to the collection. In response to the list, she dons protective footwear, reduces temperature in the storage warehouse by turning the air conditioner to its coldest setting, and begins to remove standing water. She returns to the home screen, then proceeds to the "Documentation" screen, where she is reminded not to move objects without documenting their condition and to take plenty of photographs and notes. Also prompted by a warning on this screen, she delegates contacting insurance agents to her assistant, reminding him to keep extensive written records of conversations. She then moves on to the "Protection" screen, where. . . [you get the idea]

Platform

On what platform will your app initially run? (You can plan to expand your platforms later, but for now, choose one.) Will your product be an iOS, Android, or web-based app? Are you targeting smartphone or tablet users? Justify your decisions.

Next, investigate the technical process of developing an app on this platform. So that you can be informed when you approach a developer, describe briefly the process of making an app and delivering it to users' devices. For example, in what programming language should it be written? What steps must you take to get your app listed in an app store?

Visual design

Provide images of your app's interface. These might include (extra nice, clean) sketches, wireframes made on the computer, font suggestions, sample images, and a color palette.

There are many wireframing tools; play around with a few until you find a free solution that works for you. There is also a wireframing tool that exports to PDF in your campus Gmail account. Go to "More" on the menu at the top of your screen, then choose Lucidchart.

Development timeline

Provide a realistic timeline, including alpha and beta testing, for your app's development and release. Provide sufficient detail that someone from outside your team can understand each milestone.

Development budget

Provide an approximate, but realistic, budget for building, designing, testing, releasing, promoting, and sustaining your app. (Sustaining = providing user support for your app, as well as upgrading it to keep it current with each new system upgrade on the user's device.) Be as specific as possible in your estimates.

Potential developers

Pretend you received sufficient funding to develop your app. List three app developers you would approach with your project. Describe why you might want to work with these three firms or individuals. Include links to their websites and/or portfolios.

Similar apps

It would be sad if you released your app only to discover there are other apps that do just about the same thing. Which apps are similar to, or compete directly with, yours? How is your app sufficiently different that users will want to download it instead of existing apps?

Promotional plan

How will you let your intended users know your app is available? Be very specific, and justify your decisions.

Appendices

Place in your appendices any materials that elaborates on information in any of the sections above, but which is not essential to understanding your proposed app or your decision-making process as you plan its development.

Evaluation

Your grade will depend on a number of factors, including these:

- the quality of your research as reflected throughout your assignment. This means understanding not only the technical aspects of creating an app, but also fully comprehending the actual needs of your intended users.
- realism, particularly with regard to your timeline and budget.
- accuracy. Do you get the technical details correct?
- presentation. Is the writing flawless and engaging throughout your proposal? Is the proposal well-organized and aesthetically pleasing, or does it appear to have been formatted at the very last minute?

Deadlines

April 29: App development plan due at the beginning of class.

May 15: App development presentations (during final exam period). Details forthcoming.

As always, I am available to answer questions and provide feedback on drafts of your proposal. (Feedback on longer pieces may take 3-5 days, depending on how full my schedule is.)