READER DEVELOPMENT WEBSITES: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

A study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Librarianship

at

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

by

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September 2007
Abstract

This research investigates eight websites connected to reader development in order to ascertain what constitutes an effective reader development website. This investigation is considered timely as in the online age reading and literacy skills are increasingly important. Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis in public libraries in the UK on both ICT and reader development.

The eight websites evaluated are Reader2Reader, London Libraries Recommend, WhichBook, EnCompass Culture, Give Me a Break, Scottish Readers, Amazon UK Books and Ask Chris. Though the majority of the sites are library developed sites, Amazon is a commercial site and EnCompass Culture is a British Council site.

The methods of investigation undertaken were a heuristic evaluation of the sites, an analysis of how far the websites responded to the aims of the reader development concept and a series of user tests with volunteers. The reader development framework for analysis was formed by a review of the literature related the concept of reader development. Ten user tests were undertaken with volunteers and through the use of a questionnaire attempted to determine if the websites encouraged the users to respond to reader development aims and if the websites were easy to use.

The key findings of this research are that reader development websites must consider personalisation, flexibility, creativity, subjectivity, the opening up of reading choices and the availability of online help. Furthermore, the user testing revealed that different users prefer different types of websites. This finding could be used to help to improve website design in the future.
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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Access to information in today’s society is not uniform. Feather notes “technology has made more information more available to more people….but the same technology has made access to it more difficult” (2004:40). The introduction of the People’s Network in public libraries aims to close this digital divide and has proved successful in attracting previously under-represented groups to use libraries (Brophy, 2003:13,16). Spencer and Mathieson maintain that “free access to ICT in every public library undoubtedly brings large numbers of younger people through the doors. A challenge for library staff is to engage these new customers with other library services” (2003:392).

The promotion of reading and access to digital skills are key aims of public libraries in the UK (Framework for the Future, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2003:23). Furthermore, Train recognises that reader development is a key concern for the government in the UK (2002:1). Therefore, if public libraries in the UK use effective internet sites to help to promote literature, they are able to satisfy both aims.

Furthermore, Goulding recognises “the ICT and reader development services introduced into libraries have had a positive impact on services provided and visitor numbers” (2006:5). In addition Bird and Tedd recognise that the People’s Network represents “a major development in the use of ICT for reader development” (2004:159).
The increasing importance of digital technologies does not replace the importance of reading; their interdependence has been widely recognised (Clyde, 1998:1; Denham, 2003:180; Guy, 2005:1). Manguel remarks “It is interesting to note how often a technological development...promotes rather than eliminates that which it is supposed to supersede” (1996:135). In order to play a full part in a digital society, reading skills are essential.

Reader development is a central component of public library provision and refers to the “importance of intervention, of increased choices and of shared activity between readers” (Train, 2003a:34). The importance of reading and reader development is recognised in the People’s Network: staff in public libraries are expected to be aware of reader development websites on the internet (Library and Information Commission, 1998:90).

There is thus a clear need to be able to define well designed websites that effectively promote reader development. Identification of effective sites has been under-researched; Moyer notes this need for further research into electronic tools (2005:129). Denham further has commented that while “the internet has proved to be a powerful promotion in the book world”, website use by public libraries in the UK has not been as forthcoming (2003:173). Kendall argues that, in order not to be left behind, libraries should make use of the Internet to promote fiction, as a means of publicity and to show the value of using ICT (1998:31, 33). Melchionda similarly notes that “librarians need to be pro-active not passive in delivering new services connected to the networked and digital environment” (2007:132).
1.2. Research Rationale

This research investigates websites connected to reader development to ascertain the extent to which they represent a good basis for encouraging reader development. The investigation appears timely because internet and ICT use is increasing in the UK society and within public libraries in the UK. Reader development is a key area for growth in UK public libraries and is essential in helping to create a literate nation. Through carrying out this research a framework for what constitutes an effective reader development website will be constructed.

1.3. Research Question

The research question is:

What constitutes an effective reader development website?

The aims of this research are:

- To analyse eight websites that can contribute to reader development;
- To determine what makes an effective reader development website and;
- To develop a list of factors that make a good reader development website in order to indicate best practice.

In order to answer the research question the research undertakes to:

- evaluate the chosen websites through a heuristic evaluation
- test the websites against a framework developed to assess the websites based on reader development aims
– conduct user testing of the websites to get feedback on using the websites and whether they encourage the sample of volunteers tested to respond to the aims of reader development.

1. 4. Websites under Examination

The websites have been chosen to represent a cross section of the wide diversity of reader development websites available. Ask Chris, Reader2Reader and WhichBook have been chosen as examples of innovative and highly contrasting approaches to reader development sites on the internet. Regional sites Give Me a Break, Scottish Readers and London Libraries Recommend have been selected in order to consider different approaches taken to promotions in different geographical areas. The majority are library developed sites but Amazon UK Books is included as an example of a bookseller site and EnCompass Culture is included as a site developed by the British Council. By including non-library sites with differing aims and objectives, the research should determine if such sites are better designed and more effective at promoting reader development than library sites or vice versa.

The websites examined in detail are:

Reader2Reader http://www.reader2reader.net/ (Museums, Libraries and Archives, 2005b)


WhichBook http://www.whichbook.net/ (Opening the Book, 2007e)

EnCompass Culture http://www.encompassculture.com/ (British Council, 2007b)
1.5. Dissertation Structure

Following from this introductory chapter is a literature review chapter, divided into three sections. Firstly, the literature relating to the reader development concept is examined. This informs the reader development framework which was used to assess the websites. The next section looks broadly at the relationship between the internet, reader development and fiction promotion. This section of the review informs and enlightens the positive and negative relations between information technologies and reader development. The final section discusses previous research related directly to the area of investigation.

The next chapter is the methodology chapter. Here the research approach is discussed and related to methodological approaches. This chapter is divided into sections looking at each of the areas of investigation – heuristic evaluation, the development of the reader development framework, the website use test and a discussion of the development of the user tasks, the sample used and the questionnaire design. The final section of this chapter turns to the ethical issues related to this research.
The next chapter relates to results and findings. This is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the results of the research for each individual website. Each subsection firstly looks at the literature related to, and the stated aims of, each site. The results of the heuristic evaluation, reader development evaluation and user testing results are then considered. The second section in this chapter discusses the overall findings of the research.

The final chapter concludes the research. The overall findings are summarised and the implications of these findings are stated. A section on which factors would be changed were this research to be undertaken again follows. A final section looks at recommendations for further research following on from this investigation.
2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Reader Development

The definition of reader development is different to, and wider than, simply reading promotion. Though it does encompass reading promotion, through attempting to “encourage wider reading and reading for pleasure” (Train, 2003a:35), it goes further than this. Reader development intends to “open up reading choices... [helping people to]...develop the confidence to try something new” (Opening the Book, 2004). Forrest sees reader development as “audience development for literature” (2001:169). Van Riel and Fowler assert that “trying the book that you thought looked difficult or not your cup of tea will reveal many surprises and we hope to give you the confidence to start taking a few risks” (1996:7).

2.1.1. Reader Centred

Crucially, reader development is reader-centred, placing the reader at the centre of all promotions and activities. Perren refers to this as “one of the guiding principles of Reader Development” (2003). Therefore the analysis will seek to determine if this is the case and if the websites themselves are similarly user centred.

Branching Out determine that “the reader-centred approach doesn't expect you to deconstruct, analyse, criticise or review what you have read. It simply asks you to express what the book made you think and feel in your own words and on your own terms. This makes the approach inclusive and non-intimidating” (Opening the Book, 2007a).
Perren notes that many users choose books by browsing, and thus argues that in order to be reader-centred, libraries should be encouraging browsing (2003). The applicability of this theory to websites is covered further in the literature review.

2.1.2. Subjectivity

Opening the Book, the reading promotion agency at the forefront of reader development, see the mission statement of reader development as “the best book in the world is simply the one you like best and that is something you can discover for yourself, but we are here to help you find it” (Opening the Book, 2004). This mission statement clearly expresses the subjectivity of reading, Van Riel and Fowler similarly assert that “your preferences and needs shape your reactions so that your reading experience is different from anybody else’s” (1996, 7).

Their Reading Futures, who work specifically with children and young people, use as their basis for reader development “the active way libraries work to create the best possible reading experience for everyone” (The Reading Agency, 2005). Therefore the website analysis will seek to determine if users' own experiences of reading are taken into account and if the website allows readers to contribute their own experiences of reading.

2.1.3. Communication

Perren notes that “standard book reviews are written from a critical point of view and they are formal and often quite negative” and suggests, in a reader-centred approach, readers’ views themselves should be taken into account (Perren, 2003). The Branching Out website argues that “reader to reader communication is the most powerful form of promotion there is. If another
reader tells you a book is good, that’s much more likely to persuade you to read it than rave reviews, media hype or literary prizes” (Opening the Book, 2007a). Therefore communication should be encouraged more in all types of promotion.

