

UX RESEARCH & DESIGN – VANCOUVER DESIGN COMMUNITY

DesignHere

connecting Vancouver's design community –
research, three concept directions, and where to
start.

ASH CORNETTE WITH YUKI SHI EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY APRIL 2026

"Having to look in 10 different places to find one small thing. There's no one cohesive platform."

problem statement: new designers have difficulty connecting with the design community because there is no way to search or find the community in Vancouver.

mapping the pattern.

Yuki and I ran a six-week mixed-methods study — survey, interviews, competitive analysis, proto personas — targeting designers across career stages, all based in Vancouver.

14	02	06	03
survey responses — students to senior designers	interviews — creative director, freelance illustrator	competitors analysed — LinkedIn, Eventbrite, Luma, Meetup, Dribbble, Discord	proto personas — designer, organizer, moderator

TOOLS & CHANNELS

Figma flow design and lo-fi prototyping	Forms 12 questions, two weeks, school + Discord	FigJam affinity mapping and clustering
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three user types.

early in the process we realized DesignHere wouldn't hold together if we only designed for one side of the room. three audiences, each with a distinct job to be done, same underlying gap in the ecosystem.

01	designer. discovering events, making connections, following up after — the early-career or newly relocated user we designed for first.	PRIMARY
02	organizer. posting events, reaching the right audience by stage and discipline, managing RSVPs, sustaining engagement past the parking lot.	SUPPLY SIDE
03	moderator. reviewing submissions, keeping the platform trustworthy — structured forms, rule-based scoring, fast card-based triage.	SIGNAL

where it breaks.

four affinity themes emerged from clustering every survey quote, interview fragment, and competitive observation. each pointed at a distinct pain.

9/14	say <i>maintaining</i> relationships is harder than finding them. 64% — the biggest single challenge in the data.	CONTINUITY
10/14	say LinkedIn feels wrong — global, performative, built for getting hired. 71% — the dominant platform, and the most-rejected.	MISMATCH
8/14	check three or more platforms to find one event. 57% — Eventbrite, Luma, Instagram, Discord, forwarded emails.	FRAGMENTED
7/14	want Vancouver-specific curation, not global feeds. 50% — local trust beats global reach.	LOCAL

what they asked for.

the same survey ended with a ranked feature question. the order surprised us
— and reframed the brief.

71%	would value a tool that helped them <i>track connections</i> . the #1 ask — ahead of discovery, ahead of profiles, ahead of everything.	CONTINUITY TOOLS
50%	want local event curation — Vancouver-specific feeds. people don't want more events. they want the right ones.	DISCOVERY
+	prefer transparent moderation over verified profiles. people don't want gatekeepers, they want accountability.	TRUST
21%	cited verified profiles as a trust driver. ranked lower than expected — deferred to a later phase.	DEPRIORITIZED

*"The problem isn't connection.
It's continuity."*

going in, we assumed discovery was the core problem. the data quietly pushed back — continuity is the real pain. that reframe changed the direction of the whole design.

reverse thinking.

we inverted the prompt – *how would we make it impossible to connect?* – and six barriers fell out. three concept directions answer them.

BARRIERS — WHAT WOULD BLOCK CONNECTION

- × scatter information across dozens of platforms.
- × make events impossible to find unless you already know someone.
- × provide zero way to follow up after meeting someone.
- × create environments where only senior designers feel welcome.
- × require everyone to show polished work — no WIPs allowed.
- × make every interaction feel transactional and high-stakes.

CONCEPT DIRECTIONS — THREE ANSWERS

CONCEPT 01 — ADDRESSES BARRIERS 1 + 2

centralized discovery feed DISCOVERY

CONCEPT 02 — ADDRESSES BARRIER 3

connection tracker CONTINUITY

CONCEPT 03 — ADDRESSES BARRIERS 4 + 5 + 6

safe studio APPROACHABILITY

where to start.

plotted on impact and effort – three things start now, three things follow, two things wait.

HIGH IMPACT · LOW EFFORT START HERE	HIGH IMPACT · HIGH EFFORT PHASE 2	LOWER PRIORITY FUTURE
central event feed for Vancouver design events.	connection tracker with follow-up reminders.	verified profile system. only 21% cited as trust driver.
post-event attendee list with save and note.	moderated, low-stakes community space.	job board. valuable but secondary to core community need.
beginner-friendly filters for approachable events.	organizer tools for targeted reach by stage and discipline.	

five steps to validate.

before building anything, the work to do — in order.

01 validate proto personas.

5-8 user interviews with designers matching each persona type.

03 preference testing.

determine which concept resonates most strongly with users.

05 expand the survey.

50+ respondents for statistical significance.

02 build low-fidelity prototypes.

three concepts ready for usability testing.

04 partner with organizers.

2-3 Vancouver design event organizers for a pilot launch.

END — THANK YOU

thanks

71% want relationship tracking. 64% say it's their #1
challenge. *the platform that solves continuity wins.*

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