

Usability for the Web: Designing Web Sites that Work By Tom Brinck, Darren Gergle,  
Scott D. Wood  
Review By Sri Hastuti Kurniawan and Panayiotis Zaphiris

Tom Brinck , Darren Gergle and Scott Wood add one more new book to the recently emerging list of web usability related books. Although the book is primarily written for web designers and web project managers we believe it can be a good project handbook for courses teaching topics related to web usability, although not necessarily as the core reading.

The main advantage of the book is that the readers can be sure that the authors practice what they advocate. What they present is the fruit of their expertise through years of web usability and web design projects and practices. This direct and practical involvement of the authors in usability area is evident throughout the book, where practical tips and advice take a predominant focus and attention. However, although the discussions on usability practices are both thorough and comprehensive, the book does not seem to pay too much attention to the theoretical aspects of usability.

The main theme of their book is what they call pervasive usability. In pervasive usability, usability is factored into every stage of the web site design process. This well known concept, which is unfortunately rarely practiced, can achieve a balance between commercial requirements and usability benchmarks.

They break down the book in a chapter for each of the steps of their systematic/iterative web site design process. This iterative web site design process is in six main steps.

1. Requirement analysis
2. Conceptual Design
3. Mockups and Prototypes
4. Production
5. Launch
6. Evaluation

The authors not only achieve to extensively describe each of these steps (with practical suggestions on how to avoid pitfalls) but they also achieve to touch on issues often overlooked in other similar books. Topics of information architecture and navigation are given extensive exposure and their critical importance in achieving usable web site design is also stated.

But the most important part of this book, that we think every web designer would find useful, is the inclusion of forms, checklists, and practical techniques which can very easily be incorporated and used in new projects. The book distills the necessary information into logical, reasoned, and structured practical guidelines, which make it

easier for web designers to adopt the information directly without putting too much effort to translate "philosophical" advices into design guidelines as some usability books do.

The book also discusses about how to manage a web site design project from start to finish, covering a vast range of topics from budget, time, usability method selections, etc, which we believe is useful for every design team.

In summary, we believe that this book has a place in designer's bookshelf and through its practical direction and easy to follow advices it can achieve to help in creating a usability culture among the web design community. It is a good book as a quick reference when designing a web site.