However, the subjectivity at the heart of reader development further suggests “just as there is no average reader, there is no consensus among reviewers. Unless you are sure that a particular reviewer shares your values and preferences, using reviews to guide your choice is a hit and miss affair” (Van Riel & Fowler, 1996:35).

### 2.1.4. Fiction and Quality

An implicit difference between fiction promotion and reader development is over the promotion of non-fiction materials. Russell argues that “definitions of reader development are broad enough to include non-fiction” (2004:11) - if the reading experience is central, then all types of material should be made available and promoted. As Russell goes on to say non-fiction works “can still provide opportunities to promote the value of reading in learning new skills” (2004:13).

However, this argument goes further than this into the controversial area of “quality” literature. Train maintains of reader development that “although it promotes ‘great works of literature’ as much as the most popular genre fiction, its aims are not to instruct or ‘improve’ the reader in any way” (2003a:35). Within literature Van Riel and Fowler perceive a great divide, “the literary establishment is snobbish about the entire range of popular fiction. Popular fiction is rarely reviewed in the quality broadsheets” (1996:16).
2.1.5. Creativity

Train recognises the role which emphasises the centrality of “the creative role of the reader as well as the artistic role of the writer” (2003a:34). Van Riel and Fowler expand this argument further “when you read you get angry, you get upset, you fall in love, you laugh out loud. You don’t just sit there and let it all wash over you. You are involved in a creative partnership with the author” (1996:13). The website analysis will thus also consider the extent to which the websites themselves encourage creativity in the reading experience.

The literature review will now go on to consider literature relating to the development and possibilities of websites that relate to reader development. Literature relating specifically to the websites under review is discussed in detail within each of the relevant results and findings section.

2.2. Broader Context of Reader Development and Websites

2.2.1. ICT Versus Reading

The demise of reading as the use of ICT became more prevalent had been greatly feared. However, Denham argues that “rather than detracting from reading, the use of alternative media, particularly when it is book related, can result in an increased interest in the original text” (2003:180). Going further, Clyde notes that there is a need for increasing literacy in using ICT, as Clyde notes “reading and information technology are in many ways interdependent” (1998); they do not have to detract from each other.

ICT through the People’s Network has become a major part of public library services in the United Kingdom. However, Spencer and Mathieson argue
that “books and reading remain the core business of library services” (2003:392). While it is certainly true that ICT is available elsewhere for users, through exploiting the possibilities of ICT, libraries can enhance their other core reading and books services and encourage users through reader development. This section will now go on to consider the differences associated with using ICT for reader development and fiction promotion, and consider how positively the literature perceives these alternatives to be.

2.2.2. Hybrid Libraries

One major change that could be brought about through the increasing use of ICT is the increased development of hybrid libraries. Boughey foresees that the public library of the future will offer integrated services to its users, that they will offer ICT services alongside other services (2000:143-144), that staff will be “helping customers use computers in a support role for information, reading or learning” (2000:148). In hybrid libraries, the quality of online resources to support reader development would be absolutely crucial.

2.2.3. Geographical Availability

One major difference in the use of internet sites in reader development is the geographical availability that using technology can bring about. Blue notes that through the use of websites, libraries can reach beyond their geographical boundaries to users and that availability is increased beyond opening hours (et al, 2007:28). This does not only relate to users however and Ormes remarks of the Stories from the Web (UKOLN, 2007) initiative that this is an example of geographically dispersed librarians working together (Ormes, 1997).
Conversely, the literature has revealed some problems with online resources being available to everyone. Ormes looking at where internet services should be in 2006 from 2001 states “as a growing number of users choose to use online services only the location of the library service becomes immaterial to them. The online library services of an authority 200 miles away are just as technically accessible as those provided locally” (2001). However, Ormes foresees that this future may prove difficult in terms of users of services from outside the library service area (2001) – i.e. should libraries be providing services to those users outside their remit?

A further issue with the availability of websites is the need to link the users back to libraries. Nielsen remarks on reader development websites which link to library catalogues, saying “in this way the web sites are working as an extension and improvement of the library catalogue” (H. J. Nielsen, 2005:517).

2.2.4. Community and Social Reading

Chowdhury, Poulter and McMenemy argue that keeping finding local connections is difficult via the globally available internet (2006:458) and suggest that public libraries can offer networks of community knowledge, arguing that “local community knowledge is extremely valuable for the local community, and…may be useful both for local and global consumption (2006:455). Conlon, Forsyth and Jamieson argue that “reading is a way of encouraging community spirit” and go on to note, in the Australian Big Read, that many Australian authors are featured alongside worldwide authors (2005:107).

The importance of social reading was emphasised in a survey with 50,000 responses reported by the Library Association Record which found “most readers like discussing books, trying recommendations and experimenting with
new writers” (Library Association Record, 2000:8). McGinley and Conley note the phenomenal rise of books clubs (2001:207). In a dispersed online environment this sense of community, enhanced by the social nature of reading is something which is central to reader development and could therefore be lost.

However, research by Fister into an online book group, found that reading can be a social activity and the internet can be valuable in enhancing this part of reading, and that “online discussion groups can enhance readers’ horizons and provide a sense of community with books at the center” (2005:309).

2.2.5. Advice and Anonymity

Forrest forecasts “individual reader advice on what to read next…can be replaced by library staff creating entries for a large, shared database which becomes a self-help tool” and goes on to use the example of Forager, the previous incarnation of WhichBook (2001:169). However Trott, quoting Johnson, argues that advising users is seen as a personal service: “it has been difficult to take what has been viewed as a very personal service and transfer it to the less personal online environment” (2005:211). This is a sensitive area as it is clear that advising people on reading can be very individual.

However, Moyer (2005:222) notes the reluctance many library users have in asking for help. It can thus be argued that not having to deal with library staff in person, but from behind a computer, can be beneficial. Trott finds that “online reading suggestion services offer a level of anonymity that may encourage readers to take advantage of the service”, perceiving this to be due to concerns over triviality or the ability to be able to articulate the type of book they would like to read (2005:212).
2.2.6. Subjectivity

Davies asserts that “individual tastes and preferences are so very varied, yet sometimes so trammelled. Exploring hitherto unconsidered writers can offer rich rewards but it has to be encouraged from a sound basis of knowing what will work” (2002). This is a central tenet of reader development. This subjectivity was recognised by Fister in an analysis of an online reading group who found that “members feel comfortable stating radically different opinions because it is understood that reactions to books vary widely, and that different responses are to be expected and even enjoyed” (2005:306-307).

2.2.7. Interactivity and Creativity

Using ICT for reader development opens up new possibilities. Denham notes the “potential for interactivity. This supports the concept of the ‘creative reader’…and allows for readers to interact with not only the texts but also the authors and creators of texts” (2003:193). Guy recognises that “reading is a creative activity…and the Internet, being a pool of creativity, has a lot to offer readers in improving their art” (2005). Therefore, if the possibilities of online environments can be exploited, reader development could be enhanced. Stories from the Web (UKOLN, 2007), a reader development site for children, acts on the potential for creativity and allows its users to create content for the site inspired by and connected to books and reading (Williams, 2002:19).

2.2.8. Classification

Denham notes that in the physical library, though a book may fit into one or more genre categories, it can only physically be in one (2003:184). Manguel recognises the futility of this situation:
“filed under Fiction, Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* is a humorous novel of adventure; under Sociology, a satirical study of England in the eighteenth century; under Children’s Literature, an entertaining fable about dwarfs and giants and talking horses; under Travel, an imaginary voice, under Classics, a part of the Western literary canon” (1996:199).

Quillen argues of genre spine labelling “this allows the patrons to quickly recognize romances from mysteries or science fiction but does not allow patrons to search for a romance set in England or a mystery that involves cats” (2001:17).

In an online environment, this major problem of classification schemes can be resolved – a book does not physically have to be shelved in one section, but could be tagged or allocated to a variety of sections. Furthermore, on some sites (such as WhichBook), the traditional concepts of genre based classification is jettisoned with other approaches to finding books being taken.

### 2.2.9. Browsing

Spufford argues that “the difficulty is that when you’re conscious of the mass of fictional possibilities extending away and away, to choose between them becomes a lengthier and lengthier task. How to settle on a particular straw in the haystack?” (2002:6). Van Riel and Forrest assert that “research has shown that the majority of people are browsers. Many people can’t remember names of authors or titles of books and most are looking for a 'kind' of book not a specific title” (2002:94). In an online environment Moyer believes that “browsing is an especially important area especially in light of the all the electronic resources now available to readers” (2005:223).
2.3. Relevance to Previous Research

There has been little constructive research into the use of reader development websites and much of the literature found is descriptive in nature. Wilson and Train’s research evaluated the Give Me a Break promotion in public libraries in Wales through interviews and questions with Estyn Allan librarians and library users (2005). However, the research concentrated on the effects of the displays in libraries and not the website produced in conjunction with this. The researchers surmised that “the display aspect of the promotion has been prioritised by Estyn Allan and not enough attention has been paid to the role and value of the website” (2005:35). This view was borne out by interviews with library users who were completely unaware of the existence of the website (2005:40).

