



Audiobook Redesign Package

by John Perl

Assignment 1: Audiobook Development

Creative Brief

I am an avid listener of audiobooks, and I have found the experience of one book to another is often quite different. The content can be great, but what information is available in the file, and the quality of it varies greatly. Some examples: First, if I open the book on my phone, the cover art looks great, but if I open it on my iPad or computer, the picture is pixelated and looks like garbage. Second, it's nice to be able to jump from one chapter to the next, especially if you lose your place in the book. It can be a pain trying to find where you were in a book that is over 20 hours long, and your not quite sure which hour you were on, trust me, I've done it.

If all relevant information was offered, and offered in a satisfactory way, my enjoyment of audiobooks could only increase. All it would take, is for those who put the content together, to spend a little extra time to do it right.

Effectively identify the areas of The Mediterranean Caper in need of redesign to enhance the structure of the product and facilitate a more concise experience when played on hand-held mobile devices

Improve product cohesiveness by specifically tying print and digital media formats closer together in relationship to chapters, descriptive data, and visual identifiers

Enhance Information Design by considering the unique value of properly crafted text, use of the lyric field (metadata), and browsability of media structure when viewed in digital player UI: specifically iTunes for the desktop and iPod/iPad mobile devices



Who's Gonna Use the AudioBook?

Persona Profiles:

“The Mediterranean Caper” is a good audio book for lovers of action/adventure stories. It will be especially interesting to anyone interested in nautical or marine themes.

The audience of The Mediterranean Caper is most anyone who enjoys military or spy novels, especially someone who has read any of the other Dirk Pitt novels, those who enjoy a book where the good guy has to defy the odds and come out on top, or some one who enjoys many of the other Clive Cussler books published. The Dirk Pitt series has been around long enough that it could be enjoyed by two or three generations of family members.

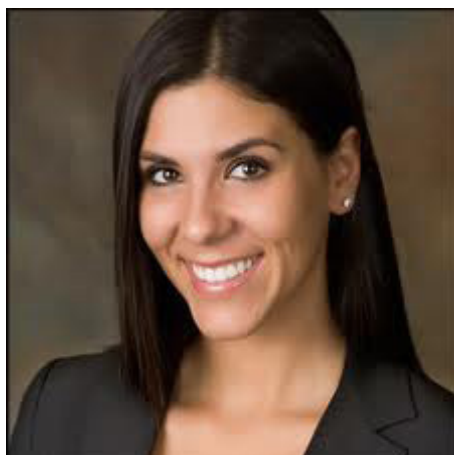
Based on this information, the audiobook experience should be uniform across the other 20 Dirk Pitt novels. It should also be offered in ways such that each generation of reader will be able to consume it in the form they desire, print, ebook, CD, and Audiobook.

iPod, iPhone, and iPad are only a handful of options consumers use to listen to and interact with Audiobooks. Limited Audiobook functionality exists on non-Apple devices.



