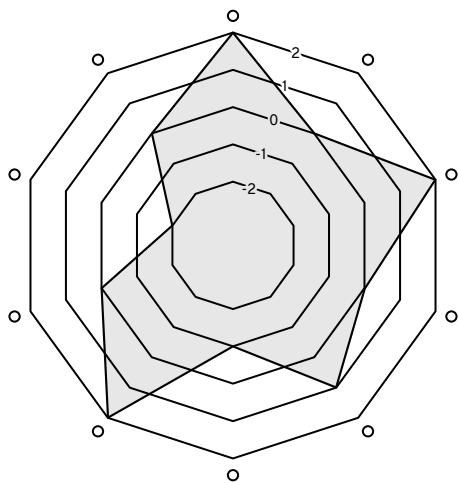


## library service design heuristics



## the service design mindset

Service design is a methodology and a process, but a true understanding of service design requires a knowledge of the Service Design Mindset. Although there is no single set of standards or tools for every project, the Service Design Mindset stays constant. These elements are the foundation of service design and fully understanding them will help you as a researcher focus your efforts productively.

## how to use

Heuristics are rules of thumb that are used to evaluate interfaces and services. The Library Service Design Heuristics can be used to quickly assess the many types of services libraries offer by asking simple questions to start you thinking about the service from the user's perspective. While using the cards, remember the Service Design Mindset, think holistically, and keep the user at the center. Heuristics work best when used to look at a discrete service. You may need to look at many different parts of the greater system to see the complete picture of how services are delivered and received.

### Focusing on User Needs and Expectations

Service design focuses not only on users' needs, but also on their expectations. User expectations are based on previous experiences with similar services that users have encountered in their daily lives.

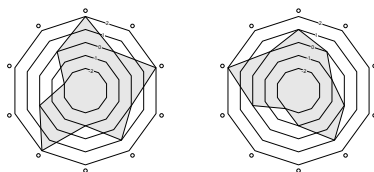
Understanding how and what people think about your services, and where they see similarities with other services, can help you understand current needs and expectations.

### Thinking Holistically

The library is a group of tightly coupled systems working together to perform services. To operate holistically, it is important to keep the bigger picture in mind when designing services by considering the larger context and ecology in which a service exists and operates.

To use the heuristics, think through each while observing a library service. Using the questions below the description of each heuristic, evaluate the service to see how well it meets the criterion. As you review the service, assign a score (on the scale of -2 to 2) for each heuristic. Plot the scores on the scoring card and then connect the dots to make a spiderweb pattern. You may also want to take notes on a separate piece of paper to help with your scoring decision.

Ask other staff members to also evaluate the same service and then compare your answers and spiderwebs to find patterns. If the service fails to meet any of these rules of thumb (i.e., is graded in a negative number), or gets inconsistent scores (i.e., when multiple people evaluate it, their spiderwebs look vastly different), you may want to consider evaluating it further using other service design tools.



#### HOW TO USE

### Having Empathy

Empathy is a tool we use to put ourselves in the shoes of our users. Without empathizing with the user's journey and behavior, we would never learn what we might be doing wrong or how to better meet their expectations and needs. Using empathy will help you remember the purpose of the service design project, the importance of thinking outside of your box, and the need to attend to all parts of the user's experience.

### Being Open-Minded and Not a Devil's Advocate

Our goal in service design is not only to understand how users use services, but also to create new services or refine current ones. We can only achieve that by confirming with evidence and looking at possible solutions, no matter how crazy they may seem at first. The devil's advocate can be the death knell of innovation because it shuts people and ideas down. Focusing on problems too early in the process can hinder any possible innovation. Great solutions come from allowing all ideas their time in the sun. Let the evidence and insights talk.

Joe J. Marquez, MLIS, and Annie Downey, PhD



[www.luxservicedesign.com](http://www.luxservicedesign.com)

Designed by Alisa Kwok

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[www.ala.org/tools/future/engage](http://www.ala.org/tools/future/engage)

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### Co-Creating

Co-creation occurs when service providers and users work together to understand needs and expectations better in order to refine, revise, or create new services. In service design, we measure and observe current exchanges and work closely with current internal and external stakeholders to co-design services.

### Making the Intangible Tangible

Services normally involve a request and an exchange—which can be verbal or physical—followed by the production of evidence. We can make the invisible steps tangible by creating dynamic visualizations such as customer journey maps or blueprints, or by staging scenarios. The visualizations help to identify any confusion or "pinch points" experienced in a typical user's journey.