Research into the design and development of reader development websites in United Kingdom public libraries was conducted by Walkey (2000). The topic was researched through interviews with five members of public library staff. This research is useful as it provides background data about the implementation of library sites. However, it does not analyse in great depth the actual usefulness of the sites themselves. The author concludes that “it is too early to draw conclusions in this field” (2000:97). As this research was undertaken in 2000, sufficient time has now elapsed to consider the now more established area of reader development and websites.

Quillen’s (2001) research analysed four reader advisory sources, three of which were online. This research was undertaken by choosing ten books, looking up their records and marking if the material contained any of 25 distinct categories of information. These categories included “title, author, publication date, publisher, number of pages…subject headings, plot synopsis, professional review, customer/patron review” (2001:27-28). By undertaking the research in
quantitative terms, the researcher was able to compare results of each resource in tables. However, this research lacked depth of examination of the usability of the resources. Additionally, as the research used only four information sources, it has limited applicability.

This research is also focused on American sources of information and therefore differs greatly to any research that could be undertaken in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, as with the research undertaken by Walkey (2000), sufficient time has now passed in the dynamic area of websites to be able to reconsider this area.

Buchanan’s (2005) research was focused entirely on reader review sections of websites. This research is interesting in considering users writing reviews but, by looking at only one aspect of websites, it does not sufficiently investigate the area.
3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

As noted in the introduction, this research tested eight websites and assessed how well they constitute a reader development website. This was carried out through three related research methods – a heuristic evaluation, assessment of the websites compared to a reader development framework developed by the researcher, and a series of user tests with volunteers. Through using a variety of research methods, results were triangulated and greater insight into the research question was achieved.

This study was qualitative, but, through the comparison of specific elements of usability and reader development aims, a more comparable picture of each website was reached.

As noted by Syn (2001:32), it is essential to consider usability of websites, if websites are not easily usable, users will not explore them or use them again. The variety of methods used is recommended by Nielsen who recommends “not to rely on a single usability method to the exclusion of others” (1993:223), he goes on to argue that combining heuristic evaluation with user testing can find “distinct sets of usability problems” (1993:226).

Both heuristic and user evaluation methods were used, as, though it is more common to use these methods during the design process, “they can also be carried out on current systems to inform new developments and future change” (Pickard, 2007:233). As one of the key aims of this research is to suggest best practice on reader development website development, it was hoped these methods would be useful in developing recommendations.
3.1.1. Heuristic Evaluation

Heuristic evaluations were used to test the usability of the websites under investigation. Nielsen defines this as “a usability engineering method for finding the usability problems in a user interface design” (Nielsen, 1994). Nielsen argues that heuristic evaluations should be evaluated by a group of people, nominally three to five, in order to locate all problems (Nielsen, 1994). For the purposes of this study, in-depth heuristic evaluation was carried out by the researcher only.

However, Nielsen does concede that all users will be able to find some problems (Nielsen, 1994). Furthermore, through the user testing aspect of the research, it is hoped that any problems not discovered by the researcher’s heuristic evaluation would be highlighted. Nielsen argues that “even nonexperts can find many usability problems by heuristic evaluation” (Nielsen, 1993:20).

“Heuristic evaluations…are concerned with testing an entire system based on predetermined guidelines” (Pickard, 2007:231). The heuristic evaluation followed Nielsen’s Ten Usability Heuristics:

- Visibility of system status
- Match between system and the real world
- User control and freedom
- Consistency and standards
- Error prevention
- Recognition rather than recall
- Flexibility and efficiency of use
• Aesthetic and minimalist design

• Help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors, and,

• Help and documentation (J. Nielsen, 2005).

These principles were chosen, both because Nielsen is recognised as an authority on heuristic evaluation (Krug, 2006:188) and because they are straightforward to apply, rather than the complexity of thousands of rules referred to by developers (Nielsen, 1993:19). These principles provide clear guidelines for website design, and are easily applicable to the websites being examined; they are thus “more suited as the basis for practical heuristic evaluation” (Nielsen & Molich, 1990:249).

By using this method it was hoped to determine problems in interface use, as Nielsen asserts “the output from using the heuristic evaluation is a list of usability problems in the interface” (Nielsen, 1994). However, although Nielsen concedes that heuristic methods necessarily focus on the negative aspects of design and “it sometimes identifies usability problems without providing direct suggestions for how to solve them” (Nielsen & Molich, 1990:255), through the comparative aspects of this research a picture of positive design features of the websites will be built up to better inform reader development website design.

Nielsen argues that “heuristic evaluation picks up minor usability problems that are often not even seen in actual user testing” (Nielsen, 1992:379). Therefore by combining both methods in this research, it is hoped more problems will be brought out.

The heuristic evaluation was carried out using a checklist of the ten usability principles listed above, with examples of how these could be perceived through the website design.
3.1.2. Reader Development Framework

The framework for assessing reader development outcomes of the websites was developed by the researcher through a review of the literature relating to the design and purposes of reader development initiatives. This review is contained within the main literature review section. It was essential to formulate a specialised evaluation tool due to the distinct nature of the concept of encouraging reader development through internet sites. The stated aims of the websites involved were also taken into account at this stage of the analysis.

From the findings of the review of the reader development concept, this research will determine if the websites under examination:

- Promote and open up reader choices
- Take a reader-centred approach
- Recognise the subjectivity of reading
- Recognise the creativity in the act of reading, and,
- Allow space for the site users to express their reactions.

The researcher will assess the websites on these areas and the user testing will further test the applicability of these statements.

3.1.3. Website Use Test

The final part of this research involved volunteers using the websites. Usability testing is defined by Dumas and Redish as “making sure that people can find and work with the functions to meet their needs” (1999:4). Therefore by using this means of analysis, the research intended to discover how well the design and usability of the websites under investigation meet the reader development aims.
This method was chosen as user testing is utilised to “gather data on how users interact with a system and how well the system responds to user behaviour” (Pickard, 2007:227). Through an examination of how people view and use the websites, the research undertook to ascertain if the websites involved were both designed well for use and encourage reader development.

It is essential that websites are well designed and usable by those who make up their intended audience. Dumas and Redish maintain that “if a product is consistent, predictable and easy to use, people will be able to learn much more quickly, better remember functions they use infrequently, and use more of the product” (1999:6).

Nielsen maintains that “user testing with real users is the most fundamental usability method… it provides direct information about how people use computers and what their exact problems are with the concrete interface being tested” (Nielsen, 1993:165). Rubin goes further to say when usability testing is carried out well, it is “an almost infallible indicator of potential problems and the means to resolve them” (1994:27).

Krug asserts that user testing is of great importance “testing one user is 100 percent better than testing none. Testing always works and even the worst test with the wrong user will show you important things you can do to improve your site” (Krug, 2006:134).

Pickard argues that “user testing is probably one of the most common ways of approaching user-centred design and is certainly the most widely used technique in LIS” (2007:227). As reader development is a reader-centred concept (Train, 2003a:35), websites under examination should be expected to be similarly user-centred. Rubin defines user-centred design as “all
development proceeds with the user as the center focus. A product’s goals, objectives, context, and environment are all derived from the user’s viewpoint, as well as all aspects of the tasks that the product supports” (1994:10).

3.1.4. User Tasks

Nielsen argues that “the basic rule for test tasks is that they should be chosen to be as representative as possible of the uses to which the system will eventually be put in the field” (Nielsen, 1993:185). The volunteers were therefore asked to browse the sites, as with internet browsing, and click on links they found interesting. Rubin maintains “the simpler the test, the easier it is to keep everything consistent” (1994:95). He suggests to “provide a goal, clearly stated in simple language, and let the participants do the rest” (1994:181).

This approach, asking volunteers to look at aspects of the site they personally found interesting is backed up by Krug, who argues that “you’ll always get more revealing results if you can find a way to observe users doing tasks they have a hand in choosing…when people are doing made-up tasks, they have no emotional investment in it, and they can’t use as much of their personal knowledge” (Krug, 2006:145).

3.1.5. Sample

Volunteers were drawn from the students of the Department of Information Studies and the majority of tests took place in the department Micros Lab. In order to provide a range of opinions, 10 volunteers were sought to take part in the research. This was achieved, and, as discussed in results, provided a wide range of opinions on the websites under review. Rubin claims for less
formal usability testing “four to five participants will expose 80 percent of the usability deficiencies of a product” (1994:93).