AudioBook Listener Persona

Mindy

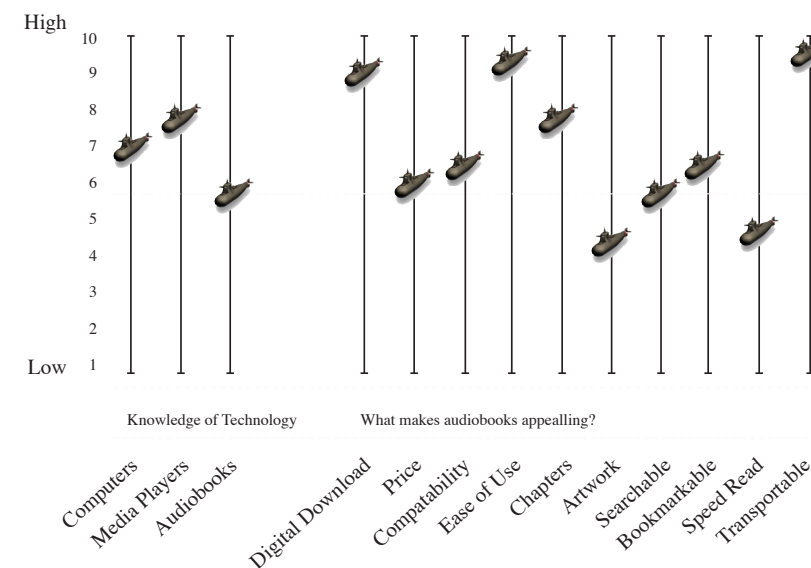


Age: 29
 Location: Cucamonga, CA
 Education: CPA
 Interests: Action/Adventure Novels
 Favorite Series: Jack Ryan Series, Tom Clancy
 Time Listening: 30 min commute to and from work

“I love listening to audiobooks during my commute, it has made the daily commute something I look forward to”

Mindy is a 29 year old Accountant. She has always loved reading a good book. Now that she is working full time, starting a family, and trying to still make time for her husband, she just can't find the time to read anymore.

A colleague suggested she try listening to audiobooks during the 30 minute commute time to and from work. She loves how fast the commute has become, and that she is getting to enjoy many of the books she thought she would never get to. It also provides a way of unwinding at the end of the day. I used to bring my work home with me because it was still on the brain, now I'm able to leave it behind.



Key Characteristics

- Enjoy reading, but don't find the time to sit down and read anymore
- Enjoy using mobile media players
- Like spending time on the beach and at park
- Hate my daily commute without a good book to listen to

Goals

- Finish entire Harry Potter and Fablehaven series in both print and Audiobook
- Read/listen to series at least 1 hour a day
- Learn to use Audiobooks better

Questions

- Can I share these audiobooks with my friends?
- Why do the chapters in the book not show up in the Audiobook the same way?
- Why do media players differ? My friends android device won't remember where she left off in the book.

Influencers

- Colleagues at Work
- Friends
- Spouse
- How easy the technology is to use
- Cover art and pictures
- How a book is read by narrator

Frustrations & Pain Points

- When I want to listen to the Audiobook many times my player will not show chapters properly and then I have no idea where to find my place in the book when I want to read! Is it my player or is it me?
- I wish I could loan books out that I enjoy, or borrow recommended books from friends
- I wish that when I bought audiobooks from the same place that the experience would be consistent from book to book

Making Sense of Non-sense

One of the key areas of Audiobook development that is consistently botched by creative developers is that of metadata and consistent structure of media assets. This applies to books that first begin in print and then moved to electronic audio format—as well as projects that first take form as an electronic medium. Regardless, the development principles remain the same. Experiences must be consistent in order to succeed!

To be sure, printed books have been, and are still, a most convenient form of reading experiences. The timeless organizational structuring of books has been perfected by hundreds of years of refinement that cannot be dismissed—even in our electronic age. With the advent of electronic reading and listening devices, traditional organization can, and should, be utilized to develop products. Within this framework interactivity within projects can be supported with ease. Even then, timeless organizational principles remain in place as the best way to create proper structure for readers or listeners regardless of format.

With that in mind, why is it then that so very many creative development houses and corporations such as Audible, continue to break intended experiences by not following traditional affordances when dealing with Audiobooks?

The Dirk Pitt series had its issues on some CD's but others were quite kind. On some, the chapter 1 points did correspond with the tracks, but on others it did not. As far as metadata, every CD is a new adventure. When information is retrieved from Grace-note, the metadata brought in is not only inconsistent from book to book, but sometimes from one CD to another.

Following standard organizational procedure from the printed book, the CD content has been adjusted 2 to match the book. These simple changes bring the experience much closer to parity and potentially creates a more consistent feel to the product line regardless of format or delivery mechanism. It should be noted that some versions of the Harry Potter series in Audiobook form are also inconsistent in their structure.

The image displays two screenshots from the Audiobook Builder software. The left screenshot shows the metadata editor for 'The Mediterranean Caper' by Clive Cussler, narrated by Michael Prichard in 1973. The right screenshot shows the chapter list and details for Chapter 12, which is 29 minutes and 35 seconds long. The chapter list includes chapters from Prologue to Chapter 18 with their respective durations. The details for Chapter 12 show its name, length, and a small book cover thumbnail.