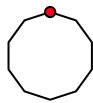
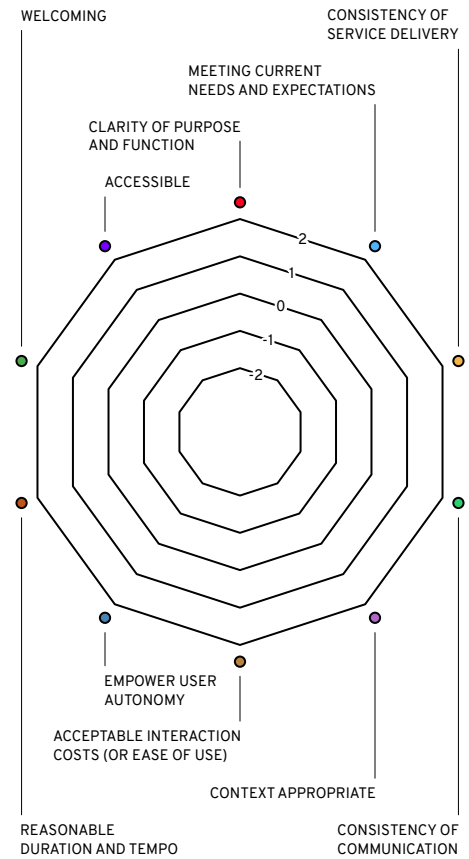
## Confirming with Evidence

All libraries are unique ecologies with their own set of users and user behaviors. Gathering evidence and insights to inform decision-making ensures that services fit with not only what users say they want, but what they actually *do*.

## Be Willing to Evolve

Our users are constantly evolving, which makes them moving targets. Existing users may change because of new cultural norms, evolving technology, or moving into new life phases. We also gain new users from younger generations and different cultures. Both existing and new users bring their own beliefs and expectations—so what we once knew may no longer be true, and things that used to work may not work anymore. But these are opportunities. Not only might we change a service, but we will also learn a little bit more about the people we serve and find new ways to deliver the value that only a library and a librarian can offer.

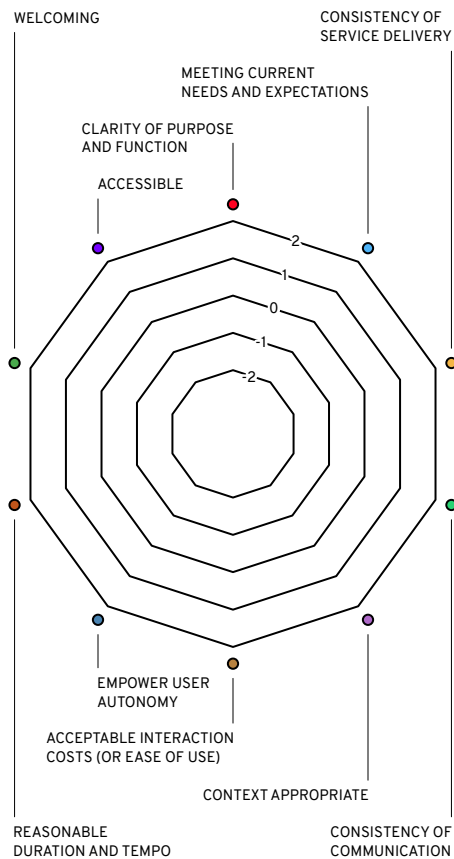
### THE SERVICE DESIGN MINDSET



clarity of purpose  
and function



meeting current needs  
and expectations



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**Users' expectations are based on previous experiences with what they consider to be similar services. As environmental inputs have changed (e.g., curriculum changes in a school program might require new collections or increased computer usage might require a more robust network or additional access to electricity), the service has adapted to those changing needs. The service provides the resources or technologies users need right now.**

Does the service meet current user needs and expectations? If not, how have needs changed? What additional resources are required as a result?

Is it audience-appropriate? Or has the audience evolved faster than the service?

What are some examples of similar services the user might encounter in the wild?

How might those external services influence a user's expectation of this library service?

What needs are being addressed by the service in its current form?

**The purpose and function of the service is clear and obvious. The service addresses evidenced needs within the context of a specific library's unique ecology.**

Why is this service necessary? How is the service related to the library's mission?

What is the evidenced need for the service?

Who is the service for?

Do users understand the purpose of the service?

