

Software Design for Handheld Devices

The George Washington University

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NewsNow

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Introduction

While commuting through bus/rail, I see a lot of people are busy reading news, listening songs or surfing on their tablets/smartphones. It is easier to read news in tablets since they have a broad screen. But for the smartphones it is difficult; it has small screen compared to tablets and the entire page has to be fitted within that size. A websites homepage have many contents on it like ads, music, pictures etc. which might be of no use to people who just wants to read news. Also as compared to tablets, mobile bandwidth is very low.

USA today provides XML feeds in which we have used it to develop this android application. It contains just the news information thus avoiding all the unnecessary contents (ads/ media/ pics) on the homepage. It saves the time and loads the page faster and also minimizes the bandwidth usage.

Description

NewsNow is an android application works best with API 2.1 and 2.3 and lower than that. NewsNow has 7 different categories of news. For ex: News, Sports, Tech, and Travel etc. When the application is launched, the user will be presented with all the available categories of the particular news channel in a list view. Upon selecting on a particular news category, the XML file will be passed and user will be presented with a list of headlines which belongs to that category. Every section has its own headlines. For example, sports section will have all the headlines related to sports only and nothing else. When the user selects the intended headline, the application will navigate him to the web view. This is a real time page which can be currently seen in the website. The web view is pulled up from the web server which in this case is the *usatoday* website.

By doing this, it makes easier for the user to find and read his intended news quickly. He doesn't get distracted and on the other end if he is sure of particular news he just needs to find the category and search for the headlines. This saves his time of going around the webpages figuring out the intended news.

Problems Encountered

When I started working on this project – before I started with Android Labs – everything was an unknown for me. Right from creating HTTP connection, parsing the response etc. For this app, I had to learn to parse the XML files which were new to me. Using the Android widgets and developing a project on Android platform without having any prior experience was a challenge to me. This was due to mediocre knowledge and little to no experience of programming in

JAVA. I had to research on XML feeds and also get the knowledge of suitable tags used for this project. Displaying the parse data using android widgets was also a tuff task. The labs turned out to be pretty helpful and most of my problems were answered but there were still some minor issues and because of those minor issues the project was not getting completed. But finally, I was able to do what I wanted to see in my app and it worked the way I wanted.

Screenshots

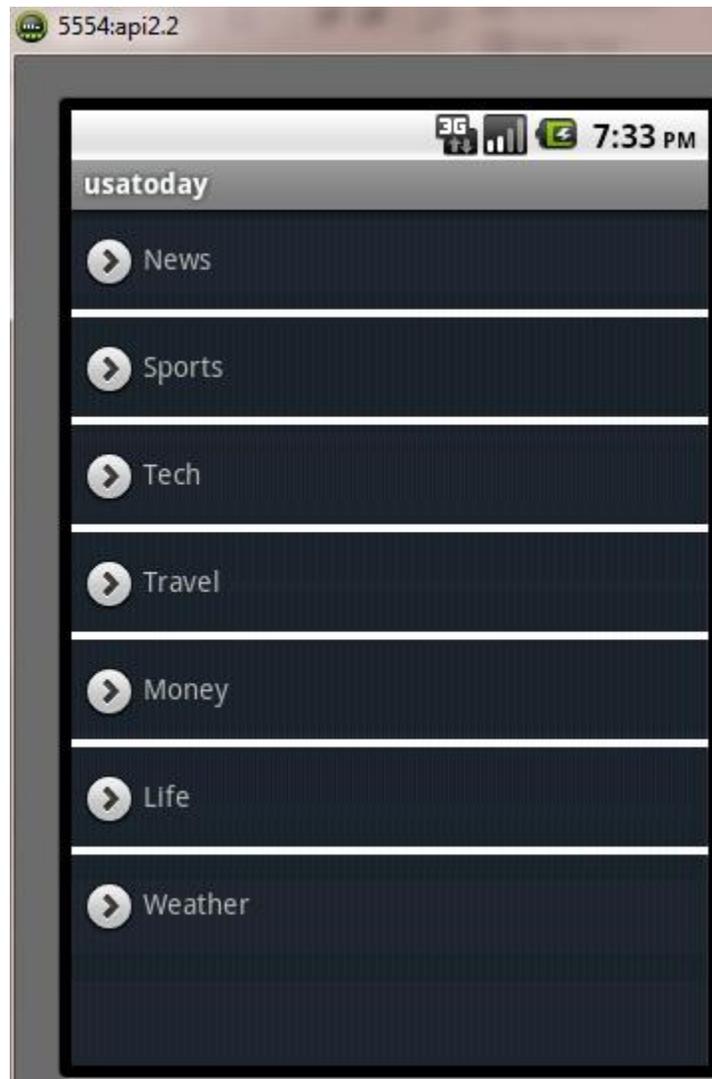


Fig 1. Application Launched

This is the start screen when the application is launched.