Additionally, great care has been taken to the manner in which the chapter description (metadata) has been applied. The affordances between print and electronic are consistent. From these small but important changes an end participant will find greater clarity in how the product should be used. From such, we then can also assume that the participant will see the product organization as logical, never giving a second thought as how the product is organized.

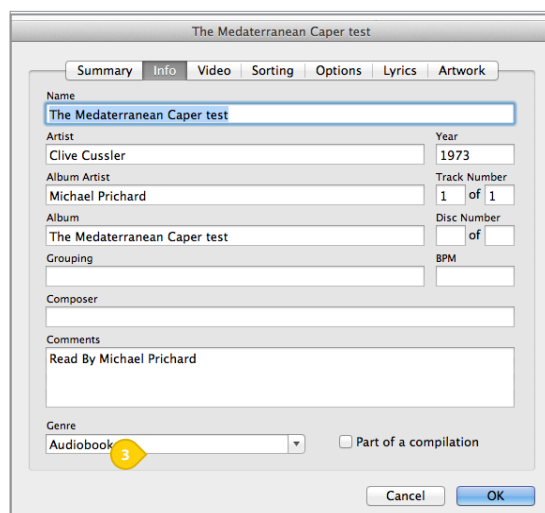
Note: For further clarification on descriptive data and assessment see the next section.

Markers 1-2: Simple adjustments have been made to the naming convention after 'Joining' separate chapter tracks to better organize chapter content. Screen captures are of Audiobook Builder v.1.5.2

Descriptive Data Implementation

The following Descriptive Data, known as metadata, has been outlined for inclusion (embedded) in the final Audiobook media file. Various adjustments have been made to best represent the title, some items being borrowed from the media, while other data was either adjusted from online publisher material or created from scratch.

All descriptive data was extensively tested in iTunes, iPod, and iPad environments; even among non-chapter compatible players, to understand how such data would be viewed when played.



Marker 3: iTunes on iPad assessment

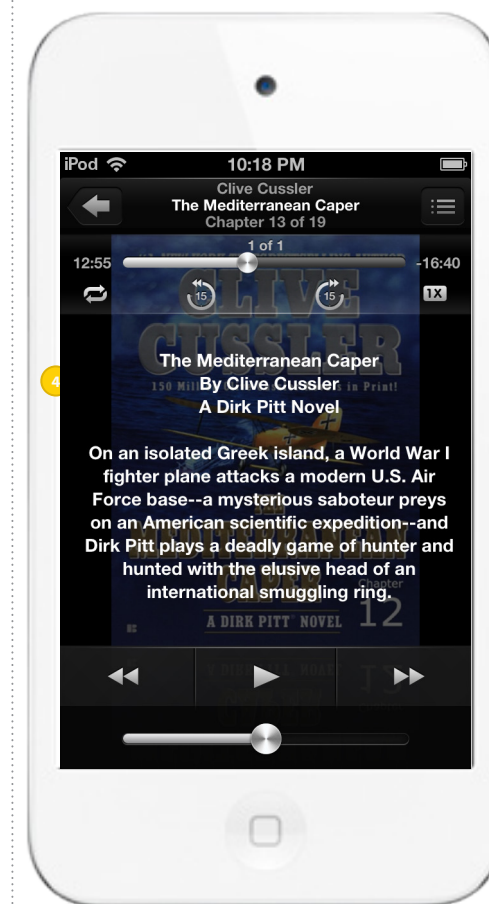
Adjustments to the data were made after consecutive assessments and with adjustments subsequently included in the final development phase. Special attention was paid to where each metadata field [tag] was used in the interface—duplicate information 3 being adjusted to better display information in the User Interface (UI). Eliminating replication of metadata adds polish to the product offering a more seamless experience for the end-participant.

