FRED’s Redesign: Taking User Feedback to the Next Level

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The views expressed in this presentation are ours and not the views of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis or the Federal Reserve System.
Today’s Topics

• A Brief History of FRED®
• Analysis Website Metrics
• Listening to FRED Users
• Increasing Utility
  • The overarching objective
FRED®—An international leader in the provision of online economic and financial information.

1. Primum non nocere
2. Increase retention
3. A friendlier FRED
4. Maximize existing features
FRED’s commitment to improvement. . .
The Decision Makers—FSPR Comm.*

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What’s the big deal with FRED?

- 35% growth!
- 1/3 traffic is international
- ~30,000 registered accounts
- *Wall Street Journal, The Economist, NYT, WaPo,* and many others look to FRED for research and content
- Most macroeconomics textbooks
Who uses FRED?

- Educators and students, 30%
- Researchers, 30%
- Business professionals, 30%
- Journalists, retired economists, and data geeks, 10%
- Retired economists and data geeks, 10%
Why change FRED? Look at the Data . . .

- ~50% of visitors new to the FRED.
  - 50% visited one page and never returned.
- Plateuing Power Users.
- New users: 2/3 land on series or graph page.
Google Analytics told us . . .

• Bounces
• Seasonality
• Underused capabilities?
• Popular features
• User path analysis
FRED’s Top 10* Events . . .

1. Zoom bar
2. Change Date
3. Line transformation menu
   (e.g., % Change)
4. Line frequency
   (e.g., Quarterly)
5. Search box @ top right
6. Download data link
7. Notes tab
8. View Data link
9. + see more (recent observations)
10. Frequency aggregation method
    (e.g., Average, Sum, End of Period)
Objectives & Limitations

Objectives
• Series page simplification
• Graph page gets some series page elements
• No change for sake of change
  • Masthead & footer to remain
• Improvements for 1st time users
  • Simplify interface
  • Add context
  • Link to additional content
• Improvements for existing users

Limits
• Minimal changes to masthead
• Page only changes as necessary for goals
• Graph shape, size, and design may not change
• Browser-sensitive design
FRED Re-Design Process

Retain outside consultant

Specs for wireframe

Assemble Team

Developers
Data
Analytics
Project Mgmt

Listen to users

Focus groups
Email responders
Support legacy features
Contrary responses?

Beta Test

Bugs & Frustrations
FRED’s “Zero-Click” Elements
What does this have to do with FRED?

The Great Debate

Over $100,000 US dollars was spent on a study to determine whether most people put their toilet paper on the holder with the flap in front or behind; the answer: three out of four people have the flap in the front.
User Testing
User Testing
User Testing
FRED Graph got wider and flatter
Returning to the Metadata . . .

That was then . . .

**Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items**

2015-11: 238.111
Index 1982-1984 = 100
(+ see more)
Monthly, Seasonally Adjusted, CPIAUCSL, Updated: 2015-12-15 9:03 AM CST

This is now:

**Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items**

Observation: Aug 2016: 240.305 (+ more)
Updated: Sep 16, 2016

Units: Index 1982-1984 = 100, Seasonally Adjusted
Frequency: Monthly
What if?
Edit Data

Color Palette
Change Observation Range
Change Units—Popular & we wanted to have it in a predominant spot
Adding Data Series

Got Divorced . . .
List of Observations ... See More get More
Some elements stayed, but not because of us

• Dear Webmaster: On your new FRED website, do you have an option to “View” the data like before? I searched but couldn’t find that option. Thanks.

• What happened to the view data screen? It was very useful.

• Please bring back view data!!!!!!
Related Categories

- GDP/GNP
- National Income & Product Accounts
- National Accounts
Download data
The “Share Icon” Connundrum
• I cannot find where to save the graph to "My Graphs" in this new version. Am I missing something obvious?

• **I can't see how to save an edit of a graph.**

• After customizing a graph, how do I save the new settings for the next time I view? Thank you. If this is addressed in tutorials, instructions, or otherwise, direct me there.

• With these new changes I cannot figure out how save or share charts. Have these features been removed?

• **Is it still possible to save Graphs? As some time ago?**

• Could the "Save graph" option be more obvious like in previous version rather than in the edit graph function? That would be perfect! Cheers for the new version.
FRED Help—take disorganized stuff and put it back together.

Need Help?

- Learn about Tags
- Tutorials
- FAQs
- Email Us
FRED Help

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How can I find data on FRED?
- Use the search bar
- Browse categories
- Browse by release
- Browse by source
- Browse using tags

How can I download data from FRED?

What can I do with FRED Data Lists?

Understanding the Data
Voices from the crowd

• Much better than the previous version. Thanks for the effort to keep improving.
• I love the new look. Great job!
• Happy with the new design, just a short learning curve to get the new menus
• FRED, Have you suddenly changed everything?? I just clicked on the series HOUST and found a very unfamiliar page.
• What have you done to Fred Graph that existed just a month ago?
• **ARE YOU KIDDING ME?**
• Your new site f*%#@? sucks. The graph page is bulls%#@?.
• **IF IT AINT BROKE DONT FIX IT, D%#& A$$!**
FRED Takes a Vacation . . . .