

Seattle Public Library App & Outreach System

An app and outreach system that aligns with the Seattle Public Library's mission of serving communities without direct access to technology

CONTEXT

Seattle Public Library



Inside SPL Central Library

The Seattle Public Library has a myriad of resources and programs that benefit individuals and the community. However, many often do not know about these resources available or how to access them. This is especially true for those who have limited access to technology.

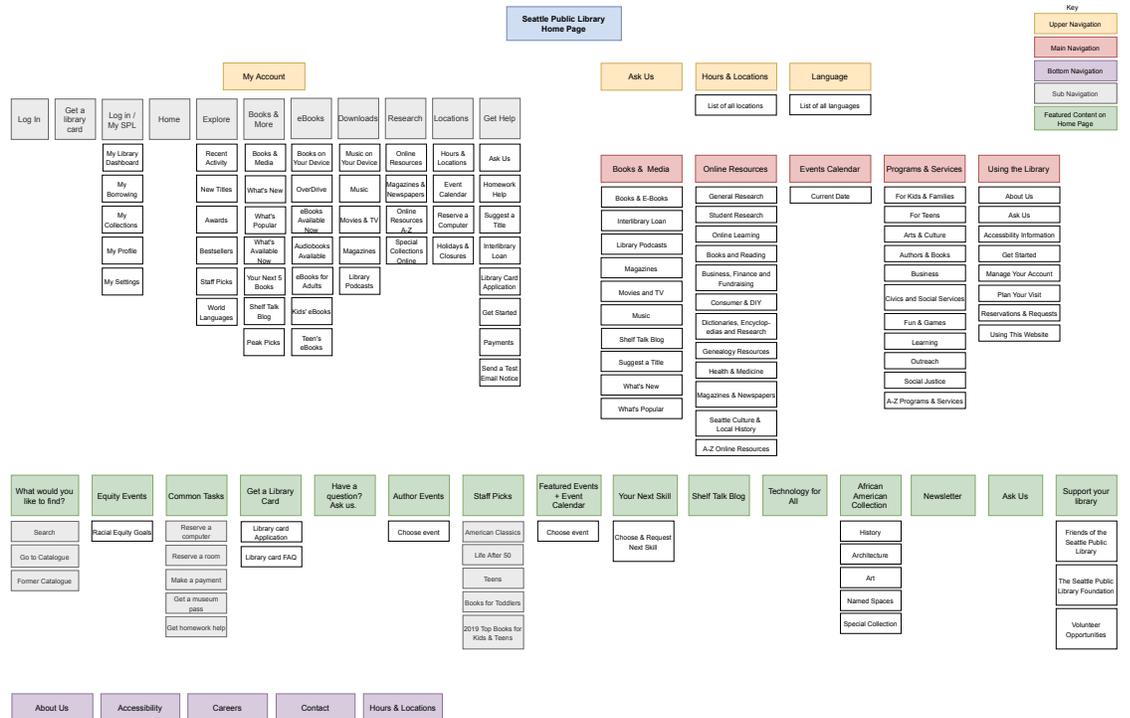
The mission of the SPL is to "bring people, information, and ideas together to enrich lives and build community". For this four week Interface Design project, our team wanted to design something that aligned with their mission and could be integrated into their existing framework to increase access to resources for these people.

PROCESS

Research Methods

1. Secondary Research

First, we did research on what the SPL offers and how they currently work. We looked at existing programs, services, locations, demographics, resources, and the means of accessing them. We also examined their website and its information architecture to understand how the resources were organized and presented.



Information Architecture of SPL website

2. Contextual Inquiry at Homeless Shelter

Our team visited and spoke with counselors and individuals at a local homeless shelter to understand barriers to resources and their perception of current library services.



A man at the shelter who wants to learn how to animate

“

*I love to draw, but I want to learn how to animate online.
It would be cool if someone could teach me.*

3. Interview with SPL Regional Manager

To understand the needs of patrons and librarians, we interviewed the SPL regional manager to understand their workflow and how their programs and services run. We organized the information we got from the interview into an affinity diagram.

1.

The library does outreach in places like: sanctioned encampments, domestic violence shelters, food banks, low income housing communities, senior housing communities.

2.