Primary Metadata Fields

Title: The Mediterranean Caper
Artist: Clive Cussler
Album Artist: No
Album: No
Grouping: No
Composer: Read by Michael Prichard
Description:
Comments: Dirk Pitt, Book 1
Year: 1973
Track Number: No
Disc Number: No
BPM: No
Genre: Audiobooks
Part of Compilation: Yes No
Volume Adjustment: No
Equalizer Preset: No
My Rating: No

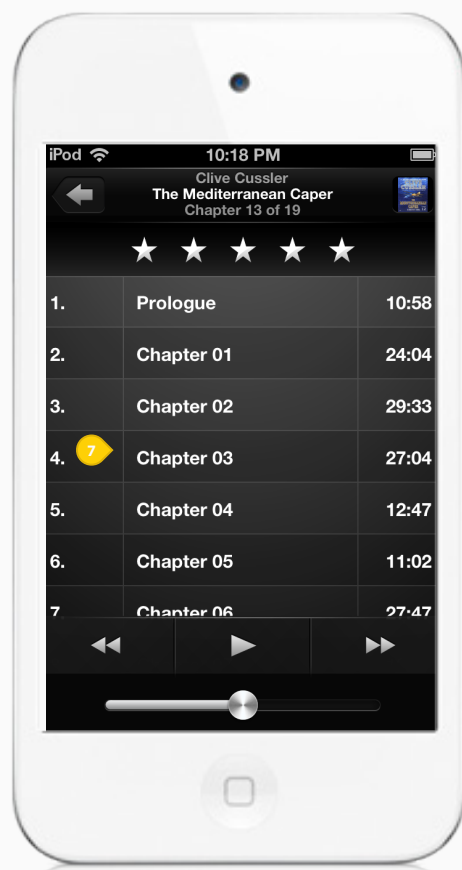
4 **Lyrics:** On an isolated Greek island, a World War I fighter plane attacks a modern U.S. Air Force base--a mysterious saboteur preys on an American scientific expedition--and Dirk Pitt plays a deadly game of hunter and hunted with the elusive head of an international smuggling ring.

Dirk Eric Pitt is a renowned adventurer. Cussler describes him as tall, 6 ft 3 in (190.5 cm) with craggy looks, dark wavy hair, and possessing a rangy build. His most striking feature is his opaline green eyes, which can be both alluring or intimidating, as need be. Pitt has a commanding presence which, combined with a quick, sly wit, often infuriates those opposed to him. His comical banter with his sidekick Al Giordino during stressful situations leaves the reader with little doubt that both are confident of their abilities. While Dirk may be considered the hero of the two, Al Giordino is the man behind him.



Marker 4: iPod Touch Lyric implementation. Note that Apple has kept the Lyric metadata centered; creating some issues with formatting. Special attention to details is critical to fine tuning descriptive data to display properly.

