The New York Philharmonic
Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives

Moderated User Testing

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(New York Philharmonic Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives, n.d.)

Our Team

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Agenda

- **Introduction: Project Scope & Goals**

- **Methodology**

- **Findings and Recommendations**

- **Conclusion + Next Steps**

- **Q&A + Discussion**

Introduction

The Project - Scope

- **The New York Philharmonic Digital Archives**
    - Usability testing of their current Digital Archives
- **Part of a larger NEH grant**
    - Improve discoverability and accessibility of archival material

The Project - Goals

- Improve the exploratory experience for new users landing on the site
- Evaluate and improve the experience for experts/researchers seeking out specific archival information.

Methodology

Moderated Remote User Testing - Process

- A form of lab experiment

- Users as participants

- Conducted in a controlled environment

- Actively moderated by an expert

- Participants complete tasks and think aloud

Moderated Remote User Testing - Benefits

- Only requires 5 participants

- Minimal Technology needed
    - Internet connection
    - Computer
    - Recording mechanism

- Can be done remotely
    - Wider Participant pool

Participants - User Groups

Three key groups:

- **The Amateur**

- **The Explorer**

- **The Professor**

Participants - Recruitment

- Created a survey to determine interest & eligibility

- Amazon gift card as an incentive

- Circulated internally and via the NY Philharmonic

- Reached out to participants to schedule tests

Testing - Tasks

Task 1:
Find a program and a photo that includes William Lincer, a member of the New York Philharmonic orchestra in the mid 1900s.

Task 2:
Find the sheet music and clarinet piece for Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Ballet.

Task 3:
Find the digital exhibition about its first female musician, and where said musician was born

Task 4:
Find the newly digitized set of press clipping scrapbooks, which are featured on their homepage, and specifically one from the park concert series

Task 5:
Find a recording of one of the virtual performances offered by the Philharmonic in the first few months of the pandemic, and which soloist performed the most during this time

