



# Usability Testing: A Practical Guide for Librarians

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early on that the information presented is a guide, and general examples are used to highlight issues with lots of prompting to consider the reader's particular circumstances.

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**Usability Testing: A Practical Guide for Librarians**, by Rebecca Blakiston, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 133 pp., US\$43 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4422-2899-3

How user-friendly is your library web page or user interface? This manual not only examines what to look for but creates a guide for how to set up user tests to check for fluency, conduct the tests and evaluate the results with the purpose to create positive changes for users to library web pages. It is noted that there are many books on the subject of usability but they are more general in approach. This manual is designed with the specific needs of library web sites, with their complex hierarchy and embedded databases, in mind. The book was born out of the author's frustration in her role as research assistant in using some databases as opposed to others. She notes that you soon favour more usable interfaces. She notes that a good website instils trust and that a thoughtful user interface encourages return visitation.

The book is arranged sequentially and it is recommended that you work through the sections. Blakiston begins by exploring why you would bother testing usability. She suggests you work backwards from the argument 'what might a user want'. The answer to this question will drive the project and determine what you will be testing for. She provides a comprehensive description of how to set up a test, engage a note-taker and identify the audience segment to be tested. In recognising that any testing situation is artificial, she notes that the artificial scenario can still show user behaviours and frustrations. The role of the note-taker is crucial and there is some detail on what the note-taker is observing, and how they should record what they observe. With this in mind, there is full discussion of the fundamentals of good note-taking for this purpose. There is some discussion of remote testing vs. in-person testing with the pros and cons of both scenarios fleshed out.

Blakiston suggests looking into finer details which might not be observed in first designing a test, such as multiple entry points. If users enter a library database through Google Scholar or another avenue rather than through the front door of the website, this entry point needs to be observed too.

Likewise, she suggests you look at what information you already have from measures such as those provided by Google Analytics. The purpose of the usability test is restated throughout. Identifying repeated problems users have in their journey and finding ways to make this journey easier are key. It is noted that you may find more problems than you thought you would, but that you should not lose sight of the potential improvement, and suggests this should be an iterative process. The final section deals with interpreting your results, how to go about fixing problems identified, as well as

how to represent this data to management. There is a sample summary report, which records both statistical and observational data such as quotes from users.

This book is a simple manual which could be used as a blueprint for redesigning a website. Its simple layout and suggested scenarios could be applied to any library system from a simple web page to a complex university system with multiple entry points. It is not technical in its language and therefore can be used by even non-technical library staff.

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**Mobile Devices: A Practical Guide for Librarians**, by Ben Rawlins, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, xv + 153 pp., US\$39.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-8106-9258-3

This guide looks at mobile technologies and their implications for libraries. The author is experienced in this field and he provides an authoritative evaluation of different technologies and the ways they may be used to enhance library services. The text is clearly set out with a short explanation at the start of each chapter and diagrams where needed.

The first chapter looks at the increasing use of mobile technology and devices, such as smartphones, tablets and e-readers in a broader context. Emphasis is placed on the rapid development of this type of technology and how it has affected the way that people are accessing information. The book then moves on to examine how mobile devices can be applied in a library environment. Consideration is given to the changing nature of user expectations and the impact this has on library services and resources. Suggestions are offered on what mobile devices and operating systems libraries can use, with discussions on jQuery Mobile framework, content management systems such as WordPress and mobile-optimised websites. Further chapters examine the iOS Platform and Android using existing web technologies such as HTML, CSS and JavaScript to develop a Phone Gap framework. It walks you through step-by-step guidelines and requirements for submitting library applications that can be distributed by the App store and Google Play. There are also details about providing library users with library-developed mobile websites and applications from a variety of mobile services, such as text messaging, lending mobile devices and roving reference that libraries are using to reach mobile users. It covers the way that library personnel can also use mobile devices.

Recommendations are given on the ways libraries can evaluate and maintain mobile services and resources, which are important aspects of any project. This covers how to make updates to library mobile applications to the App store and Google Play. A chapter on Marketing Your Library's Mobile Services and Resources offers suggestions on ways that users can be informed about mobile services and resources that are provided by the library, such as slideshows, announcements on Library websites, Lib Guides, Social Media, Library Instructions and Library Displays.