One problem with any research of this kind is how easily it can be related to all people. Nielsen argues that “one needs to consider the entire spectrum of intended users and make sure that the interface is usable for as many people as possible, and not just those who happen to have the same characteristics as the developers themselves” (Nielsen, 1993:46). However, being able to test all possible users is an impossible task, as Krug maintains “there is no Average User…all web users are unique, and all web use is basically idiosyncratic” (Krug, 2006:128).

The users tested provided a convenient sample. Rubin asserts that “the selection of participants whose background and abilities are representative of your product’s intended end user is a crucial element of the testing process” (1994:119). However, Dumas and Redish maintain that “in usability testing, you usually have a convenience sample – people from the appropriate population whom you happen to find and who are available to you” (1999:37). They also suggest that “an inexpensive way to get participants, especially for a product meant for the general public, is to use your personal networks” (Dumas & Redish, 1999:141). This advice was followed during this research.

3.1.6. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was to determine how far the users testing the chosen websites found that:

- They effectively promoted literature (including all types of fiction and non-fiction)
- How far the websites opened up reading choices
- If the users found the sites centred around themselves (they were able to express their own opinion)
- More generally, if the test users found the sites well designed and easy to use, and finally
- Which of the sites they preferred and which they liked least.

This method of data collection was chosen as Nielsen maintains that “many aspects of usability can be best studied by simply asking the users. This is especially true for issues relating to the users' subjective satisfaction…questionnaires…[are useful for]…studying how users use systems and what features they particularly like or dislike” (Nielsen, 1993:209). Gaining the opinions of the test users was thus essential. Dumas and Redish argue that “after spending time…using the product, participants have an opportunity to gain some perspective about their impressions of its usability” (1999:211). Rubin further suggests of post-test questionnaires that they can be used to “gather preference information from the participants in order to clarify and deepen your understanding about the product’s strengths and weaknesses” (1994:199).

Dumas and Redish found measuring usability “subjective measures may be either quantitative or qualitative…you can talk about the participants’ average rating of the product” (1999:187). As the researcher was present in eight out of the ten user tests, any ambiguities or misunderstandings were able to be dealt with immediately. Furthermore, additional information was sent to remote test users (Appendix 2), together with the information sheet included in the questionnaire. However, the questionnaire design and piloting attempted to ensure potential misunderstandings were not an issue.
3.1.7. Questionnaire Design

Volunteers in the user test were given a questionnaire on which to record their responses to websites. The user test questionnaire combined both quantitative and qualitative questioning in order to give both comparable results between the websites and a depth to the sample’s responses to them. Sudman and Bradburn stress that in questioning attitudes, you first know precisely what you intend finding out (1982:122). Therefore the questionnaires were designed with this in mind and attempted to ascertain the user’s views on how they perceive the website design and usability, if they felt the website encouraged them to explore reading, and whether it met the aims of reader development.

The questionnaire design was considered carefully, Sudman and Bradburn assert that “question wording is a crucial element in maximising the validity of survey data” (1982:1). Therefore, to eliminate any possible bias, and enhance the validity of results the design of the questions was considered carefully. On the issue of presentation, Sudman and Bradburn note that “a less crowded questionnaire with substantial white space looks easier and generally results in higher cooperation and fewer errors” (1982:244).

The same questions were asked for each website to provide a means of comparison. There was also a final section comparing the websites, asking the users to determine their favourite and their least favourite website and to state their reasons for these choices. Rubin defines comparison tests as being “used to establish which design is easier to use or learn, or to better understand the advantages and disadvantages of different designs” (1994:40-41).

Through the researcher being present during the completion of the questionnaire, any ambiguities or misunderstanding were thus reduced (Czaja &
Furthermore, as Oppenheim notes, personal contact can be beneficial in administering questionnaires (1966:36). However, Dumas and Redish maintain that “the whole point of usability testing is to predict what will happen when people use the product on their own” (1999:174). Therefore, though the researcher was able to assist with any difficulties with the questions, any assistance with the use of the websites themselves was limited.

Oppenheim notes the importance of the introduction and explanation of the research in survey design (1966:65). This part of the questionnaire was considered and designed in order to provide a brief explanation of the research, while being concise. Sudman and Bradburn advise that “it is your ethical responsibility...to inform the respondent as fully as is appropriate about the purposes of the survey” (1982:11).

Czaja and Blair recommend ensuring that preliminary questions in questionnaires are relevant to the topic, easy to answer, interesting, applicable to all those answering the questionnaires and focused on closed questions (2005:94-95). The researcher took this approach to the design of the questionnaire and attempted to keep within these guidelines.

Questions in the major section of the questionnaire included those based on Likert scales to determine strength of feeling (Bell, 1999:185-186) about the websites. This type of questioning was considered very relevant as finding out the opinions of the volunteers was a major aim of the research. These results were used in quantitative analysis to help to compare responses from different users and between different websites. Oppenheim suggests that attitude statements “should avoid double negatives and should be short and uncomplicated” (1966:115). Furthermore, Sudman and Bradburn advise to “use
words that everyone in the sample understands and that have only the meaning you intend" (1982:48).

The final section focussed on a comparison of the websites, in order to find out which website users liked and disliked and their reasons for this choice. Rubin argues that in comparison testing “one needs to ascertain why one alternative is favored over another, and which aspects of each design are favorable and unfavorable” (1994:41).

These more open questions asked about user preferences of the websites. Pickard argues that open-ended questions can add detail and “provide your research subjects with an opportunity to make their own comments about an issue” (2007:195), Oppenheim similarly notes that the freedom of response is the primary advantage of open questioning (1966:41). These qualitative responses to the websites will be discussed alongside findings of the other methods of research.

3.1.8. Pilot

The questionnaire was piloted to ensure the questions were easy to understand and provide the information required (Bell, 1999:127-128). Following on from this pilot, some of the wordings of the statements were altered to make their meaning more clear, but the questionnaire remained substantially the same. A copy of the final version of the user questionnaire is included as Appendix A. Users were also given a separate copy of the instruction sheet to take away, which contained the researcher’s contact details.
3.2. Ethical Issues

This dissertation abided by the University of Sheffield Ethics Policy. No potentially sensitive areas were investigated but care was taken when considering volunteers for the user tests. An information sheet formed the front page of the questionnaire and this is included in Appendix A. Volunteers were also given a separate copy of this information sheet to take away with them.

All participants were assured that participation was voluntary and the information sheet on the research informed them of the specific details of the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2001:270-273). Contact information for the researcher and dissertation supervisor was also provided on this sheet. The information gathered from volunteers is confidential (Nielsen, 1993:183). The information sheet made clear that consent is assumed through the returning of the questionnaire to the researcher.

There is a risk in user testing volunteers may feel that they are being tested and feel anxious about this (Nielsen, 1993:181-182). Therefore the information sheet, and the researcher, ensured that the volunteers understood that was the websites under examination and not their use of them (Pickard, 2007:228). Furthermore, through providing the volunteers with simple instructions on the tasks they undertook, this potential anxiety was further abated.
4. Results and Findings

4.1. Reader2Reader

4.1.1. Review of the Literature

The Reader2Reader website (Museums, Libraries and Archives, 2005b) was developed as part of the People’s Network website and, as such, supports the People’s Network initiative in United Kingdom public libraries. The Library and Information Commission made clear that as part of the People’s Network, library staff should be trained to ensure that they were able to promote reader development through the People’s Network (1998:70). Denham (2003:175) notes that the attention paid to training about reader development websites in this report “make[s] a clear link between reader development and the value of the internet in supporting this element of library provision”. Boughey (2000:143-144) suggests that the People’s Network aims to offer ICT services alongside traditional services.

Reader2Reader is managed by the Opening the Book organisation. Guy (2005) notes that “Opening the Book uses a reader-centred definition of quality: it is not the quality of the book that matters, rather the quality of the reading experience”. Reinforcing this argument, the website describes itself as being “where readers can tell others exactly what they think about books they’ve read – good or bad” (Museums, Libraries and Archives, 2005a).

Furthermore, Reader2Reader make clear that they are concerned with reading as a social act, and that, on the website “if you want to try a new kind of
reading group, here is the alternative, available at any time and from anywhere –
online” (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2005a).

4.1.2. Heuristic Evaluation Results

Reader2Reader performed reasonably well in the heuristic evaluation. The visibility of the system status was clear, if no search matches were found when using the search function “No matches were found for words searched under” was displayed, along with the option to alter the terms you originally entered into the search box.

The three main options Browse, Chat and Search (see screen shot overleaf) were considered to be terms that would be familiar to most website users, though Chat may require some clarification, which was provided next to all options. However, the option to search, which is most conventionally presented prominently on website homepages, is contained within the Search section, so is not is not easy to find. Furthermore, the concept of tags, which is presented on the home page, may not be familiar to all users, though there is an explanation, which could be improved.
Breadcrumbs are prominently provided along the top of all pages, so it is easy to return to all previous pages and see where you have come from.

