UXkids case study:

KB Koninklijke Bibliotheek
Nationale bibliotheek van Nederland

Building an interactive prototype for the National Library of the Netherlands

Keywords: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KB, Concept design, User stories, Interaction design, User tests, Kids age 9-12
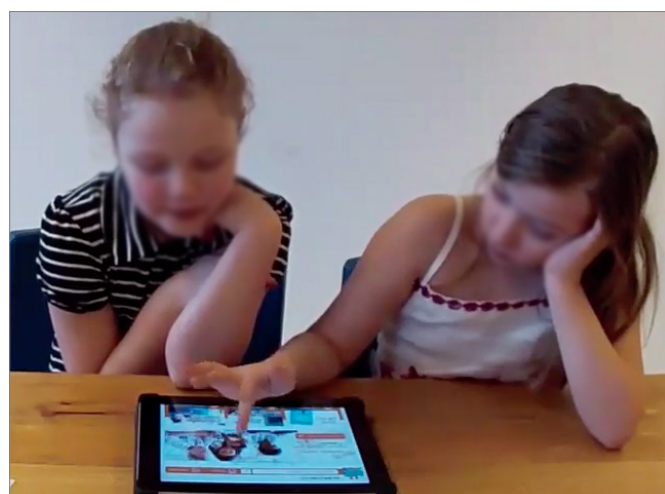
Being part of the network of public libraries, the National Library of the Netherlands (known in Dutch as the Koninklijke Bibliotheek and more commonly as the KB) is working on a digital platform for their youth members. The goal of this platform is to stimulate the development of language, reading and media literacy skills.

The Dutch public libraries put a lot of effort into developing their physical products and services for kids. Over the years they have gathered a lot of experience regarding their in-house offer. However, developing a child- and user-friendly online platform for kids confronts the KB with a new challenge. In order to help them make the right design decisions, they reached out to UXkids, an expert on the online user experience for kids.

"We are very happy with our collaboration with UXkids. They offered the needed expertise that we don't currently have at the National Library of the Netherlands. With their experience and knowledge about child development, UXkids was able to deliver a first prototype of our new website for kids.

UXkids are efficient in their work and ask the right (critical) questions. Their deliverables are convincing and practical. Job well done!"

Lieke Hoefs, Project Manager Youth at the KB

The project team that works on the new youth proposition already had a rough idea on what they wanted the online platform to look like.

Yet, they didn't have the necessary experience with designing digital media for kids to answer the following questions:

*The KB team was able to watch an online live-stream of the research.*

- What makes an online platform appealing and intuitive for kids?

- How do we design a platform that will match the needs and expectations of the young readers?

- How do we match a new concept with the existing technical framework?

- How can we make the new platform tangible for all stakeholders at an early stage?

UXkids joins the project team at the KB

UXkids joins the project team in order to help the KB with a child- and user-friendly design for the new platform. User research and an inventory of existing technical and organizational regulations were the starting point for the new design.

UXkids wrote user stories in order to map out the needs and expectations of the kids.
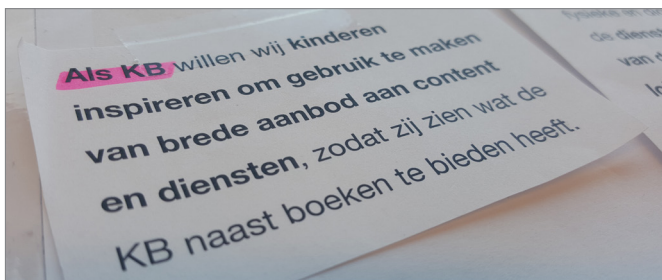
The ideas and goals of the KB were also taken into consideration during the conceptual phase of the project.

In close collaboration with the KB, UXkids was able to answer the initial questions.

Wat is belangrijk voor een aansprekende en intuïtieve omgeving voor kinderen?

Based on years of experience, UXkids has become an expert on designing digital products for kids.

Below we discuss five important aspects of designing for the age group 9 - 12 years:

1. Intuitive structure

Kids in general are not looking for structure on a website. Rather, they are action driven and love to navigate through a website using trial & error.

As a consequence, kids don't like dead ends, but want to endlessly explore fun and interesting content.

2. Help with search

Most of the time, kids know what they are looking for, but lack the skill to systematically search for it on a website. That's why it is crucial to take them by the hand and offer clear instructions and feedback during their search.

3. Personalisation

Even more than adults, kids are triggered by content that is relevant for them. Only when kids expect to find interesting content, they are motivated to further explore a website. It is therefore very important that the content matches the child's age and interests.

4. Visual content

Kids are very visual by nature. As a consequence, images need to be functional and relevant.
Text works best if it gets integrated in images or if it's visually supported, for example by icons.

5. A cheerful visual design

Colors play a very important role when it comes to a child-friendly look & feel. Colors can be used as an indicator for content categories or simply to create a fun and cheerful appearance. The visual design is a great tool to prevent boredom on a website, which is essential for kids.

How do we design a platform that will match the needs and expectations of the young readers?

UXkids beliefs in a Child Centered Design process. A lot of design aspects, such as the ones discussed above, can be considered universal. They form the base for best practices as the starting point for a new design. However, kids are still the experts when it comes to the user-friendly design for children.

By involving kids throughout the design process, the KB knows for sure that their concept and design will meet the needs and expectations of their users.

The prototype was tested with kids age 9 - 10.
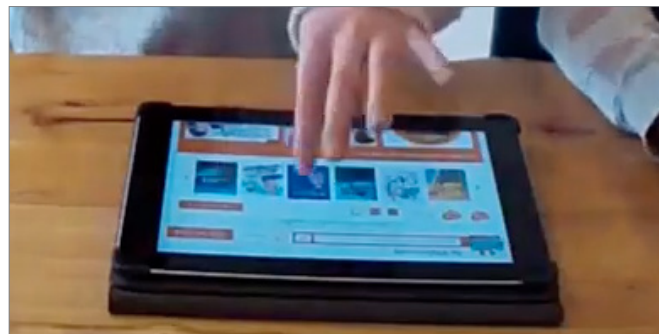
Kids were encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas.

How do we match a new concept with the existing technical framework?

Fitting the new design into the existing framework was one of the main requests the KB had for the new platform. From the very beginning, UXkids worked together closely with all members of the project team. This close collaboration allowed the team to validate the technical feasibility of the concept early on and make well-considered design decision.

How can we make the new platform tangible at an early stage?

An image says more than a thousand words. This holds true for digital products. By creating a click-able prototype, UXkids bridged the gap between an abstract vision document and a tangible concept. The visual design for this first version was based on the corporate identity of the KB, which UXkids enriched with a child-friendly character.

The interactive prototype, which allowed for all top level interactions, made the new platform come to life - long before a single line of code had to be written.

The new concept was ready to be presented and discussed. This way, everyone was kept in the loop and there was no more confusion or miscom-munication of what the new platform would or would not be.

About UXkids

The best digital products for kids are developed with kids.

UXkids is the only company in the Netherlands that is specialized in the user experience (UX) for children and teens.

We are a driven and passionate team with more than 6 years experience with the young users.

During the past couple of years, UXkids:

• Talked to 500+ children,

• Interviewed 180+ teachers and parents,

• Visited 29 schools,

• Conducted 148 user tests,

• Held 132 focus groups,

• Held 93 interviews and

• Enjoyed countless unexpected insights into how kids see the (digital) world

Do you have a question or need help with designing digital products for kids that will have a positive impact? Then let's talk!

UXkids

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