How does it function within the current library ecology?



consistency of  
service delivery



consistency of  
communication



context appropriate



acceptable  
interaction costs  
(or ease of use)

**Communication across channels is clear and consistent. Language used is clear and modern and requires no additional explanation.**

Is similar language used on physical signage and on the website?

Is signage clear and appropriately positioned?

Is language up to date?

Are verbal naming conventions the same as those used on printed maps or other official publications?

Are policies enforced as described in a handbook or on the website?

Is branding consistent across channels (or libraries)?

**The delivery of the service is consistent across channels. Service providers are aware of how services are delivered and are consistent in their delivery regardless of medium used (e.g., print, electronic, verbal, distance, face-to-face). Service providers are professional and trained to perform the service to library standards.**

Is this service delivered across more than one channel?

Is the service delivery consistent across channels (or libraries)?

Have service providers been trained in the same manner? Are they knowledgeable about how services work?

Do service providers share the same information with all users?

Are service providers aware of other services near them? Do nearby services confuse or clarify the service delivery model?

#### CONSISTENCY OF COMMUNICATION

#### CONSISTENCY OF SERVICE DELIVERY

**Interaction costs are the mental and/or physical efforts that a user must expend to use a service. The service makes sense to the user. Instructions, when necessary, are clear and concise and add value to the experience and do not place additional costs on the user. When the time and energy to learn how to perform or complete a task outweigh the benefits gained from the task, the interaction costs are too high.**

Is it clear to the user how to use the service?

Does the service require instructions? If yes, can they be elegantly integrated or explained in a way that minimizes confusion?

Does the service constantly require library staff to explain how to perform the task?

How long does it take to learn how to perform the task?

Is the user required to have additional resources to perform a task (e.g., identification, pen or pencil, paper)?

Is the technology or process easy to adopt?

Is the service easily understood by a beginner?

**Services are highly contextual and should be designed to fit a specific location or ecology. The service fits within the context in which it is provided and is appropriate based on user expectations, needs, and service delivery messages.**

Is the service delivered at the point of need?

Does the service fit where it is currently delivered?

Is the service context-appropriate?

#### ACCEPTABLE INTERACTION COSTS

#### CONTEXT APPROPRIATE



empower  
user autonomy



reasonable duration  
and tempo



welcoming



accessible

**The amount of time required to perform a task is reasonable for both users and service providers, given all factors involved. The amount of time to perform a task does not outweigh the benefit of completing it. Users have the sense of how they are progressing by receiving adequate feedback on where they are in the sequence of performing a task and how much more time is required to complete it. Reasonable duration and tempo applies to both users and service providers.**

How long does it take a user to perform a task? Is this a reasonable amount of time for that user?

Is this service delivered in the fewest possible steps?

Are there appropriate feedback mechanisms to inform users of where they are in their journey?

How long does the service take to perform?

How much time is required for a user to navigate an interface?

Are there policies in place limiting the amount of time a user may use the service?

If a user must wait to use the service, is that duration reasonable and clear?

#### REASONABLE DURATION AND TEMPO

**The library and its services should accommodate, as best as possible, the range of behaviors of all users. Users requiring additional assistance are not made to feel different when accessing the library's services. Services are available and understandable for users requiring additional assistance.**

Does the space fit the users, or must the users fit the space?

Are the space and services accessible?

When a service is not fully accessible, are reasonable accommodations made? Is it clear how to request accommodations?

Are instructions clear and positioned at the right height for all users?

When additional help is needed, is access to help readily available?

Are services clear to all users? Do all channels demonstrate services for all users?

Do users know about available services? Are they publicized to the community?

#### ACCESSIBLE

**Not all users want to be helped. The service accommodates users who prefer to explore and learn on their own and allows them to undo what they have done in the event of a mistake.**

Does the service allow users to self-serve?

Does the service allow users to self-serve without feeling they are being watched?

Does the service allow for users to undo actions in the event of a mistake?

Does the process of undoing feel neither shameful nor embarrassing?

#### EMPOWER USER AUTONOMY

**Libraries are public, yet personal. They are often referred to as "third places" (i.e., not home, not work, but a special "other" place) because of the role they play in the lives of our users. The library and the service are not only pleasant to experience, but also desirable to use. The service is welcoming to all user populations.**

Is the space or service inviting? Would *your* users find it inviting?

Is it comfortable? Is it clean?

Can users navigate the space, website, or interface with little or no difficulty?

Does it accommodate diverse user behaviors?

Is it a place where users would want to read, research, do homework, or browse the collection?

#### WELCOMING