The library provides social/human service venues such as meal programs for seniors and kids.

3.

The library has a mix of classes. Some are taught by library staff (like basic computer skills) and some are taught by paid instructors.



Affinity Diagram from Interview with SPL Regional Manager



*In our experience, the most effective way to reach these communities with high needs and barriers to access is **in person visits and hands on help from library staff.***

Key Insights**1.**

With an abundance of resources, many key pieces of information are lost and need to be brought to light with a new hierarchy.

2.

The library prioritizes learning and accessibility. Outreach programs already in place could be used to distribute personalized resources and spread information.

3.

Access to information should not be presented in just one medium, it should be accessible online + offline and available to those who cannot easily make it to the library.

Librarian

Give the librarian a platform to connect with patrons and share resources for those with and without access to technology.

Patron

Give patrons of the library the opportunity to easily and independently explore and collect resources on topics they are interested in.

Use case examples

Librarian + Community Member w/out digital access

A librarian does outreach in homeless camps and wants to find a way to share resources with someone who doesn't have digital access.

Parent + Child

A mom wants to find storytime classes for her kids, and cooking classes for herself.

Learner

A senior citizen who loves to take Skillshare classes and learn about new things. He would like to create learning plans for himself and know about upcoming classes and workshops.

Ideation

How might we design a mobile service to connect people (both with and without access to technology) to personalized resources?

The main challenge for us was designing an app for people who do not have access to it which seemed paradoxical at the time. However, we learned that librarians already play a huge role of being a bridge for patrons to access resources and programs. We realized that if our design helps Librarians do their jobs, it could help them help the people they serve.

1. Style Experimentation & Task Flows

First we each individually created an initial style guide and basic user task flows so we could bring the best of our ideas together. We each had a specific user type to think about.

Mine

Seattle Public Library

Possible Colors

#1A1A1A	#6B6B6B	#DEDED	#FFFFFF	#0057AC
#4680B8	#00708B	#C83D46	#F4A21F	#0070AC

Events

Community

Skills

Ask Us

Expert in their Field

Vision: An app for the Seattle Public Library where people can learn skills or hobbies from each other through online forums, events, classes, and workshops.

Registering for a workshop

```

graph LR
    A[User opens app] --> B[User taps "events"]
    B --> C[User browses through upcoming events and workshops and taps one]
    C --> D[User sees information about the event. User taps "register"]
  
```

Communicating on the community forum

```

graph LR
    A[User opens app] --> B[User taps "community forums"]
    B --> C[User taps "Animation group"]
    C --> D[User sees posts from members. User taps "bookmark" button on a post]
    D --> E[User replies to the post "thank you that is helpful"]
  
```

Creating a workshop to host at the library

```

graph LR
    A[User opens app] --> B[User taps "Skill share"]
    B --> C[User clicks "workshop"]
    C --> D[User sees the list of upcoming workshops. User wants to host his own so he clicks "create workshop" button]
    D --> E[User selects an open time slot and an open room. User enters in info for the workshop. User taps "create workshop"]
  
```

Maygha's

SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Mother

User Goal: a mom wants to find storytime classes for her kids, and cooking classes for herself. She wants to find things that fit both needs—finding classes for her kids, and learning about cooking for herself.

```

graph LR
    A[User clicks "Events"] --> B[User clicks "Type of Events"]
    B --> C[User chooses "Classes"]
    C --> D[User clicks "Categories"]
    D --> E[User chooses "Food"]
    
    F[User clicks "Story Time on Wednesday"] --> G[User clicks "Add to my Calendar"]
    G --> H[User adds class to her SPL calendar and personal calendar]
    H --> I[User clicks "Back"]
    I --> J[User clicks "Clear Filters" on Events]
    
    K[User clicks "Wednesday"] --> L[User clicks "French Cooking Class"]
    L --> M[User clicks "Add to my Calendar"]
    M --> N[User adds class to her SPL calendar and personal calendar]
  
```

Sarah's

Seattle Public Library

Dancer Pro Connect

Source Sans Pro Chat with a Librarian

Librarian + Community Member

Vision: Librarians can connect with people who may not have access to technology through outreach programs. They can generate learning plans centered around library resources, and share these plans digitally or via print.