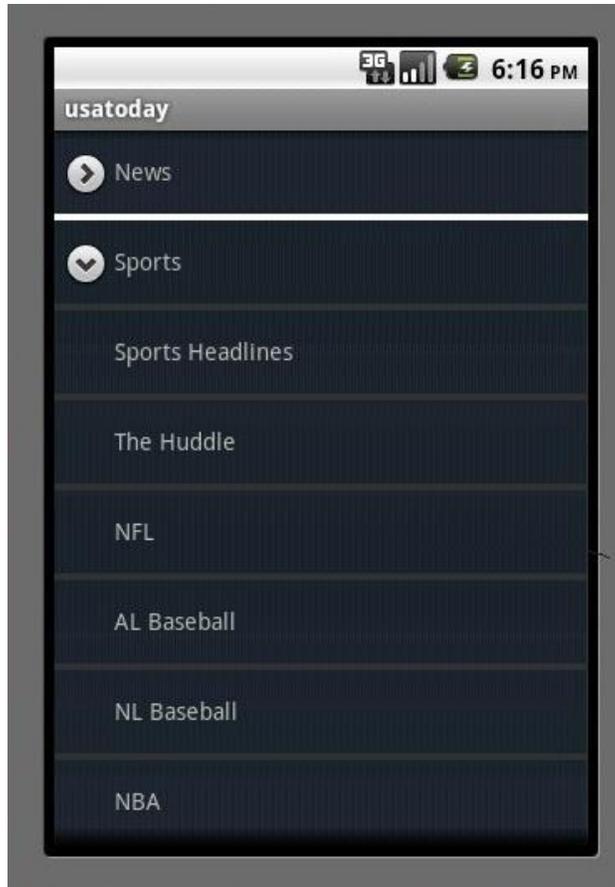


Fig 2. Select Category

This is the screen after a particular category has been selected. A list of another categories open up showing to choose one of them.

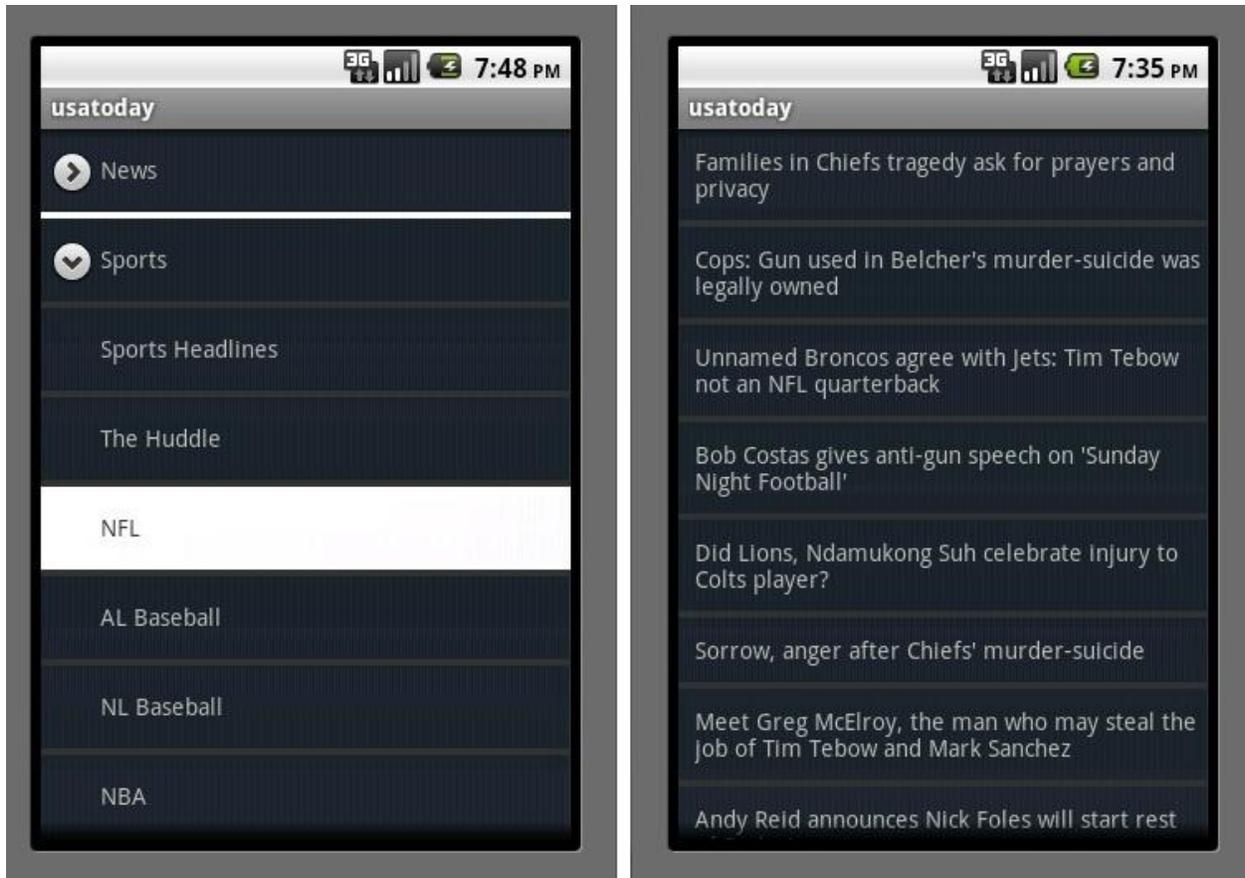


Fig 3. Headlines

This is the screen after you select any one category. In this, the user has selected NFL so the next screen will show all the headlines related to NFL.



Fig4. Web View

When the user selects the intended headline, the application will navigate him to the web view. This is a real time page which can be currently seen in the website.

Purpose of this App

The purpose of this app was get the news quickly as possible without any distractions. How this is achieved? By saving the time for the page to load and the bandwidth that the page uses. This app doesn't contain any kind of unnecessary ads/content so it helps the achieve the above two targets and also becomes easier for the user to find his choice of news.