The green arrow (see screen shot above) is used consistently for main options, though it may not be initially familiar to users, through building on a commonly recognised graphic of an arrow, its meaning is reasonably opaque.

On the adding comments options, the meaning of "*" placed next to certain fields is not explained, though this presumably means such fields must be filled in. Explicitly stating this could help to avoid user error.

Through the use of breadcrumbs and the green arrow symbol, Reader2Reader helps to promote user recognition. However, it is not possible to use the People’s Network or the Reader2Reader logo to orientate back to
either homepage. This is unfortunate as it could promote recognition of the logos and assist user navigation.

Considering flexibility of use, quick links are available on the right hand of all pages from a drop down box. However, only limited options are available and those that are, are not separated into an obvious Browse/Chat/Search hierarchy. Through a survey in progress on Reader2Reader at the time of this evaluation, it is clear that the developers are considering how it can be improved for users.

The design of the site is consistent and quickly familiar to the user with the top right hand corner of all screens displaying People’s Network Home, About Us, Contact Us and Sitemap, and the bottom left hand corner displaying Accessibility, Terms and Conditions and Privacy Options. It is very helpful to have these options available and they do not impede the use of the site. One flaw in their design however is that once these options have been clicked on once, the link is changed to a font colour which cannot be seen against the background.

Reader2Reader provides minimal help in the use of the website. On the homepage information on “writing about books” and dealing with issues through; “seen something that shouldn’t be here” is included, but this assistance is only available on the first page. Options to “Alert us”, “Add to favourites”, “Recommend to a friend” and “Comment on this review” are available on pages but there is no explanation about what these options will do until they are clicked on.
4.1.3. Reader Development Results

Reader2Reader promotes reading for pleasure focusing on browsing sections rather than searching sections, though searching is available it is given a lower status than browsing.

Books are organised in categories in the main browsing section “Take your Seat” in categories including “Relaxing and Fresh”, “Travelling Companions” and “Fashionable and Upmarket”. These categories do not follow familiar genre boundaries and may therefore encourage users to try books which they may not otherwise have been willing to try.

Reader2Reader recognises the subjectivity of reading very well by including categories such as “Am I the Only One?” for users to express an opinion on a book opposite to the received view and “Bin a Book” for users to remove books – this section also offers other users the opportunity to “Rescue this Book”. Similarly the “Persuaders” category allows users to encourage others to read titles that they have enjoyed. In this respect, Reader2Reader responds well to its stated aim of encouraging all readers to express their opinions (Museums, Libraries and Archives, 2005a).

This website encourages creative acts related to reading to a degree in allowing users to respond to each other’s comments, options for “Chat” and allowing users to tag books. These activities relate well to the social aspects of reading that Reader2Reader emphasises (Museums, Libraries and Archives, 2005a).

As is clear in the discussion above, Reader2Reader very clearly allows users to express their own opinions in a variety of ways. It also features
particular users’ “Favourites” on the homepage alongside “Most Viewed Books” emphasising the importance of individual users’ reading choices.

### 4.1.4. User Testing Results

Reader2Reader received positive feedback in some areas of the user testing. Very positively all ten users agreed that the site was easy to navigate, and seven agreed that they enjoyed using the site. Three users commented that they liked the colourful layout of the site. However, though still positive, results were more mixed on the two questions involving exploring books and authors, as can be seen below, in the results for question three.

![Bar Chart]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Encouragingly for a site which actively promotes the social aspects of reading, nine of the users either agreed or strongly agreed that they found it easy to express their own opinions. Two users mentioned liking that users could express both positive and negative opinions. However, another user commented that only having one review on many of the books limited its usefulness.
The full results of the user evaluation of the Reader2Reader website are contained in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A (Q6 only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site was easy to navigate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using this site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2. London Libraries Recommend

4.2.1. Review of the Literature

London Libraries Recommend (London Libraries Development Agency, 2007a) is part of the London Libraries website and is managed by the London Libraries Development Agency, whose aim is to “develop a co-ordinated strategic vision for library and information services across London” (London Libraries Development Agency, 2004). The “Recommends” section of the website “is a twice yearly London-wide promotion featuring books old and new chosen by London’s librarians because they are a good read. Many promotions are aimed at encouraging people to try writers and forms they wouldn’t normally read” (London Councils:2005). This site contains a variety of fiction promotions, many closely connected to the London area (Capital Offences, London Lives).

The current promotion, A Book with a View, “includes 50 fiction, poetry and non-fiction titles where world landmarks and landscapes are a significant, if silent, character” (London Libraries Development Agency, 2007b). It has been developed in connection with Architecture Week and reviews, quizzes and listings for events related to the promotion (London Libraries Development Agency, 2007b).

4.2.2. Heuristic Evaluation Results

London Libraries Recommend performed reasonably well on the heuristic evaluation. London Libraries is a text heavy site and, as such, contrasts greatly with some of the other sites looked at, which make far greater use of graphics (EnCompass, Scottish Readers). In terms of the heuristic evaluation, this meant that text was far more frequently used for various options than on other sites.
What’s in London Libraries (WiLL) is available on the London Libraries Recommend page when the “Find this in a London library” link is clicked. However, while searching for results (which can take some time as all library catalogues are checked) a “searching for identifier …” status is given (see screenshot below). This means that users are unable to see if that the item they wish to search for is being checked.

The use of bold text on the site for links makes clear what is available to be clicked on in the London Libraries site. As well as the current promotions available on the site, a list of previous promotions is provided. Previous promotions descriptions are given underneath the links to them; this is useful in providing further information about the promotion, as some of the titles are not obvious.
The London Libraries website does make use of breadcrumbs to help navigation, but these are not so easy to locate as with some other sites, such as the Reader2Reader website.

The London Libraries website is somewhat inconsistent in that options available for previous promotions are not always still available, such as quizzes, however, this inconsistency is to be expected to a degree as current promotions take precedence. On the homepage the “Quick Reads” option is available twice, firstly in the Recommend list and secondly down the right hand side. This could prove confusing as both options navigate to the same page.

Two search boxes are available on the homepage which could create errors, but these are very clearly labelled as “general site search” and “search for recommendations”. However, unlike some sites, the book search does not suggest using keywords, authors or book names. After searching for books, the page does show what has been searched for and gives the option to search again but it does not show what it is you are searching (past promotions, current promotions etc.).

As previously mentioned, London Libraries does not make much use of graphics but is instead text based – clickable links are generally words or descriptions, therefore there is little use of recognising items for users.

London Libraries does not offer shortcuts for frequent users but does provide some useful options on the left hand side of the home page such as “Find a Library”, “Looking for a Book, video or DVD” and “Join your Local Library”.
London Libraries design is fairly minimalist with purple being used as a dominant colour, which is consistently used for clickable links. Pale purple/pink boxed useful links are provided on the left hand side of the page. As London Libraries is very text heavy it may be that too much information is initially provided.

Considering recognition, diagnosis and recovery from errors, if no returns are found in searching “Search for Recommendations”, the page gives a message of “Sorry – no results were found for your search”, a search again box and an option to search the whole of the London Libraries website.

The London Libraries Recommend section of the London Libraries website does not offer any help. The entire website has an FAQ section but does not offer any assistance on using London Libraries Recommend. A “Contact Us” option is offered but many users may feel hesitant using this if they need help on using the site.

4.2.3. Reader Development Results

London Libraries promotes books through specific promotions linked to events in London libraries such as talks by authors. The current promotion is titled “A Book with a View” and focuses on books which feature books influenced and involving architecture or landscapes.

London Libraries attempts to open up reading choices through very specific promotions and includes both fiction and non-fiction titles in its current promotion, unlike some of the other websites being examined. However, due to the very precise nature of its promotions users may be disinclined to investigate
promotions which they may feel do not interest them. This problem is overcome to an extent by including previous promotions on the website including “Appetite for Reading” which focused on books connected to food and drink, “Big Gay Read”, which focused on books by gay and lesbian authors and “Departures”, a promotion of books in translation.

This website does not actively recognise the subjectivity of reading; reviews of titles are short and anonymous with no possibility for users to respond to the descriptions given.

London Libraries does encourage creative activities connected to reading through its connection to events taking place in libraries. This website also allows creative activity on the website to an extent through its inclusion of literary quizzes related to the promotions available.

One failing of this website in relation to reader development is that it does not allow users to express their own opinions on the site. However, this shows that the website itself is more concerned with book promotion than reader development, as can be seen from its aims.

4.2.4. User Testing Results

The user testing questionnaires revealed very mixed reviews of London Libraries Recommend. Two users particularly liked that non fiction material was included in the promotions, and three users liked the themed nature of the site, though two found this limiting. Three users found the design of the site cluttered, which reflected a mainly negative response to whether the site was easy to navigate. Three users liked the direct link through to the London
Libraries catalogues. Responses were particularly mixed on questions one to four, the results for question three are below.

