Figma Feature Usability Test Results

Key Findings

Insights

- ➢ This is a challenge that the community is working through but with no solutions yet
- ➢ Designers don't like moving back and forth between files with publishing and accepting changes, and this feature would help with that
- ➢ This feature would work for simpler and smaller scale components and design systems but may not scale well with more complex systems and use cases

Feedback

- ➢ Needs more visual clues to indicate that you are in a new mode
- ➢ Needs to focus on the component being edited and not show the whole file in viewport
- ➢ Needs to make it clear how it works with libraries with publishing and accepting changes
- ➢ Instance Level section needs to be interactive and clearly explain what is being edited
- ➢ UI elements work overall but need refinement, and in some cases may not be needed
- ➢ Screen real estate could become an issue with more sections to the properties panel so it's important to only add what is necessary for the new feature

Priority Revisions

New Mode Obvious

(Hard) Make it clear that you are in a new edit mode

- ➢ Viewport modal less like a frame and more like a window in a mode
- ➢ New window controls like a plugin?
- ➢ Select the canvas with a purple stroke?
- ➢ Add popup that shows you are in context edit mode
- ➢ And/or a text label indicating "Edit in place" or "Context edit"

Focus on Component

(Easy) Focus on the single component and not the entire design system

- Remove other elements
- Fit to component becomes obsolete

- Make it clear the window can be drug
    - Corner lines?

Working with Libraries

Make it clear how everything works with libraries

- ➢ Fix the master to arrow version when affecting a library asset
- ➢ Add publish and accept prompts

Instance Level

(Hard) Make it clear what the instance level section does

- ➢ Make it clickable for selection & navigation
- ➢ (Easy) Instance level header is misaligned to other side panel headers
- ➢ Keep current depth limit
- ➢ Make it clear what is being edited and selected

UI Elements

Work overall but need some refinement:

Global

- ➢ (Easy) Add hover state tooltips to all new UI elements

Icons

- ➢ (Medium) Separate out confirmation options into another section or place into another modal of some kind
- ➢ Confirmation approve (check) and cancel (X) icons
    - Check if there are any instances of confirmation icons in Figma
    - Consider “Accept” and “Dismiss” buttons instead
        - Refer to share button styling
        - Could replace check and X within edit options section
    - Location on panel as a new section?
    - Place into another modal of some kind
        - Refer to advanced stroke, fill, and color style modals
        - If using a modal the confirmations may not be needed

Context Edit / Go to Master Icon

- ➢ Consider placement options:
    - (Easy) Remove context edit icon and create text decision point with go to master icon
        - Edit in place
        - Go to main component
    - (Easy) Nest context edit text into the … menu
    - Keep where it is (only one user suggested removal)

Viewport Mode

- ➢ Consider synonyms for "viewport"
- ➢ (Hard) Make it an obvious window and not just look like a frame
- ➢ (Medium) Add other styling to suggest a new edit mode

Overlay Mode

- ➢ (Easy) Remove the drag function and the reset icon
- ➢ (Medium) Add other styling to suggest a new edit mode

Prototype

Changes to make to the prototype functionality

- ➢ (Easy) Add frames indicating a new task in the linear prototype
- ➢ Hook up layer panel selections
- ➢ Try fixing property panels to have vertical scrolling
- ➢ Specify in script that you are selecting the "top card" element, since it may be unclear which item on canvas is being referred to

Iterative Fixes

Updates between sessions

- Steps out of order
- Interaction hookup issues
- Scrolling issues
- Chang from on click to drag
- Side panels not updated properly
- Updating wording on the script

Quotes

Participant 1

“Wait, is this something in Figma now or is this something you’re making?”

“It’s funny that you decided to tackle edit in place with master relationships, because I worked on literally this with a big team for six months to get to a solution. It is SO insane.”

“It just has to be super clear that if the master does live in a design system file somewhere, and I go to master edit mode right here, and I save these changes, it’s gonna update in reverse to the design system.”