explore
connect
personalize

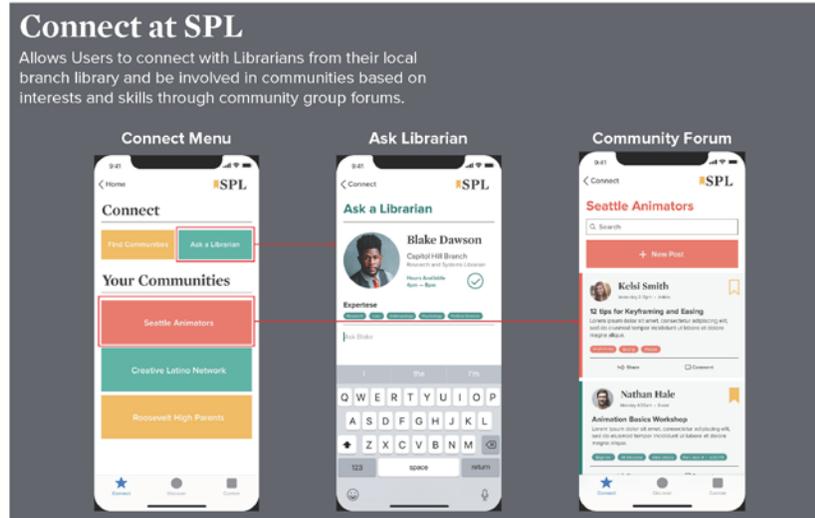
```

graph LR
    A[Librarian selects the "personalize" tile] --> B[Librarian views filters to personalize selection]
    B --> C[Librarian fills in personal information for CM]
    C --> D[Browser age, location, and language]
    D --> E[Browser learning goals / interests]
    
    F[Selects "resource held by" as important] --> G[Selects level of importance for other skills]
    G --> H[Selects "recommend a plan" button]
    H --> I[Selects "share plan button"]
    I --> J[Option to print, email, or message plan]
  