In responding to whether users felt encouraged to consider their own opinions, eight users either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. Results were also negative on whether users felt it was easy to express their own opinions, with six users feeling this was not applicable and four users either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement.
The full results of the user evaluation of the London Libraries website are contained in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A (Q6 only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site was easy to navigate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using this site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3. WhichBook

4.3.1. Review of the Literature

WhichBook, (Opening the Book, 2007e), formerly known as BookForager, is a site designed by Branching Out with software from Applied Psychology Research is the most frequently cited reader development internet site in the United Kingdom. The approach it has taken is innovative and, as Guy explains, WhichBook provides “an intuitive aid for choosing books. Instead of starting with an author or genre, readers consider the kind of experience they would like to have” (2005:1).

WhichBook “offers readers a way of choosing a particular book by identifying the mood and style of the book using a sliding scale” (Bird & Tedd, 2004:162), Brown further argues “the choices cover the full spectrum of human emotions…you can mix and blend different quantities of these ingredients to suit your mood of the moment (In Denham, 2003:186).

However, the literature has not been entirely complimentary of the WhichBook approach. Nielsen argues that “the quality of whichbook.net may be debatable. The selection of books seems limited and accidental, and the possibilities of choice sometimes silly. Do readers really want to distinguish between novels “larger than life” and novels “down to earth”? ” (H. J. Nielsen, 2005:516). With 20 million different combinations available (Guy, 2005), is it possible that users will not find books that interest them? However, it can be argued that by allowing this vast element of choices an element of play (Brown in Denham, 2003:187) and therefore creativity is brought to users. Van Riel asserts that “everyone responds to the sense of play in the system” (2003:140),
and further argues that “the delight of this system is that it cuts across the genre categories” (1999:292).

Rafferty and Faux further note that “it has been designed on the principle that meaning resides (almost) entirely within the text and that its representation within the artificial language of the indexing system is fairly straightforward and unproblematic” (In Denham, 2003:186).

Furthermore, the categories assigned to such titles have been questioned, Conlon, Forsyth and Jamieson note that WhichBook is indexed by librarians (2005:108). Van Riel and Forrest elaborate “each book has been read by a real reader, one of 130 library staff across the country who have been specially trained to contribute to the site” (2002:94). However elsewhere Van Riel recognises the subjectivity of reading arguing that WhichBook “allows individual readers to define their “good read” subjectively, as one person’s good read may well be another person’s nightmare” (2003:138).

### 4.3.2. Heuristic Evaluation Results

Overall, WhichBook rated averagely on the heuristic evaluation. The WhichBook site takes a very simple approach to website design, with most options directly available from the homepage.

On results retrieved by the site, no explanation of the differences between “best match” and “fair match is given”. This would be helpful for users to interpret their search results.
Considering matching the system to reality, it is uncertain if the use of “Go!” rather than search, retrieve or find is clear enough. Some users may find this unclear as compared to other web conventions. Further to this, using the word “Parallels” to describe similar books to those found is not clear enough, it may be more obvious to use language that could not be misconstrued. The pointers on sliders cannot be moved simply by clicking the mouse but must be dragged and dropped, this could be made to match with other systems which do allow users to click the mouse.

Looking at user control and freedom, users are able to click the text WhichBook logo to reset and/or return to the first page however there is no clear option available for users to return from the Character/Plot/Setting menu to the main menu.

The design of WhichBook is very consistent with only blue, yellow, black and white being used. The exception to this is the red “Go!” button which makes it stand out from the rest of the page. The larger text version uses pale yellow as a background colour rather than blue but it is unclear if this differentiation would be useful to users using this version. On the results page, underlining to indicate clickable links is not consistent: “Read Extract” and “Translated By” are in exactly the same font but only “Read Extract” is a link.

WhichBook helps to eliminate error prevention by users by providing a description of actions when hovered over (see screen shot overleaf). However, this feature would be more useful if the descriptions were given in a bigger font, as users may not be able to clearly see them.
If no results are returned, WhichBook gives a “Sorry! No books matched your request. Please try again” message but rather than resetting choices retains what the user originally input.

WhichBook is a very simple system, is text based and makes no use of symbols at all but is not text heavy. It therefore does not require user recall. Throughout user sessions WhichBook retains the same library service for the user.

WhichBook does provide flexibility of use as far as text only, large text and the option to remove glowing effects are available, but there are no further advanced options for flexibility of use. WhichBook requires the Flash plug-in to use which not all users may have access to.
As previously mentioned, WhichBook limits colours to blue, yellow, black and white with no graphics, pictures or book covers used on the site. This makes the site very minimalist in design, but some variety, such as the inclusion of book covers may make the site more interesting to use.

WhichBook does not help in errors in choosing audio or large print options, it is not clear one option must be deselected before selecting the other and the prompt given to “Please choose EITHER audio books” is unclear and does not help the user to recover from this error.

WhichBook does provide help in the form of a demo of the site in operation. This is a very helpful idea. However on this demo users are given two options, to either “Show Me” or “Next Step”, which may be confusing. One major problem with this help is that it is not prominently located.

4.3.3. Reader Development Results

WhichBook encourages the promotion of reading through allowing users to set themes or characters, plots or settings they want from books and then returning books based on these settings.

Users specify exactly what they want in books which may not help to open up reading choices. However the design, with the possibility to alter settings and play with the controls, may encourage users to try differing variants on the site. Parallels are also given to all books featured which may help to encourage users to try different options. One failing in this regard of the WhichBook website is that the titles available are limited to fiction and poetry from 1995 onwards.
WhichBook does not recognise the subjectivity of reading in as far as the descriptions and categories allocated are decided and controlled by trained library staff. However, through the “Read Extract” option readers are able to make their own decision on books recommended, though the extracts are short and chosen by the site itself.

Creative activities related to reading are not actively encouraged on WhichBook and users are not given the opportunity to express their own opinion. However, it can be argued that WhichBook encourages an element of play in the book choosing experience through its unusual design.

4.3.4. User Testing Results

User testing results for WhichBook were mixed. As can be seen below, not all users found the site easy to navigate. One user noted that the site was possible to navigate only after looking at the how to use section.
Seven of the users enjoyed or strongly enjoyed using the site and six users commented that they found the approach of the site interesting. Very positively, eight users agreed or strongly agreed that they explored books that they might not otherwise have considered. However, nine users either disagreed, strongly disagreed or felt that it was not possible to express their own opinions.

The full results of the user evaluation of the WhichBook website are contained in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A (Q6 only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site was easy to navigate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A (Q6 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using this site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A (Q6 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A (Q6 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A (Q6 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A (Q6 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4. EnCompass Culture

4.4.1. Review of the Literature

EnCompass Culture (British Council, 2007b) is designed by the British Council and aims to “to provide a virtual space for Reading Groups around the world to meet, discuss books and talk to authors” (British Council, 2007a). It promotes contemporary titles from UK and Commonwealth authors (British Council, 2007a). The British Council Literature Department (who develop the site) aim to promote “the innovation, diversity, creativity and excellence of contemporary British literature” (British Council, 2007c).

4.4.2. Heuristic Evaluation Results

Overall, EnCompass performed reasonably well in the heuristic evaluation. The approach it takes focuses on the central graphic which can be seen in the screen shot later in this section.

EnCompass keeps the user well informed of the system status, text is used in the centre of the spinning graphic to gives options and is also used for a “Getting Results” message while the site retrieves results. On the results pages, precisely what the user searched for is listed at the head of the results.

The first level categories on EnCompass are divided into “Books for Adults”, “Books for Children” and “Books for ages 12-18”, which seems unclear and confusing. It would be preferable to replace “Books for ages 12-18” with a “Books for Teenagers” section to keep consistent. Furthermore, the graphic used for the 12-18 section features a book and headphones which may not be
strictly relevant to a site to encourage reading books. One further mismatch between the system and the real world is the adult section called “Management”, where it is unclear precisely what the titles are meant to represent.

EnCompass uses breadcrumbs to assist in user orientation. It is also possible to use the back and forward button; however, due to the graphical nature of the site, it is not clear enough that this option is possible.

Considering consistency, the titles retrieved by EnCompass vary considerably, with some titles bearing very brief descriptions, some with much longer descriptions and links to author pages and other reviews. However, all title pages contain a “Write a Review” and “Buy at Amazon.co.uk” option.

The use of the centre of the moving graphic for instructions has been noted above and this can also assist in error prevention. As can be seen in the screen shot overleaf, different sections light up yellow as needed. This is very helpful and can assist users of the site.
However the yellow pointer is not used consistently and on the first level of the search a white pointer is used which changes to a white hand. This is not as visually clear and does not assist with user recognition.

EnCompass does offer several versions of the site comprising a non-flash version and a text version where selections are made from drop down menus. Accessibility options given are to change the size and colour of the font.

EnCompass does use a moving flash design which may not be a suitable design for all users. Though other options to view the site are available, the use of flash can limit who is able to view it to those who have the right software available.