Participant 2

“So I’ve made a style change. I see that it reflects all the way up. Cool.”

“Every design software is trying to solve this exact problem right now. Nobody has this dialed in yet. It’s very hard, very complex.”

“You’re tackling a billion dollar question.”

“The first company that gets this right is going to be very successful.”

“You are introducing modes without any sort of context or anything like that. This overlay and viewport; relying on iconography to convey that is very difficult, because it’s something that, from a designer’s perspective, this editing in place/overriding thing is very new, and it’s very confusing.

“If I go into a mode, it needs to be more obvious that I’m in a different mode”.

Participant 3

“I think this is a cool feature and I think it’s helpful”

“My main concern is that at most organizations, you don’t want everyone to have this power”

“It’s a feature that is more appropriate for smaller organizations or individuals who are in complete control of both sides of this puzzle.”

“This feature does something, and it does something interesting. It ~~like,~~ lets you mess with a component from an instance”

“I imagine the community would have so many cool uses for it, if it existed.”

“It’s a feature that’s not useful on super complex components where you have a layer of variants for your states and then a layer of variants for your layouts”

“File bouncing is like, half of our day in Figma. From the component file, to the color file, to the text file, to the icon file…just constantly bouncing around. I never even close any tabs in Figma because of all the files I have to constantly go back and forth with to push and receive updates”

“I think there’s something here, for sure.”

“I don’t need any other information from that file. I just need that component"

Objective

Determine usability for new UI elements:

1. Contextual edit icon
2. Edit options icons
3. Instance Level
4. Viewport mode
5. Overlay mode

Assumptions & Hypotheses

1. Users will try the design panel tools over right-clicking.
    A. Participant 1 - Mostly
    B. Participant 2 - Mostly
    C. Participant 3 - Yes
2. Users will understand the new UI elements intuitively
    A. Participant 1
        ➢ Yes overall, with exception of the reset icon in overlay mode
    B. Participant 2
        ➢ Knew the component icons meant something was affecting the master, but their meanings weren’t intuitive
    C. Participant 3
        ➢ Didn’t verbalize any issues with them
3. Users will navigate between instance levels using the canvas versus the new Instance Level panel.
    A. Participant 1
        ➢ Yes, but they would expect it to be clickable.
        ➢ Make it clear if it is or isn’t
    B. Participant 2

- ➢ Yes, but would expect it to be clickable

C. Participant 3

- ➢ Yes, but would expect it to be clickable

Tasks

1. Update the color of the card label in viewport mode.
2. Update the style &position of the heart icon in viewport mode.
3. Update card label color and heart style & position in overlay mode.

Scenarios

You want to make changes to the card element in your design, by updating the master component. You would like to see the edits reflected in the design without switching to another page or file by using the new context edit feature.

Scenario 1

Update the color of the card label in view port mode.

1. Select the card instance and use the context edit feature to make changes to the master.
    - ➢ No issues for any participants
2. You want to focus on just this component, so you fit the viewport window to the master.

A. Participant 1

- ➢ Step 2 and 3 were out of order for this test but it was fixed before the second test
- ➢ User understood that the icon resulted in a resizing of the viewport

B. Participant 2

- ➢ Asked why the user would want to do that

C. Participant 3

- ➢ Wanted to drag the modal using command + drag
- ➢ Didn't expect to use a button but figured it out
- ➢ Recognizes that other people would use it

3. Select the card label and change the fill to red with a color style.
    A. Participant 1
        - ➢ Step 2 & 3 out of order
        - ➢ Easily selected and changed the color style once on this step
    B. Participant 2
        - ➢ Tried scrolling the property panel
        - ➢ Otherwise no issues
    C. Participant 3
        - ➢ Tried clicking on the context edit button again
        - ➢ Then used color style option with no issues
4. Approve changes to revert back to the instance selection.
        - ➢ No issues with any participants

Scenario 2

Update the style &position of the heart icon in viewport mode.