Testing - Post Test

- **System Usability Scale**

    - **Quickly and easily assess usability**

- **Emotionally focussed questions**

    - **Gauge their experience with the Digital Archives**

Testing - Review

- Reviewed footage

- Group discussion

- Rainbow chart

- SUS Analysis

Findings and Recommendations
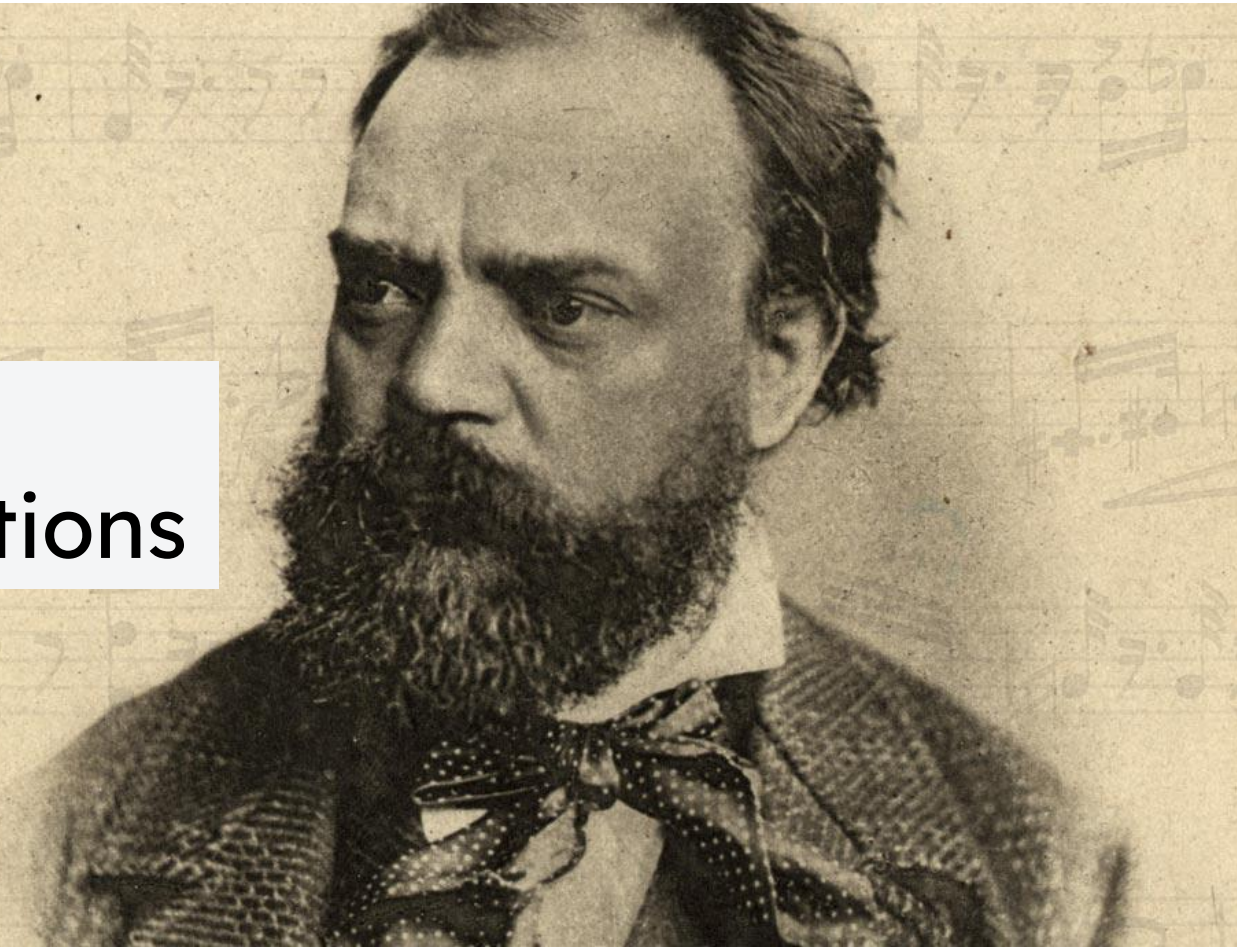
(New York Philharmonic Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives, n.d.)

"It's a very well designed interface. It does match the culture of the New York Philharmonic."

"I definitely like that the first thing I see is the 'Search the Digital Archives' section."

Word cloud generated from user responses to the post-test survey

1. I think that **I would like to use this system frequently**.
2. I found the system unnecessarily **complex**.
3. I thought the system was **easy** to use.
4. I think that I would **need the support of a technical person** to be able to use this system.
5. I found the various **functions** in this system were well integrated.
6. I thought there was too much **inconsistency** in this system.
7. I would imagine that most people would learn to use this system very **quickly**.
8. I found the system very **cumbersome** to use.
9. I felt very **confident** using the system.
10. I **needed to learn a lot** of things before I could get going with this system.

SUS Survey

Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Improve navigation usability and accessibility by updating styling, spacing, and text.