When no results are retrieved EnCompass provides a list of categories searched under and a message “To find more results, try again with fewer
categories or click the category names above to see all results in those areas”. Less helpfully “Top of Page” and “Download Page” options are given which are only useful when results have been retrieved.

EnCompass does offer “Help” on the right of the menu bar. What is provided is text heavy, though does offer links to other topics. It is complicated to find the specific help on using the site as it is contained under the “Five Ways to Search and Browse” link.

4.4.3. Reader Development Results

EnCompass promotes books through a spinning selection tool. It also provides advice on setting up reading groups, book quizzes, author interviews, a “Reader in Residence” and a discussion board.

This website provides many more conventional selection categories than other sites analysed. These include “Crime Fiction”, “Love and Romance” and “Travel”. This suggests that they may not encourage users to experiment with other types of books than those they usually choose. EnCompass also intends to promote British and Commonwealth writing and so does not feature books outside of this selection.

The website does not recognise the subjectivity of reading. All reviews of books have been written and categories assigned by the site. However, unlike WhichBook, users are invited to write their own reviews of books, however this does not appear alongside the original review but on a clickable link. Discussion boards are also available on the site, apart from the selection tool. The presence of a “Reader in Residence” and reviews written by them does implicitly
recognise the subjectivity of reading through focusing on one person’s view of titles.

EnCompass does encourage a degree of creative acts related to reading through its promotion of reading groups, “Reader’s Quiz” and “Discussion Boards”.

Users of EnCompass can express their own opinions through the discussion boards available and the option to “Write a review of this book”.

4.4.4. User Testing Results

The user testing results for EnCompass were mixed, though generally leaning towards positive. Users were very divided on whether or not they found the site easy to use, seven users commented that they disliked the use of the spinning graphic, one particularly questioning how accessible this was. Whether users enjoyed using the site was very mixed, as can be seen below.
Seven users either agreed or strongly agreed that the site encouraged them to explore books, though unfortunately only three agreed or strongly agreed that the site encouraged them to explore titles they would not otherwise have considered. However, as one user noted, this site links to Amazon and not to library websites and so promotes buying rather than borrowing titles. However, as this site is intended to be worldwide, linking to specific library catalogues would not be appropriate. Results for considering own opinions were mixed, with results on expressing own opinions very varied.

The full results of the user evaluation of the EnCompass website are contained in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A (Q6 only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site was easy to navigate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using this site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5. Give Me a Break

4.5.1. Review of the Literature

Give Me a Break (Opening the Book for Estyn Allan, 2007) is an Opening the Book designed site in association with Estyn Allan (the Welsh Branching Out group) (Opening the Book for Estyn Allan:2007). Bird and Tedd note that Give Me a Break is the first Wales-wide promotion, first to be bilingual and first to specifically target young people (2004:163-4). The titles featured are aimed at those “under 40 who do not have much time to come into a library to browse for suitable reading material”, and further feature some material with Welsh connections (2004:164).

Wilson and Train explain the background of the overall project (of which the website is only a part) stating “the promotion recognises the ways in which people use reading to ‘take a break’ or as a form of escapism and offers a range of titles to meet a variety of reading needs and preferences” (2005:3). Their evaluation of the project found that the website was insufficiently known and utilised in the overall programme (2005:33,40).

4.5.2. Heuristic Evaluation Results

Give Me a Break did not perform very well in the heuristic evaluation. Give Me a Break is a simple system to use with a variety of links to click from the homepage.
The site has attempted to use familiar concepts for its links such as “Boredom”, “The Ironing” and “The Kids” but the results returned when choosing each option do not seem relevant to the initial choice.

The orientation available on Give Me a Break is varied. Although, while on results pages, all options are still available on the left hand side, it is impossible to return to the homepage without resorting to the back button on the browser (see screen shot below).

![Screen Shot](image.png)

The consistently available options on the left hand side is matched by the ability to switch between English and Welsh in the top right hand corner. The design of the “Surprise Break” option is not consistent with the other options given (see above).
Give Me a Break does not aid in error prevention with the confusing instruction on the homepage of “Choose what it is you want a break from and find yourself an escape route”. Nowhere is there any mention of books or how to use the site.

Due partly to the simplicity of the site design, the only flexibility of this site is in changing languages between English and Welsh, but the site does not specify which language books are.

Though Give Me a Break does not provide that much information, the design scheme clashes to a degree with purple, yellow, red and black all featuring strongly. The changing type size, colour and design also add to the slightly chaotic feeling design of the site.

Error control on this site is very limited, though as it is a very simple site it may not be needed to a great degree. A “Try Again” option is available on results pages which will provide the user with a different selection of titles, but it is not possible to specify further changes.

No help is available on the Give Me a Break site; this is a major failing as no direct description of how users can use the site may discourage use.

4.5.3. Reader Development Results

Give Me a Break promotes books through a simple homepage which asks users to select what kind of break they would like. These vary from “A Long Break” to a break from “Boredom”, “The Email” or “The Ironing”.

64
The titles featured when categories are selected seem somewhat arbitrary and with little connection to the category. However, it is possible to “Try Again for a Different Selection”. Some of the titles available on the site have a Welsh connection (Bird & Tedd, 2004:164) and so could be seen to be opening up reading choices centred around Welsh experiences. One of the most interesting aspects of the Give Me a Break website is the option to choose a “Surprise Break” where users are asked to select from a list of categories which genres they are willing to try and will then be provided with a surprise book at their local library. Though this feature is only available in Wales, it is an interesting development for encouraging users to open up their reading choices.

The very simple design and function of the website does not encourage creative activities connected to reading, recognise the subjectivity of reading or allow users to express their own opinions. Therefore, it does not rank well as a reader development website.

4.5.4. User Testing Results

Give Me a Break did not perform very well in the user testing questionnaire. Most positively six users agreed or strongly agreed that the site was easy to navigate; however, as the design of this site was very simple, this result could have been expected to be higher. Unfortunately six users were neutral on whether or not they enjoyed using the site, with three disagreeing with the statement.

Results were fairly negative as to whether the site encouraged users to explore books and authors, with eight users disagreeing or feeling neutral towards this statement with nine neutral or disagreeing that it would encourage them to explore authors they would not otherwise have done. Four users
commented that the choices seemed limited and two found the categories given, and the results returned, random. As can be seen below, most users felt the site did not encourage them to consider their own opinion on books.

![Bar chart showing user opinions on site encouragement to consider opinions on books and/or authors.]

All users either felt it was not possible or disagreed that it was easy to express their opinion on this site.
The full results of the user evaluation of the Give Me a Break website are contained in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A (Q6 only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site was easy to navigate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using this site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6. Scottish Readers

4.6.1. Review of the Literature

Scottish Readers (Opening the Book, 2007d) is designed by Opening the Book for Scotland’s Reader Development Network programme (Opening the Book:2007b). Scottish Reader aims to help people find reading groups, provide “inspiration on what to read next” and through “So you think you know Scotland” and “Voices of Scotland now” promotions is “celebrating the incredible diversity of Scottish writing” (Opening the Book:2007c).

Scottish Readers has not received a great deal of attention. Prescott describes it, along with Give Me a Break and WhichBook as “excellent examples of websites that bring books and readers together in interesting and fun ways” (2007:6).

4.6.2. Heuristic Evaluation Results

Scottish Readers performed fairly poorly in the heuristic evaluation. It is based around a clickable picture which leads to other areas of the website.

The visibility of system status in Scottish Readers is poor, as the mouse moves over areas, descriptions are given but these can be confusing and unhelpful. One example is “Boating Lake – take a trip”. These may be intended to arouse interest but provide little useful information. Also, on three of the links from your homepage pages are titles “Your Results”, giving no indication to the user of what was clicked on.
On the website users are invited to “roll your mouse over the map to explore”. It is unclear if this is language or phrasing that all users would be familiar with.

Scottish Readers offers a back option to return to the homepage and on results pages offers a list on the left hand side of the results pages to aid navigation. It would also be helpful to provide this list on the homepage as, due to the nature of the site, it is difficult for users to know immediately what parts of the graphic are clickable.

Looking at consistency, The Ruins, Flowerbeds and Boating Lake options all have the same design on their results pages with black backgrounds with white and red text. Other options are not consistent with this design.

Scottish Readers does not provide any help with error prevention. A discussion of the help available is given below.

This site does not aid users with recall as it does not carry the book titles through to the catalogue search available on this site, expecting users to re-input this information.

Considering flexibility, Scottish Readers does offer text only, high contrast and mobile versions of the site with links available to them at the top of every page. However, in the alternative versions of the site the Park Bench options are completely different to those in the standard version, showing inconsistency.

Scottish Readers design is minimalist, with information only becoming available on areas when the cursor is over them. However the information given
is insufficient and there is no way of telling from the homepage which parts are clickable. The Colour Wheel option on the standard version of the Park Bench area of the site is very difficult for users to control and does not list options available to the user.