1. You open the context edit again and select the heart icon.
    A. Participant 1
        - ➢ The prototype had some interaction issues on this step that were fixed before the second participant test
        - ➢ Opened context edit tool and selected heart quickly
    B. Participant 2
        - ➢ No issues
        - ➢ Said that in a typical usability test you would separate out your flows and not have one continuous linear flow, but that this being tailored for designers is ok to be linear
    C. Participant 3
        - ➢ No issues

2. The heart is a nested instance of another component, so you need to go one level deeper and open a second context edit window.
    A. Participant 1
        - ➢ Tried to use the instance level panel before clicking the context edit button again to go another level
        - ➢ Had to stop and think about this for a second but understood quickly after redoing it again
    B. Participant 2
        - ➢ No issues
    C. Participant 3
        - ➢ No issues
        - ➢ Gave a curious “hmmm” at the next level edit
3. You want to see the design system that the heart icon is a part of before making changes, so you expand the viewport window.
    A. Participant 1
        - ➢ Tried to use the “switch to overlay” button
        - ➢ Prototype was set to click for this test but was changed to “on drag” before the second participant test.
    B. Participant 2
        - ➢ Jumped ahead and assumed correctly that we would change the heart before giving instruction to show the whole design system
        - ➢ Tried to use the Edit Options panel before I mentioned needing to resize the window itself
    C. Participant 3
        - ➢ Tried to find a button in Edit Options before dragging the frame
4. You decide to proceed and update the heart icon design.
    - ➢ No issues with any participants
5. You approve the changes made to the icon and return one level back to the card master component viewport.
    - ➢ No issues with any participants
6. You select the heart icon and change the position to the top right corner of the card.
    - ➢ No issues with any participants

7. You approve the changes and return to the instance on the design. You deselect the instance and your changes are completed.

    - ➢ No issues with any participants

Scenario 3

The card has been reset for this scenario. Update card label color and heart style & position in overlay mode.

1. You change the order of edits and begin with the heart icon first, and select the card instance.

    - ➢ No issues with any participants

2. You start a contextual edit of the card, and select the heart icon.

    - ➢ No issues with any participants

3. You go one level deeper and start a contextual edit of the heart icon.

    - ➢ No issues with any participants

4. You briefly switch to viewport mode to check the design system, and switch back to overlay mode.

    A. Participant 1

        - ➢ Tried right click on canvas before using Edit Options panel
        - ➢ Used the correct icons first try in Edit Options

    B. Participant 2

        - ➢ No issues

    C. Participant 3

        - ➢ No issues

5. You adjust the design of the heart icon, and then move it to the top right corner of the card.

    - ➢ No issues with any participants

6. You apply changes, return to the previous instance level, and select the card parent element.

    - ➢ No issues with any participants

7. To have a side-by-side comparison, you move the overlay to the right.
    A. Participant 1
        - ➢ The Instance Level and layer panels didn't properly reflect this selection and caused confusion for this step since the user thought they were on the instance and not the master overlay.
        - ➢ Felt like he was dragging out an instance and leaving behind a master, compounded by the error on the panels
        - ➢ Dragging pattern in Figma is never reversed so it was confusing
        - ➢ Had to explain that he was actually moving an overlay of the master, not option dragging like you would to make or duplicate an instance
    B. Participant 2
        - ➢ No issues
    C. Participant 3
        - ➢ No issues
        - ➢ Seemed to maybe drag at first since the interaction didn't take
8. You select the card label and change the fill to red using color styles.
        - ➢ No issues with any participants
9. You select the parent element, reset the overlay position, and apply the changes.
    A. Participant 1
        - ➢ Tried to click and drag at first
        - ➢ Understood eventually that it was a reset icon, but it felt more like an undo
    B. Participant 2
        - ➢ Tried to use the Instance Level panel and layer panel first
        - ➢ No issues selecting on canvas
    C. Participant 3
        - ➢ Succeeded with the task
        - ➢ Did a side smirk while thinking about how to do this
        - ➢ Not as quick as the previous successes
10. You deselect the instance to see the final design.