Recommendation 2: Update style and navigation elements on the carousel to make it more intuitive and accessible.
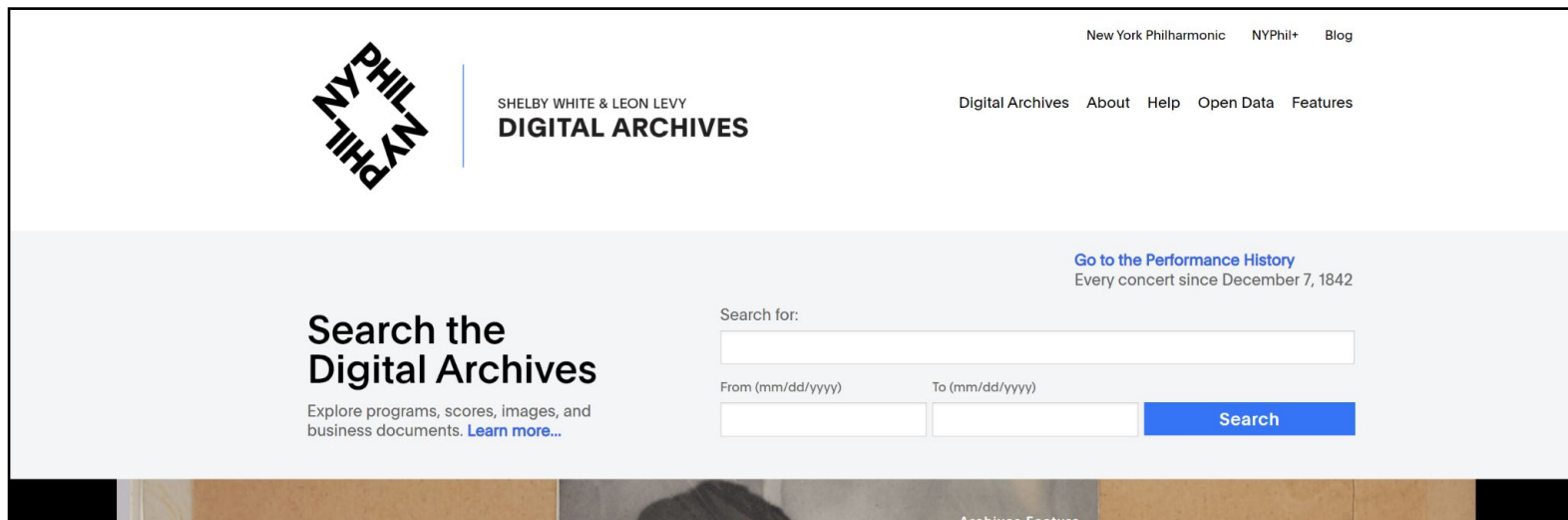
Recommendation 3: Streamline search results page with consolidated sort and filter options.

Recommendation 4: Move pop-up modal underneath each filter and introduce a search bar for the filter options when opened.

Recommendation 5: Minor findings and recommendations

Finding #1

Navigation usability and accessibility challenges

Recommendation 1

Improve navigation usability and accessibility by updating styling, spacing, and text.

Recommendation 1

1.1) Add link styling to the navigation labels to make it clear that they are interactive links (and that they signify the active page)

1.2) Change the "Features" label to " Exhibits"

Recommendation 1

1.3) Add "…from the New York Philharmonic" to the explanatory text by the search bar

1.4) Shrink the top navigation slightly to reduce white space

1.5) Additional adjustments to improve accessibility of main navigation and search

Finding #2

Challenges navigating the carousel and with button contrast
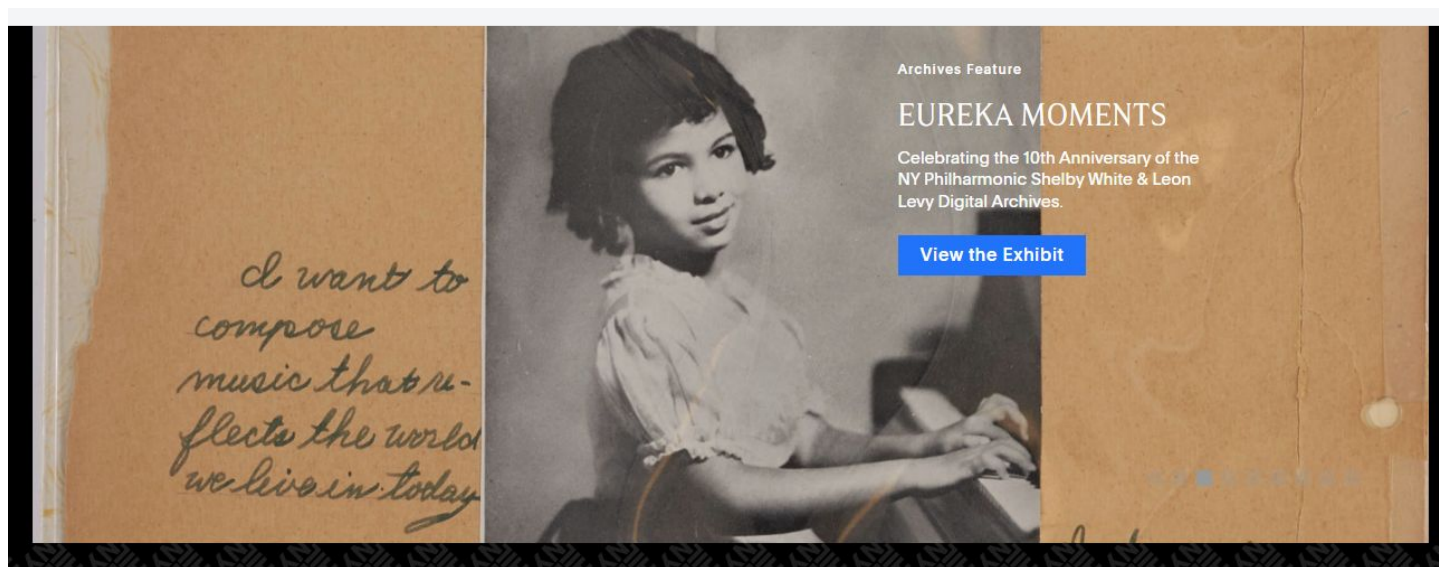
"It's luck to see what the page loads on the carousel and if it wouldn't have showed up [via the automatic timing that flips through carousel banners], I wouldn't have known that it was there."