Descriptive Data - Chapter Title Development

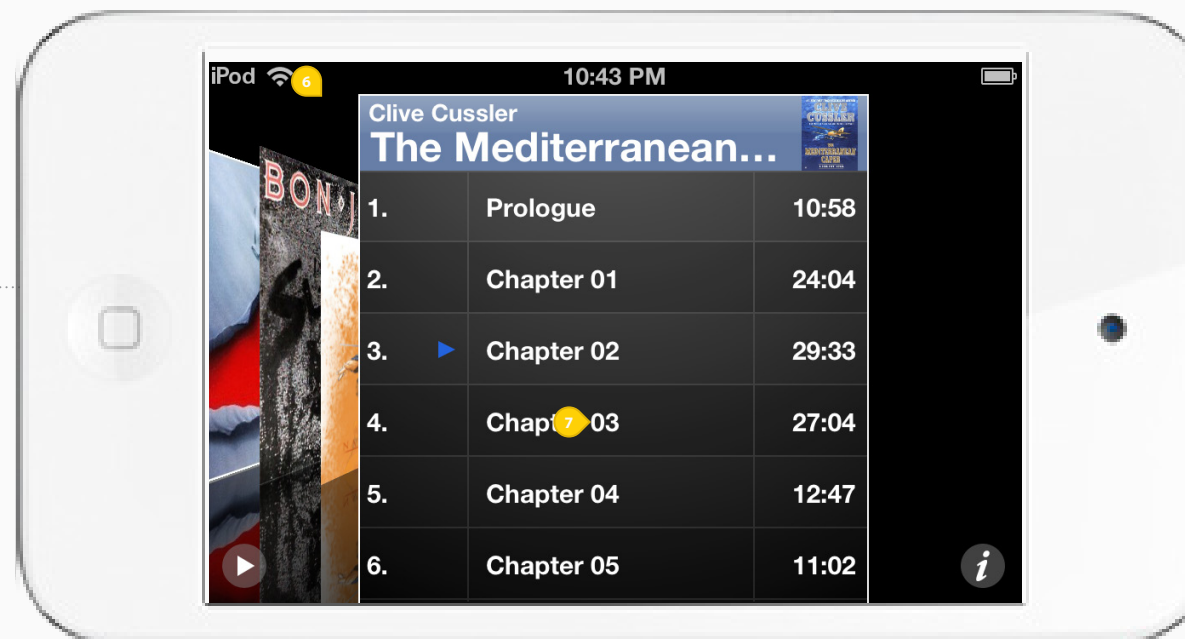


5 **Marker 5:** Chapter selection screen on an iPod Touch. Screen captures are of iOS 6.1.2