```

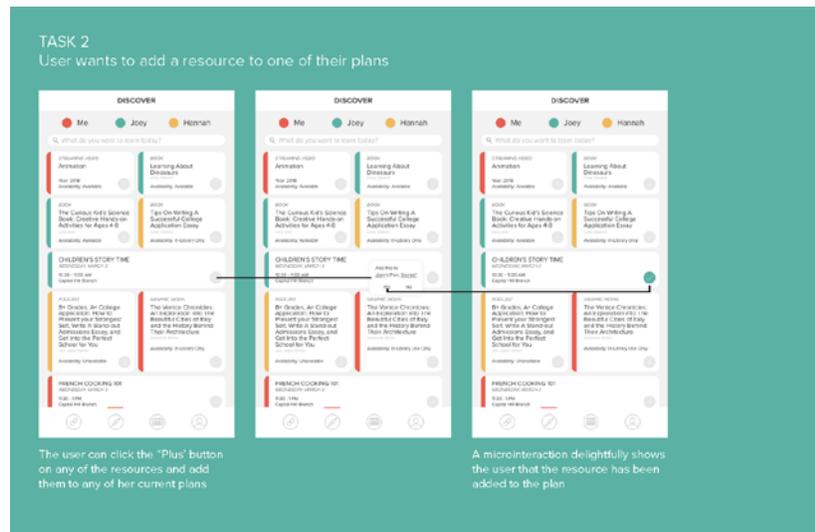
CM = Community Member

2. UI Ideation

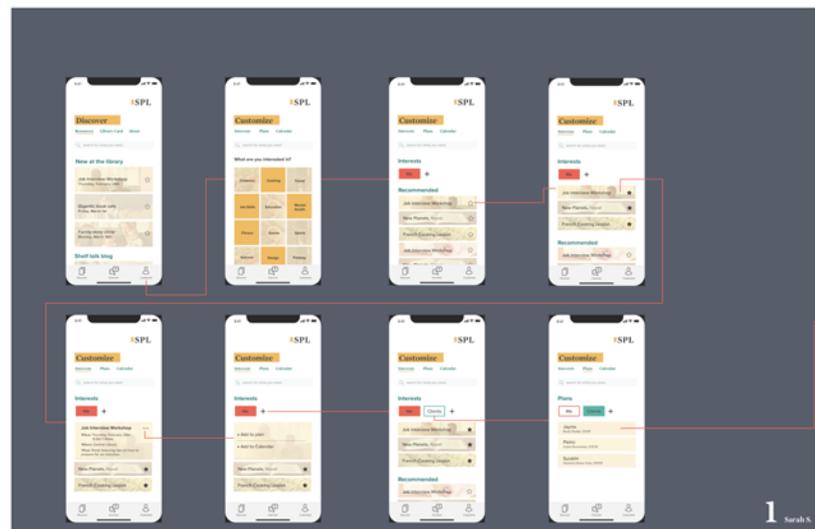
After we decided on some key functions of our app, we individually designed some low-mid fidelity interfaces so we could present to each other what we each envisioned for layout and style.



Mine



Maygha's



Sarah's

Design Principles

Accessible + Inclusive

Staying true to a core SPL value, individuals from all walks of life should be able to easily use this platform.

Personal

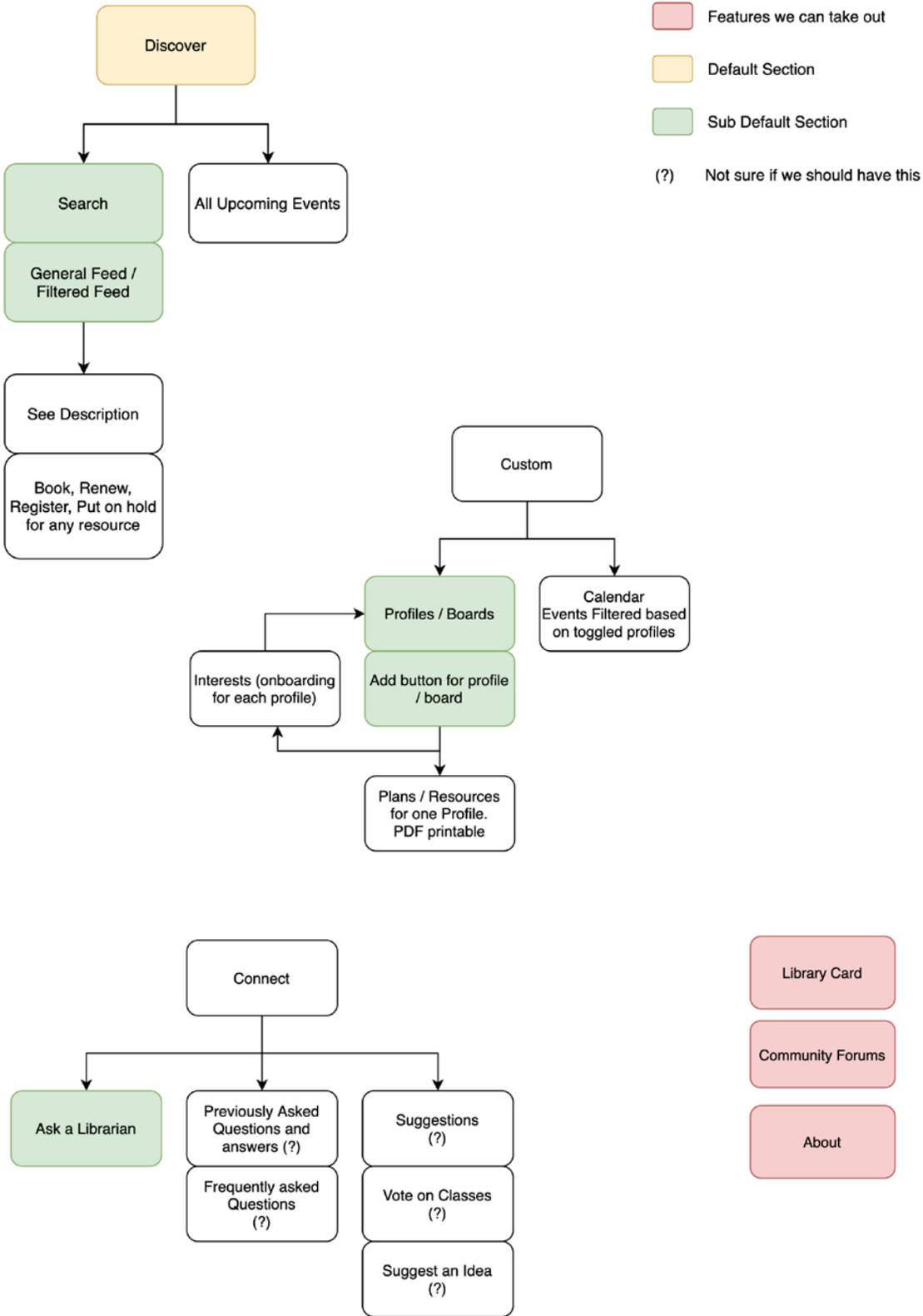
Individuals should be able to fulfill their own specific wants and needs in regards to the process of accessing the library's vast resources.