Recommendation 2

Update style and navigation elements on the carousel to make it more intuitive and accessible.

Recommendation 2

2.1) Change the color of navigation buttons

2.2) Unhide the navigation arrows

2.3) Change the colour of the 'Explore' button
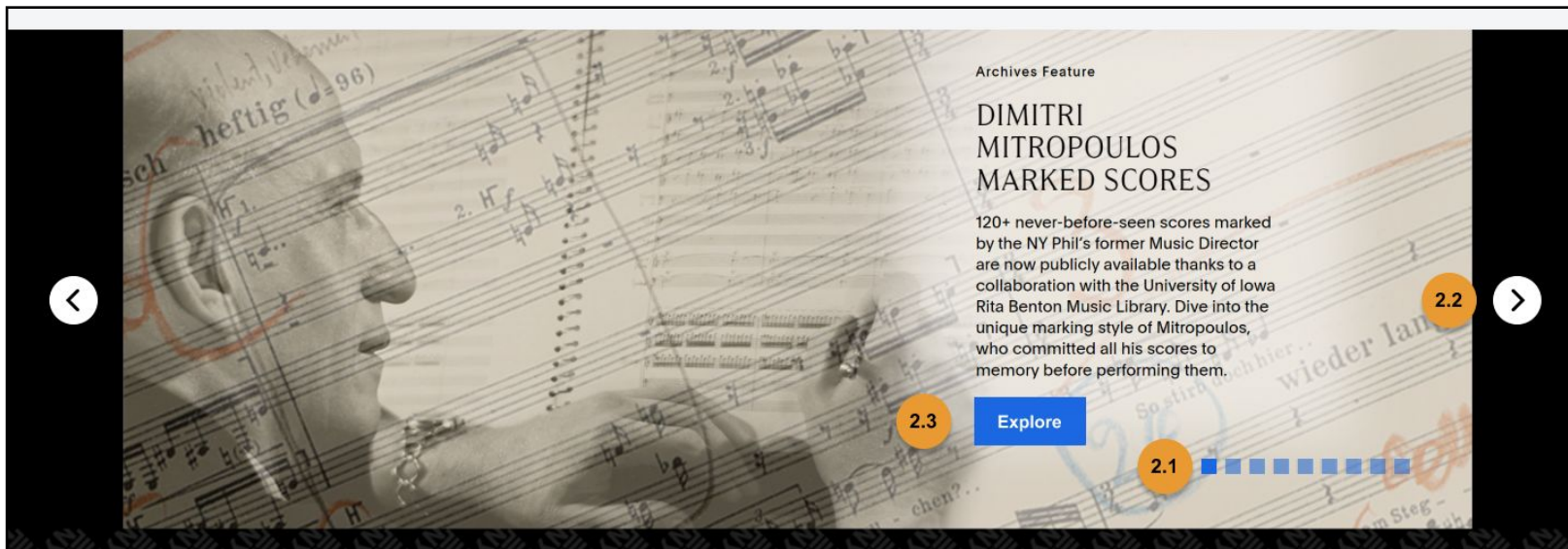
Finding #3

