

Discovery: Who is the user?
Generate design resources

StoryPortraits

Illustrate how a user performed a specific activity in four to eight steps

Introduction

The goal of StoryPortraits is to extract the main insights from user studies and to communicate them in a concise and illustrated manner in order to keep your design process grounded. You can also use StoryPortraits to communicate the main results of your user observations and interviews to members of the design team who did not take part in them as well as to other stakeholders.

StoryPortraits can be used as artifacts in brainstorming and video prototyping sessions, either as resources for ideation as well as a way to evaluate design ideas (how your idea would be useful in the context of this user story?). Because they don't disclose personal data, StoryPortraits are also a good way to share user stories with all the stakeholders of the project.

However, you should keep in mind that StoryPortraits do not replace raw data and will always incorporate your bias because they require you to select only parts of the original interview and to leave out other information that could potentially turn out to be useful in the design process.

If you conducted interviews, StoryPortraits can allow you to represent their results in an illustrated manner. If you conducted video observation, themed videos might be best suited to illustrate user activities (see the themed video variation).

What to do

Preparation (before)

Right after each interview, as it is still fresh in your memory, go back to your notes and underline what were the most surprising/interesting stories. A story consists of a series of factual steps conducted by the interviewee to achieve a goal and should ideally be stand on its own. If you conducted the interview with a colleague, you can discuss and see if you identify the same stories. Make sure that you have access to all the raw material while you are creating your storyportrait (video footage, pictures of artifacts, audio recordings).

Because one of the goal of StoryPortraits is to facilitate comparison across stories, you should try to keep a consistent format for all of them. For your first storyportrait, we recommend using a horizontal A4 or A3 page format to facilitate both printing and easy display on screen, but you can choose another format if it is better suited to your type of story.

Time	20-60 minutes
Difficulty	intermediate
Team size	team
Supplies	– notes – laptop
Access to	– observation or interview

Goals

- Represent user activities to support analysis and design
- Communicate user stories to people who did not participate in the interviews and observations

Workflow

Resources needed

Observation or interview data

Complementary techniques

Thematic Analysis

Useful for

Persona, participatory design

Contributors (who does it?)

- designers

Audience (who is it for?)

- design team
- stakeholders
- users

Roles

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| – Moderator | Moderate the design session |
| – Scribe | Take notes |

Paths / step

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Credits

Nolwenn Maudet, StoryPortraits

Trade-offs

Pro
Con

Coaching

Did you:

- ☐ Rewatched the video first?

Templates

Download the spreadsheet template or pdf at:

Procedure (during)

Each identified story is the basis of one StoryPortrait. Identify the different steps in a chronological order. During the interview, the interviewee won't tell you the story from start to end, but rather evoke different details at different times as they remember some additional details along the way.

As a general rule, try to distinguish between specific actions that you can represent as drawings (or icons) and the user's feelings and impressions accompanying these actions that you can represent as quotes. More than the fidelity of the drawing, what is important is to represent actions in a schematic way, using arrows to indicate chronology. If you are trying to identify recurring elements (for example, which application or tool is used by the user), you can represent them as an icon that you can then reproduce across your storyportraits. These will help you skim all the stories and quickly find the relevant information). When you add text and quotes, respect the vocabulary used by the user. Position a picture of the main artifact at the center of the page. Finally, give a title to your story that summarises the user activity/key surprise and remember to label each portrait using a code (for example an anonymized name and a story number).

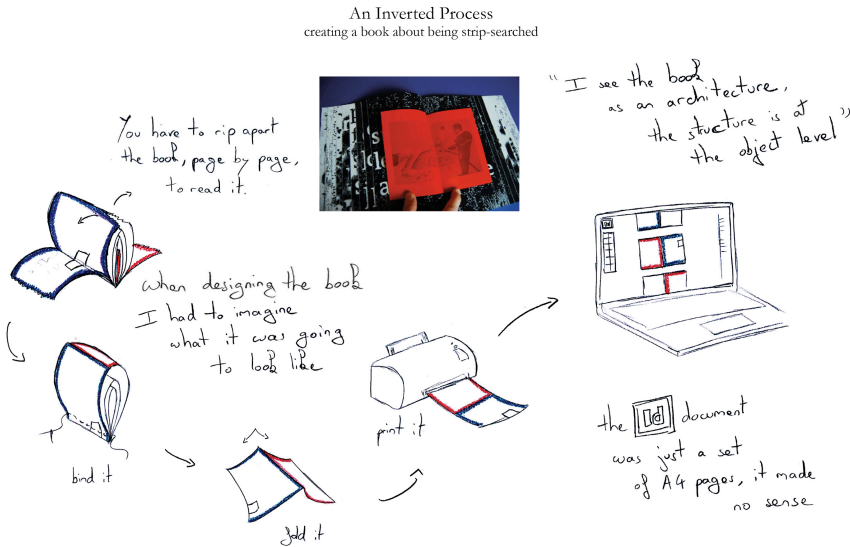
Each StoryPortrait should stand on its own, someone who has not participated in the interview should still be able to understand what the user what trying to achieve and how they did it.

When your storyportrait is done, send it to your interviewee, asking them if they see any incorrect information and if they have any comment that they want to add. You may leave empty spaces that they can complete if you are missing some specific details. You can then use the other side to annotate it by sticking post-it notes for example.

Selected references / Bibliography

Author (2000) Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nulla sed nunc enim. Vivamus eget nibh enim. Proin sed erat nulla, et pharetra massa.

Illustrations / figure



Example of a StoryPortrait about creating a book layout