Learning-oriented

Resources are organized in a way that makes them easy to digest and find. Opportunities for learning are simplified by making learning new things a primary function of this platform.

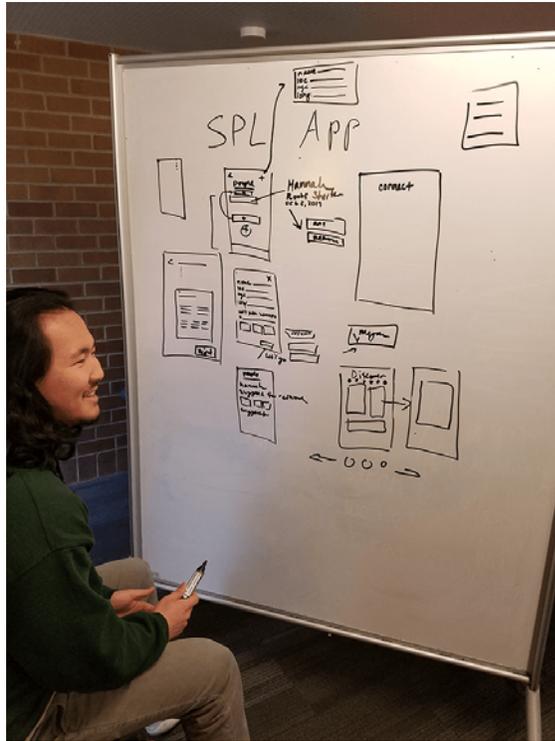
3. Information Architecture

Based the ideas from our conversations and brainstorming sessions, I made this information architecture diagram for our app so we could all be on the same page of what functions and interfaces were necessary.



4. Teamwork makes the Dream work

We then met together and spent hours working together to unify our ideas and design our interfaces at the library (of course)



Working hard but having fun



"Now let me get a picture of you!"



4 hours later...

Visual Language

For our typeface we use Mercury to maintain the bookish aesthetic of the library while using Proxima Nova to keep the app's UI clean and modern. We also pulled from the navy blue SPL currently uses and turned it into a turquoise to add some personality. We used complementary coral and yellow colors to make the brand appear more friendly and the app more engaging.

Mercury Bold

Proxima Nova



A key characteristic of our design is the tiles. Our tiles have rounded edges by 5px to appear friendly but still professional. These tiles are meant to showcase the library's resources and events and they are color coded on both the app and the PDF plans.