Follow-up Questions

1. **Did the feature UI work within the brand aesthetic?**
    A. Participant 1
        - ➢ Yeah they are pretty close
            - Was confused by the reset function of overlay mode
                - Thought it would take him out of overlay mode completely
                - Icon feels like an undo
            - The hidden instance layers had a master icon instead of a diamond outline for instances, which was fixed for the next test.
                - Confused him into thinking there were 2 masters but said if the icon was fixed on the layer panel, it would have made sense.
            - Layer panel and instance level panel were showing child selections instead of the parent
            - Had to explain that he was moving the master overlay position and not dragging out a copy
                - Feels this drag and move aspect will be confusing since it feels like option dragging an instance
                - Feels replacing the *action* of dragging and with a right click option or a keyboard shortcut would be less confusing.
                - Would be more intentional vs dragging
                - What you have is the opposite behavior, which is likely to be confusing
                - Even the action of *moving* the element would have a user expecting it to jump out of a frame like it would normally
                - Consider adding a button on the side panel that does this “drag” action and reset it back (in the place of the current reset button)
                    - Maybe a square with a right arrow to “drag”
                    - Maybe a square with a left arrow to “reset”
                - This was the only issue he had, but everything else made sense to him

B. Participant 2

- ➢ For the most part, it matches the visual language of Figma
    - Iconography
    - Widths
    - Etc

C. Participant 3

- ➢ Yes overall
    - New component “context edit” icon was good
    - Parent / child diagram (Instance Level) was nice
        - It’s a confusing feature
        - First inclination is that it allows editing at any level in a sort of “god mode”, taking into account nested elements
        - Would expect to be able to click it as an alternate form of selection and return to that level
    - Check mark and other finer line icons were a bit too thin
    - Doesn’t imagine Figma actually using a check mark like this

2. Did the feature solve a problem?

A. Participant 1

- ➢ Yes, it can be a pain to jump to the master that is outside of the context of a screen and make edits

  e.g.
    - Editing the width of something
    - Overlap of another element
- ➢ Publishing and updating can be cumbersome
- ➢ Just needs to be *super clear* that editing the master edit - it will update the design system in reverse also
- ➢ Thinks that maybe the concept of moving it out is overkill and not worth it
    - Introduces a level of complexity that may not be necessary
    - Can’t imagine a scenario but if there was a viable one - it would work with a button push or right click - NOT A DRAG

B. Participant 2

- ➢ No, it created problems
  - Introducing modes without context
  - Overlay vs Viewport relied too much on iconography
  - From designer's perspective edit in place is very new and confusing
  - Needs to be more obvious that he is in a different "mode"
    - Would expect certain aspect of Figma to be disabled within this mode
    - Needs a hyper-focus on the fact that you are editing in place
  - Need to be able to understand that these are document and design system wide changes
    - Currently feels like it's on-the-fly local edits
  - Viewport mode will not scale well for components that have a lot of variants or design systems that span pages
    - Nice small "fit" function works ok for a simple component
    - In all likelihood in a real world scenario, it will never be so neat to be able to fit so nicely
  - Maybe the modal could work if it only showed the elements that make up the component, variants, etc…and not the rest of the design system, to help with hyper-focus on that edit in a mode
  - Context edit should only focus on the component and not in the context of the component library
    - Other elements are a distraction
    - Not worried about anything but the card being edited
  - Needs to be crystal clear that you are doing something different in a new mode

C. Participant 3

- ➢ It creates a quicker way to do something
- ➢ It can be annoying when working with libraries to go to another file and push the updates and accept them in another file.
- ➢ I don't think this prototype was clear on whether the external file was updated or if one would still have to go back and update it.
- ➢ Permission levels

