Example usability problems to classify for Homework assignments – Set #2

Case 5: Resetting the screensaver timeout -- A
A user did not want to be bothered by the screen saver kicking in during lulls in computer usage during the day. So he decided to set the timeout on the screensaver. This user pulled up the control panel for Display and clicked on the screen saver tab and saw a screensaver field labeled "Wait", followed by a text box containing "15", followed by "minutes". Wanting to set it for at least and hour and a half before the screensaver activated, he selected the "15" and typed over it with "90", and clicked on OK. The dialogue box disappeared, and he returned to his work. He was a little surprised sometime later when the screensaver activated after only 60 minutes. It turns out that this feature is limited to 60 minutes. This case is about the system not supporting the user’s desire to set the timeout to 90 minutes.

Case 6: Resetting the screensaver timeout -- B
This case is based on the previous case (case 5): A user did not want to be bothered by the screen saver kicking in during lulls in computer usage during the day. So he decided to set the timeout on the screensaver. This user pulled up the control panel for Display and clicked on the screen saver tab and saw a screensaver field labeled "Wait", followed by a text box containing "15", followed by "minutes". Wanting to set it for at least and hour and a half before the screensaver activated, he selected the "15" and typed over it with "90", and clicked on OK. The dialogue box disappeared, and he returned to his work. He was a little surprised sometime later when the screensaver activated after only 60 minutes. It turns out that this feature is limited to 60 minutes. But this case isn't about that problem. This problem is about the fact that, after performing the task, the user wasn't aware that an error had occurred. After he clicked on OK, the dialogue box apparently disappeared and no indication was given that the input wasn't fully accepted.

Case 65: Resetting the screensaver timeout -- C
This case is based on case 5: A user did not want to be bothered by the screen saver kicking in during lulls in computer usage during the day. So he decided to set the timeout on the screensaver. This user pulled up the control panel for Display and clicked on the screen saver tab and saw a screensaver field labeled "Wait", followed by a text box containing "15", followed by "minutes". Wanting to set it for at least and hour and a half before the screensaver activated, he selected the "15" and typed over it with "90", and clicked on OK. The dialogue box disappeared, and he returned to his work. He was a little surprised sometime later when the screensaver activated after only 60 minutes. It turns out that this feature is limited to 60 minutes. This case is about the system not heading off the problem by saying what the allowable range on the timeout value was, in the first place.

Case 66: Resetting the screensaver timeout -- D
This case is based on case 5: A user did not want to be bothered by the screen saver kicking in during lulls in computer usage during the day. So he decided to set the timeout on the screensaver. This user pulled up the control panel for Display and clicked on the screen saver tab and saw a screensaver field labeled "Wait", followed by a text box containing "15", followed by "minutes".
Wanting to set it for at least an hour and a half before the screensaver activated, he selected the "15" and typed over it with "90", and clicked on OK. The dialogue box disappeared, and he returned to his work. He was a little surprised sometime later when the screensaver activated after only 60 minutes. It turns out that this feature is limited to 60 minutes. This case is about the interaction design not providing (perhaps in addition to an error message) a prompt to help the user recover from the error by telling what the acceptable range of timeout values is.

Case 67: Resetting the screensaver timeout -- E
This case is based on case 5: A user did not want to be bothered by the screen saver kicking in during lulls in computer usage during the day. So he decided to set the timeout on the screensaver. This user pulled up the control panel for Display and clicked on the screen saver tab and saw a screensaver field labeled "Wait", followed by a text box containing "15", followed by "minutes". Wanting to set it for at least and hour and a half before the screensaver activated, he selected the "15" and typed over it with "90", and clicked on OK. The dialogue box disappeared, and he returned to his work. He was a little surprised sometime later when the screensaver activated after only 60 minutes. It turns out that this feature is limited to 60 minutes. This case is not about what the system told (or didn't tell) the user, but is about the fact that the system arbitrarily put a value of 60 minutes in for the timeout when the user had asked for something else.

Case 70: Resetting the screensaver timeout -- F
This case is based on case 5: A user did not want to be bothered by the screen saver kicking in during lulls in computer usage during the day. So he decided to set the timeout on the screensaver. This user pulled up the control panel for Display and clicked on the screen saver tab and saw a screensaver field labeled "Wait", followed by a text box containing "15", followed by "minutes". Wanting to set it for at least an hour and a half before the screensaver activated, he selected the "15" and typed over it with "90", and clicked on OK. The dialogue box disappeared, and he returned to his work. He was a little surprised sometime later when the screensaver activated after only 60 minutes. It turns out that this feature is limited to 60 minutes. It further turns out that, as the designers know, some feedback is actually given. The system changes the user's "90" to a "60" very briefly before the dialogue box disappears. This case is about the fact that this feedback wasn't up long enough for the user to see it.