Textual Resources

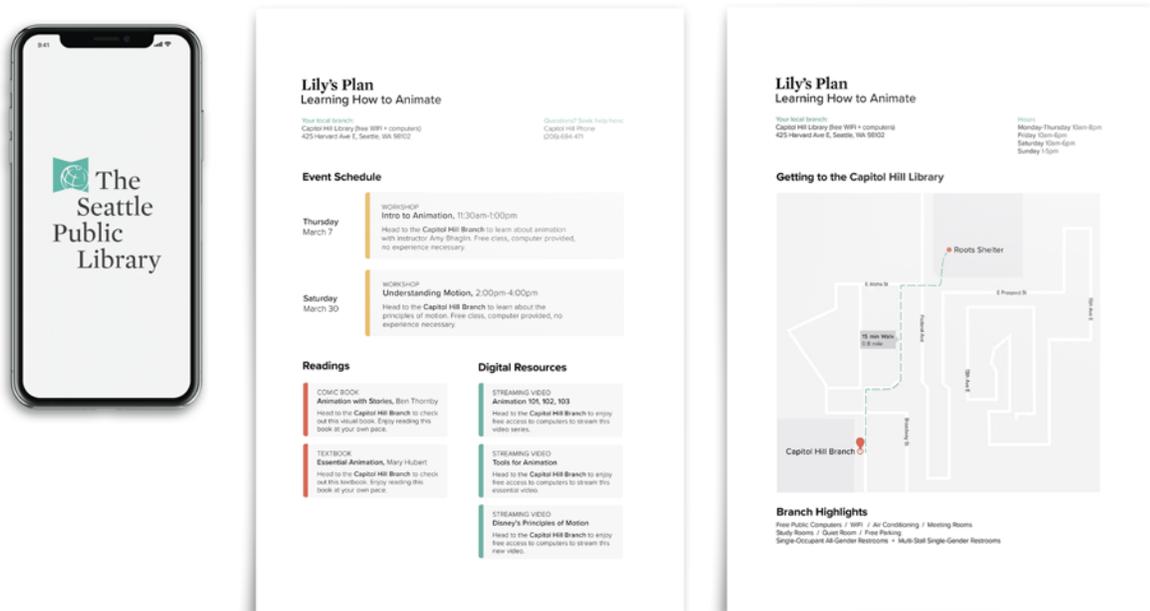


Events



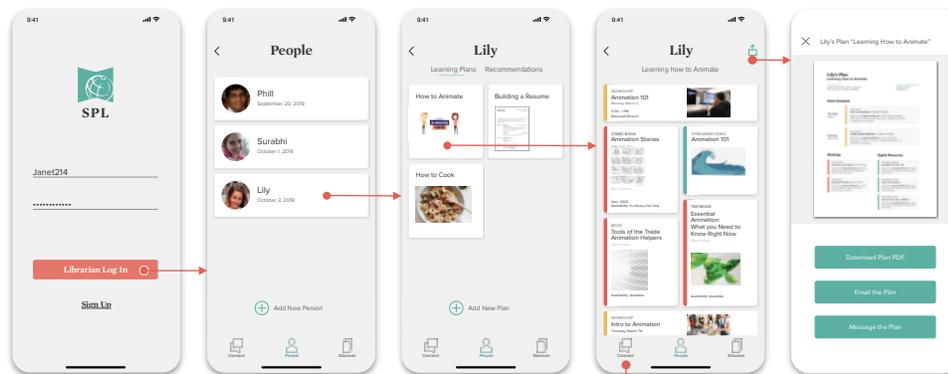
Digital Resources

“Final” Interfaces

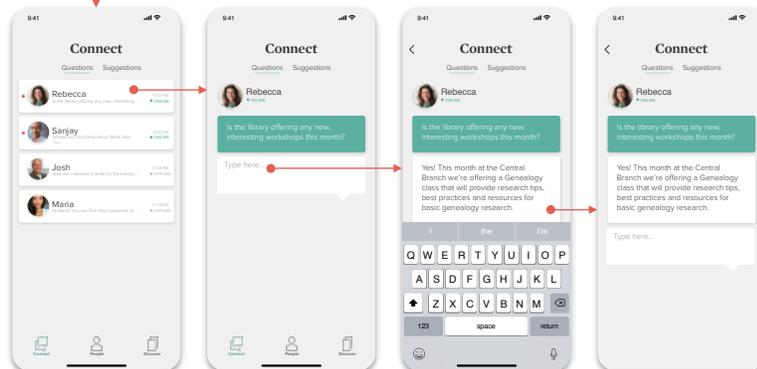


Librarian App

Downloading a printable plan in the “People” section

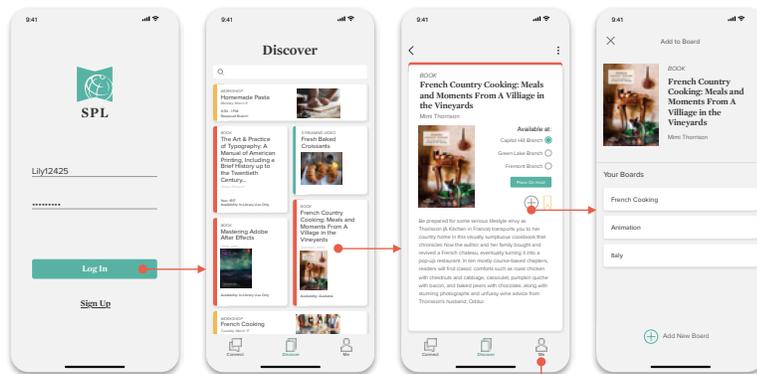


“Connect” section for answering Patron’s questions and suggestions

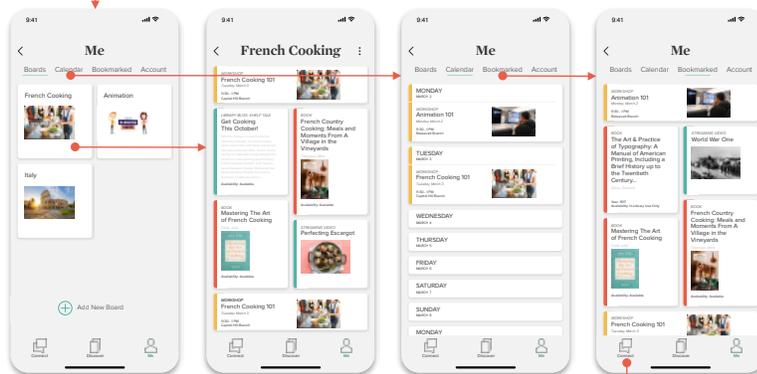


Patron App

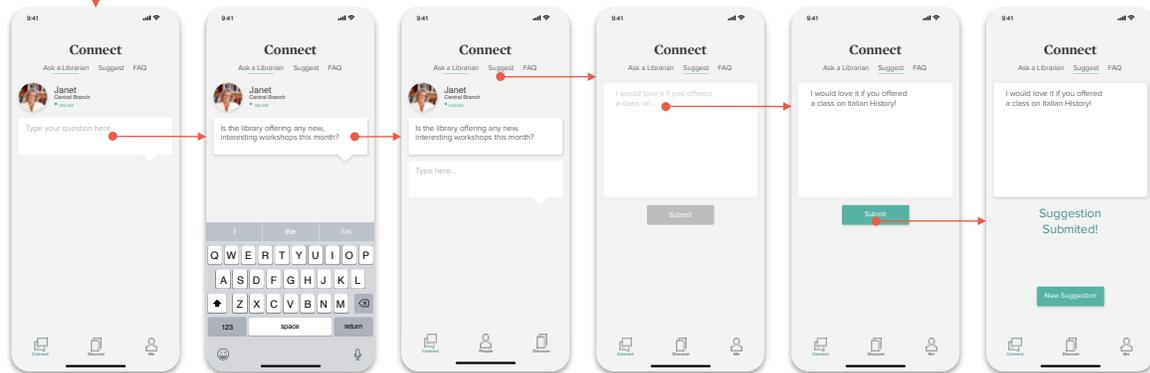
Adding a resource to a board in "Discover" section



Resources and events organized in "Me" section



"Connect" section for asking questions and giving suggestions



REFLECTION

If I were to continue...

One of the main challenges to this project was not having access to actual users who use the SPL's services. Part of this was due to time constraints with the fact that this was a short four-week project, and part of it was that our class focused more visual interface design rather than user experience design. Nevertheless, I am proud of our team for going beyond what was expected, prioritizing the needs of users who aren't considered nearly enough, and to come up with a meaningful design that aligns with the SPL's mission and work.

If I were to continue working on this project, the next step would be to conduct usability testing with librarians, real SPL patrons, and individuals without digital access. I would also test and get feedback on how effective the printable PDF plans would be and continue iterating based on that feedback.

Takeaways

An important lesson that I learned during this project was to think beyond just screens and interfaces, and to focus more on the people and what their needs and tasks are. Because the given scope of our project was to design mobile interfaces, I initially thought that tackling the challenge of helping people without digital access with a digital product was absurd. I am thankful to my team and our research process to help me now know otherwise. Although we weren't certain that we would be successful tackling this challenge within this scope, I am glad we didn't limit ourselves and followed where our research led us.