- Perhaps view only permissions would mean not having access to this feature and wouldn't see the icon or that they are in view only mode
- Who has this power?
    - Large companies have design ops who manage libraries and you have product designers who work on the features
    - Seems most appropriate for smaller design orgs or freelancers who have full control of the design
- Feature work
    - Would rarely update a master component if doing feature work and would just update in the main design library

➢ Use cases

- Discovery
    - When you just want to iterate and make a bunch of cards or some element and avoid having to do all the copying and pasting back and forth
    - Could make a dummy component that pre-exists in your design library that gets edited using this feature
- Icons
    - It's constant that an icons is made wrong and you have to edit it
    - This would avoid going down an icon library rabbit hole from seeing others that need work too
    - Would help to keep the workflow going and focus on what is needed in front of you

➢ Main concern is the trickiness of navigating nested components

- Rarely has components that don't at least have 2 other levels of nested components
- Feature wouldn't be useful on super complex components
    - Could mess things up at certain levels with variants involved due to chained inheritance

➢ Seems more useful for smaller design systems

➢ Onto something in that it alleviates file bouncing

- ➢ Main question would be:
    - How does this work with libraries?
        - Dig into this a bit more
        - Prototype felt like it was only local based solely on the icon styling being the 4 black diamonds
        - Icons didn't show the usual arrow icon to indicate a library asset where applicable
        - Maybe give the publish and accept prompts?
    - What kind of hints might make you feel like you are working with external libraries?
        - Solve with visual tricks to indicate a special mode
            - Special frame with outline?
            - Blur background?
            - Clue me into being in superpower mode
        - Would like to see the publish and accept prompts and not have to worry about going to the file to push it anyway
        - Would want to use this to avoid going to another file when it's absolutely certain that something needs to change globally
        - What you are trying to do is "merge to master"
            - It's kind of similar to branching and merging
            - What you have here is a window into the other file
        - Looks too much like it's just a frame
        - It should feel impactful because it's really dangerous if there are mistakes

3. How difficult were the tasks?

A. Participant 1

- ➢ Easy

B. Participant 2

- ➢ Pretty confusing because of introducing entirely new concepts
- ➢ Iconography is a bit confusing
    - The component icon is so established as a pattern that it inherently will be confusing to see it in a new context

- Check and X need to be set apart from the other Edit Options
    - Maybe a separate section in the properties stack
        - Edit Actions
        - Edit Modes
    - Maybe just spread apart
    - Parallel in hierarchy seems like they all do similar actions

➢ Maybe like plugins it can have it's own control window

- A new frame or modal
- Might help to reinforce that you are in a new mode
- Controls nested into the panel doesn't completely convey a mode
- Aligns with the idea that, like plugins, it's something new and different
- Gave my reasoning for side panel and he understood why as a native feature it might feel more organic

C. Participant 3

➢ A little tricky at first but also had no familiarity with the feature

➢ Some were hard because of the language used in the instructions

- Viewport
    - What does this mean to you?
    - No idea what that is
- Which component is the card?
    - Is it the card on top that I'm selecting?
    - Is the card component the card, text, and button?
    - Wasn't sure what exactly was being edited
- Scaling to fit to master
    - Instinctively wanted to Cmnd + Click and drag as if it were a frame
    - The fit to master utility is a new concept here
        - Really liked the concept of it

        - He wasn't aware of or had never used the "resize to fit"before, which is similar and the inspiration
        - Said someone who uses that more would have better feedback on it