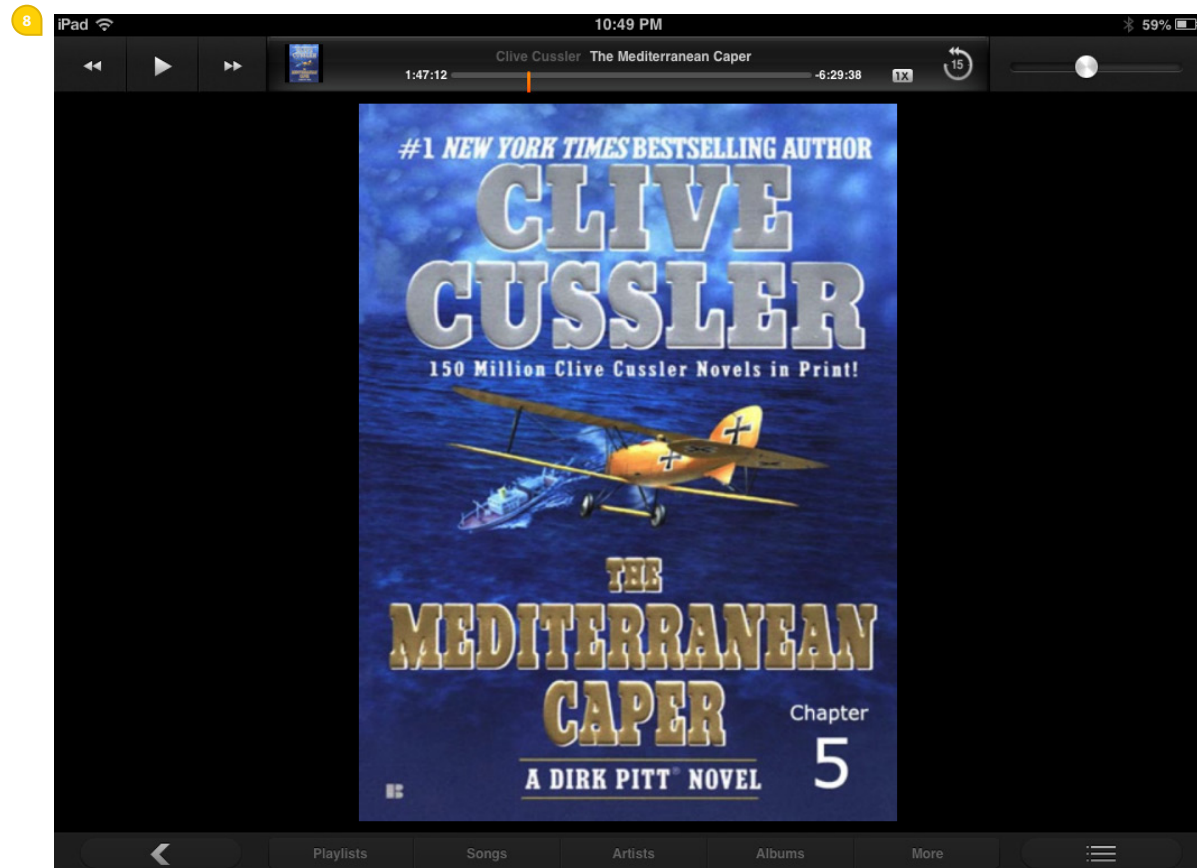
Satisficing in the UI

7 **Marker 7:** Title length in the chapter selection screen results in a non-optimal reading situation. As can be seen truncation of chapter titles will occur, which then creates an all-to-often undesirable effect that may make readability less than ideal for the end-participant.

Thus, special attention to design principles is necessary, specifically the use of 'Satisficing' to achieve acceptable goals when dealing with descriptive data.

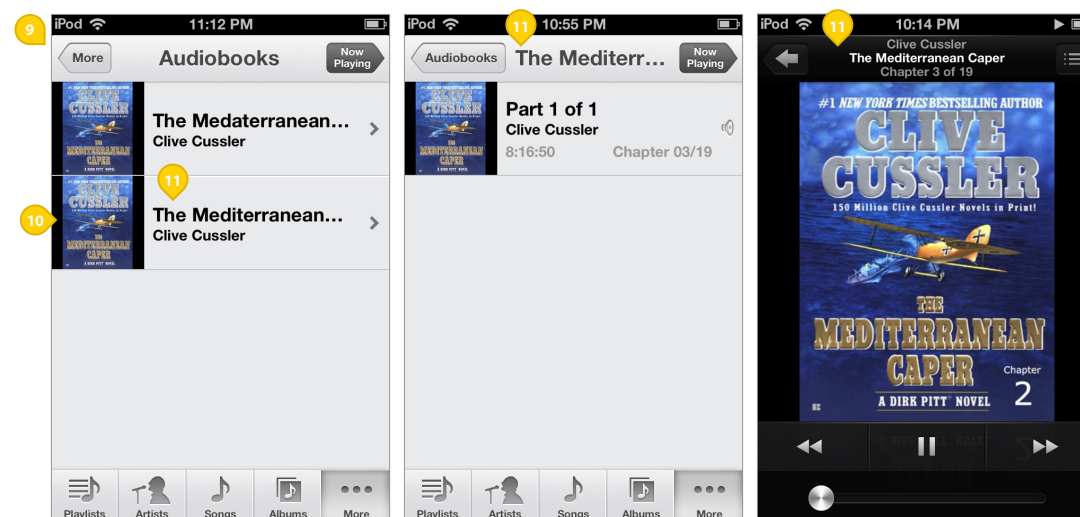


6 **Marker 6:** Chapter selection screen on an iPod Touch in landscape mode. Screen captures are of iOS 6.1.2



Solution: What can be done to counter the truncation of chapter titles on an iPhone/iPod Touch? Unfortunately not much! After several attempts at dealing with the problem, taking into account the original book titling scheme, and multiple tests on devices, it was decided that truncation is a fact-of-life with satisficing ruling the day. The issue of truncation is a direct result of screen size and resolution of small devices.

The iPad is no better, it no longer shows the chapters regardless of whether they exist or not, so selecting a specific chapter is impossible. I found that if you place a chapter marker on the cover art and place one for each chapter, that you can at least visually represent which chapter you are currently on.



8 Marker 8: Representation of chapter on an iPad mini. Screen captures are of iOS 6.1.2

9 Marker 9: Audiobook selection screen on an iPod Touch. Screen captures are of iOS 6.1.2

Satisficing in the UI

10 Marker 10: Just as chapter titles truncate in chapter selection screens, the issue also occurs in the Audiobook selection screen too. Broken in parts, the Audiobook selections now only show [Author] information.

11 Marker 11: Notice how each subsequent screen adjusts the titling of the Audiobook—truncating occurs differently as progression deeper into the application until at the Now Playing screen.