- Results page layout prevented users easily navigating and filtering search results
- Users obtained inconsistent content in search results

Recommendation 3

Streamline search results page with consolidated sort and filter options.

3.1) Consolidate sorting and filtering options.

3.2) Display search results content intuitively for users by adding "All Results" and displaying results consistently.

Finding #4

Issues with:

1. Navigating pages of filter options
2. Dropdown options for soloists, conductors, and composers/works
3. Overlay of pop-up modal
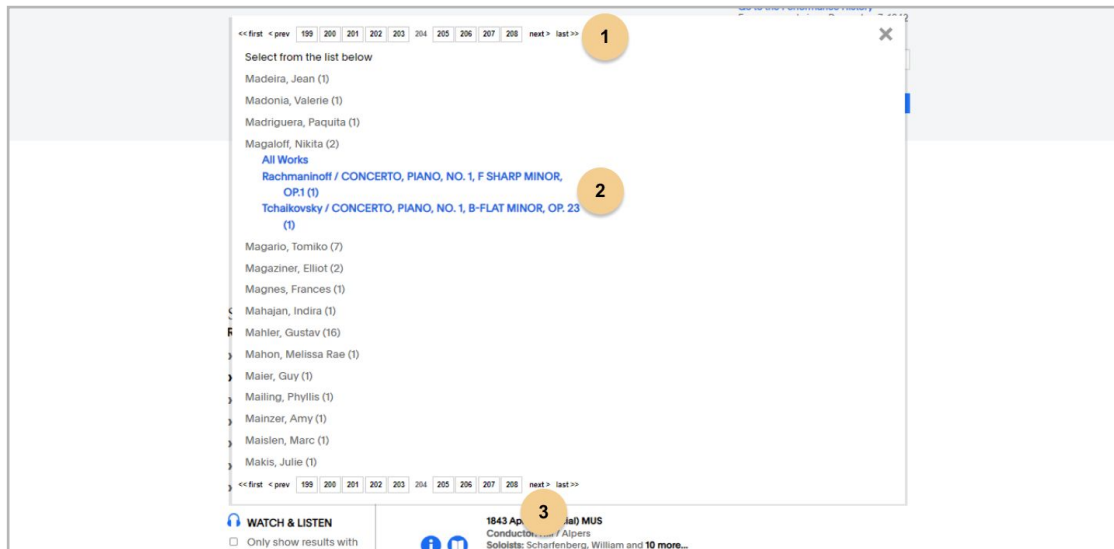
"There must be a better way to find an individual with this very long list"

"I don't like skimming through all the pages, I find it very annoying."

Recommendation 4

Move the pop-up modal underneath each filter, introduce a search bar for the filter options, and remove the additional layer of filtration options

4.1) Move the pop-up modal underneath the filter options

4.2) Introduce a search bar under the filter options

4.3) Remove the additional layer of filtration options

Recommendation 5

Minor findings and recommendations

Recommendation 5

Minor findings and recommendations

Topics:

- Accessibility
- Metadata
- User Interface
- Links and Labels
- Knowledge Organization

Conclusion and Next Steps

(New York Philharmonic Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives, n.d.)

Conclusion and Next Steps

Tracking Effectiveness of Improvements:

- Run additional SUS surveys
- Facilitate additional moderated user testing

Topics for further investigation:

- Accessibility audit
- A/B testing of components and labels
- Card sorting and/or tree testing of the sitemap

Thank you!

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