- ➢ *Did you find the other components in the design system that showed a distraction and would you ever imagine a use case where you would want to see the entire design system to check the markups and documentation while in this mode?*
    - If this tool existed, I might actually have on screen documentation
    - Given that it isn't and that a lot of effort already is put into documentation as a link or description
        - Would love to have a descriptions be overhauled before doing this type of workflow
        - Documentation is used by many parties whereas this is a specialty tool for component editing
    - Ideally you would want to keep documentation and component editing functions separate.
- ➢ Wonders if it even needs to be a window into another file
    - Could see people in bad practices by keeping it open
    - Would basically be separate tabs open
    - Rather than that - it needs to just push out the one component at a time. One has to commit before the next can be affected.
    - Having separate monitors and using a different page would be the lowest cost options for them, having 2 windows open.
    - Feels like it is basically shortcutting another page
    - Would *really want* to have the power to focus on just the master component edit from the instance

4. Do you have any additional feedback?

A. Participant 1

- ➢ The instance level can potentially go on infinitely as a tree and may need to be limited to certain number of levels or the UI updates to the current level on top and the trees below
    - Otherwise, screen real estate and indentation becomes a challenge
    - Be able to cancel out of the entire thing

- Make it very clear what is being edited
- *How would you graphically portray this?*
    - Color styles for what is being edited
    - Adding "(editing)" to the item being updated
    - Bolding, italics, etc
    - Showing the top level item as what is actually being *edited* and anything below is what is *selected*
    - Some form of clear understanding of what is selected, changed, and how they are related
- At a basic level - this design works
    - Would need more refinement for more complex use cases

➢ *Would you think that the instance level is telling you where you are, or that it's interactive and will take you where you want to go?*

- Either make it interactable or make it clear that it's just a diagram
    - Perhaps take away the selection color and use some sort of other indicator of current level
- If interactable - consider the hierarchy panel on the layer panel instead of the design panel
    - Like when you select an item in layer panel and the selection and children show a new color

B. Participant 2

➢ Instance Level hierarchy

- Asked what the thought process was for the Instance Level hierarchy
- Explained that it was meant to be a guide for tracking and not selection
- Also wondered if it was clickable like the previous participant

➢ Resizing modal was not intuitive

- Doesn't convey that it is part of a bigger design system and that it can be drug out to show more
- Maybe it isn't a modal at all

➢ Iconography

- Can assume that the new icons with the master component icon have something to do with the master component
    - Edit in place
        - Wouldn't have necessarily seen that as the meaning of the new icon
        - Maybe you add a decision point when clicking on the "Go to master" component icon using text vs icons
            - "Edit in place" or "Go to main component"
            - Would further cement the idea that you are willfully entering a new mode versus a guess
            - Reduces visual noise
            - Maybe even with instance options …
        - Tooltips may help
            - Take into consideration screen real estate
            - Not having a new icon could save screen real estate and be helpful for long instance names

C. Participant 3

➢ Look around Figma for examples of confirming actions

- Figma is usually pressing a thing and it just does it
- Maybe an accept and dismiss button?
- Might even just be like the blue buttons like the Share button
    - Placed within the Edit Options section maybe?
    - Would still expect design panel full access but maybe not need pages access?
    - Perhaps the new context edit icon opens up an overlay modal like Color styles or color fill windows where all the controls are nested
        - This would help to save on precious real estate vertically on the design panel
        - Has to scroll a lot just to get to colors and this is just adding to it
    - The X may not end up being necessary at all
        - A lot of figma is just deselecting and not hitting X

- All this really depends on how it ends up being styled
- Check out the dropdowns for stroke and advanced stroke settings for ideas on controls
    - Can imagine a done button nested in that
    - Already has the X

Usability Goals

1. Tasks are achieved easily and quickly

    Quick, but sometimes a bit confusing sometimes

2. New UI elements are intuitive
    A. Participant 1
        - ➢ yes overall
        - ➢ Drag option in overlay was confusing

    B. Participant 2
        - ➢ Not intuitive
        - ➢ Icons ambiguous
        - ➢ Not obvious you are in a new mode

    C. Participant 3
        - ➢ Icons make sense and work
        - ➢ Not obvious you are in a new mode

3. Feature elements work with the product aesthetic

    Yes