Considering errors, more information is needed on Scottish Readers on what the options offer. There is an option on results pages to change the book selection if not happy with the selected books but there are no options to alter the search.

Scottish Readers help is contained in the “Park Gates and Meeting Point” as seen in the screen shot below. This area is not obviously titled and being positioned near the bottom of the page may not be easy to find for users. The help offered provides some explanation of each option on the homepage but the descriptions offered are unclear.
4.6.3. Reader Development Results

Scottish Readers promotes books by inviting users to select from a variety of categories on a picture of a park and providing them with book titles and short reviews related to the category chosen.

This website does attempt to open up reading choices to an extent. The variety of different types of selection available allows users to choose differing ways to select books. Alongside “So You Think You Know Scotland” and “Scotland Now”, promoting Scottish literature in a similar way to London Libraries, Scottish Readers contains “The Ruin” and “Boating Lake” providing more recognisable genre choices. Scottish Readers also contains the “Café” area which provides users with “Tasters” – poems and “Chef’s Surprise” – which is similar to Give Me a Break’s “Surprise Break”. Further, in the “Park Benches” section, Scottish Readers allows users to choose books by moods, such as “Adventurous”, “Indulgent” and “Reflective”.

Scottish Readers does not actively recognise the subjectivity of reading, all reviews have already been written and categories assigned. However, through the same “Tasters” section, users can make their own decisions on the material available.

Creative activities related to reading are not actively included in the site, though it does provide information relating to reading groups. It is further possible to “Recommend This Book to a Friend” thus allowing for further discussion and promotion of materials. Scottish Readers does not allow users to express their own opinions.
4.6.4. User Testing Results

The user testing questionnaire results for Scottish Readers were reasonably negative and varied in different categories with some differences of opinion amongst the users. Just four users agreed that the site was easy to navigate, with only five agreeing that they enjoyed using the site. Three users commented that they liked the design of the site while four commented that they really disliked it, with one feeling it was “too abstract” (User One).

Four users felt that the site encouraged them to consider books and authors with only two feeling that it encouraged them to consider books or authors they would not otherwise have considered. As can be seen below users did not overall feel the site encouraged them to consider their own opinions.

![Bar chart showing user opinions on encouraging own opinions](chart.png)

Views were mainly negative over whether users found it easy to express their own opinions, however four users commented that they liked the feature on the site which enabled them to email titles to friends.
The full results of the user evaluation of the Scottish Readers website are contained in the table below. For question 6, one user did not indicate a response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A (Q6 only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site was easy to navigate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using this site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7. Amazon UK Books

4.7.1. Review of the Literature

Amazon UK Books (Amazon.com, Inc., 2007a) is a part of an online store which originally began trading solely as a bookstore but has since expanded into diverse product ranges. Amazon.com, of which Amazon.co.uk is a subsidiary, considers itself “the leading online retailer of products that inform, educate, entertain and inspire” (Amazon.com, Inc., 2007b).

The Amazon website is frequently mentioned throughout the literature in relation to libraries, and examples of its diverse functionality and broad coverage of titles are discussed. Whereas Davies comments on the value of linked recommended titles based on titles the user has previously viewed or bought (2002). Kendall notes the value of Amazon for information on new releases and forthcoming titles (1998:31). Quillen believes “the Amazon.com approach, which provides so much information in a variety of ways (customer reviews, professional reviews, browsing by genre, lists), is one that should be emulated by libraries and readers’ advisory databases” (2001:41).

4.7.2. Heuristic Evaluation Results

One major problem with the analysis of Amazon was that the researcher, and all test subjects, were already familiar with the site. However, for the purposes of the heuristic evaluation, Amazon was considered on the same framework as the other websites. Overall, Amazon scored averagely on the heuristic evaluation.
Amazon provides valuable user assistance when searching. If no results are found the site offers clear advice: “No results match your search for … in Books”. Even more helpfully, if search terms are similar to other search terms (such as when words are misspelt) it results in a message stating “Did you mean …” with an option to click on this link and search under this alternative term.

Amazon is a very well known website and its conventions have to some extent become conventional throughout website design. This is especially the case with the site’s use of tabs to navigate to different sections. One problem with the Amazon “Browse” function is the sheer number of items to view, it is impossible to browse through such large volumes.

Users of Amazon may frequently have to use the browser forward and back buttons which can become disorientating. However, Amazon does provide a record of what items have been looked at by users, which may prove useful should users want to return to previously viewed items.

Considering consistency, one noticeable feature of the Amazon site is that each time it is visited the homepage has changed with different featured books and promotions, this may prove disorientating to the user. Links on the site are generally text links and book cover links; however italics are used for some books titles, but not all. This should be consistent. Book results pages all possess the same layout but do not all contain the same features.

Error prevention is very good on Amazon. Any search terms can be entered into the search box and, as noted above, Amazon offers good user assistance when searching.
Links on Amazon are generally text links and picture links, each item page is given the same layout in the same order (though not all features are available on all pages) and the yellow “Add to Shopping Basket” is prominently displayed on all pages. These all help to add to user recognition.

Amazon offers a great degree of personalisation and flexibility of use for frequent users. By signing into the site, Amazon provides recommendations on what you have previously bought from the site. Amazon also offers suggestions based on items you have looked at previously. The flexibility of Amazon’s search box also assists users.

Amazon has a vast amount of information available through its website which is not only limited to books but many other categories as well. This information is well organised and divided into sections but may be overwhelming and disorientating for novice users. There are a variety of ways to find books from the homepage (as can be seen overleaf) such as topic browsing, searching or searching through offers, but this could prove confusing to users.
Amazon offers assistance on new features such as the “Customer Discussions” section with a “What’s This” link. This helps frequent users of the site to keep up to date with new features. It would also be very useful to discreetly include this feature on other facilities of the website to aid new users.

Help is displayed at the top right hand corner of all Amazon pages but is in a small black font which is not easy to locate. Help is divided into topics and sub-topics, with links to other related topics, which helps to organise and present the amount of information available to users.

4.7.3. Reader Development Results

Amazon UK Books promotes reading for pleasure, but as a commercial enterprise its focus is necessarily related to the selling of books. This does not
detract from the ubiquitous nature of the site, how well known it is to many people and the vast variety of materials it sells.

Amazon does attempt to open up reading choices through a variety of avenues. Alongside search and browse functions, Amazon uses promotions such as “Great Deals on the Latest Books” sales, “Hot New Releases” and “Top Sellers in Books”. This is a useful feature to have as research, including that carried out by Train (2003b:17) reveals that many library users choose books from the returns trolley, in effect trusting that other people’s choices. Amazon also offers several avenues to explore what other items users who have also looked at particular titles have looked at/bought. Included in this is the “Customers Who Viewed this Item also Viewed…” section. For frequent users, Amazon also offers recommendations based on those items previously purchased.

Amazon partially recognises the subjectivity of reading. Though Amazon’s own reviews are given priority on product pages, a star rating of books based on “Average Customer Review” rating is also given at the head of the page, showing how other users have rated the books. Amazon customers can also add to “Customer Reviews” given near the bottom of product pages.

Amazon encourage some creative activities related to reading. These include “Listmania”, where users can post lists relating to topics of interest to them, and the new feature “Customer Discussions”, where users are encouraged to ask questions and discuss products.

This website encourages users to express their own opinion through “Customer Reviews” and also allows other users to rate how useful they find
these reviews. The use of the star system very early on product pages suggests that Amazon recognises the value of their customers’ opinions on items.

4.7.4. User Testing Results

The results for the Amazon UK Books site were mainly positive. Eight users agreed or strongly agreed that the site was easy to navigate, however only five agreed that they enjoyed using the site. It is worthwhile to note that all users had previously used the site, with four feeling that this may affect their opinion on using and navigating the site. One user specifically commented that the personalised recommendations made for them based on previous purchases were very useful.

Seven users agreed or strongly agreed that the site encouraged them to explore books and authors although only three felt that the site encouraged them to explore books and authors they would not otherwise have considered. Three users commented that the ability to search the site was very good, however one user commented “it was a better place to search for books/authors you are already aware of. It wasn’t as inspiring as some of the other sites in encouraging reading new material” (User Ten).

Six users agreed that the site encouraged them to consider their own opinions on books and authors whilst, as can be seen overleaf, results on expressing opinions were mixed, though more positive than for some other sites.
I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site

The full results of the user evaluation of the Amazon website are contained in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A (Q6 only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site was easy to navigate</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using this site</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.8. Ask Chris

4.8.1. Review of the Literature

Ask Chris (Essex County Council, 2001) is a website developed by Essex County Council. Turner argues that for the development of Ask Chris “the starting point was the three out of four readers who don’t know what to read next and the way library classification and shelving arrangements can put barriers in their way” (2002:171).

Turner clarifies “we wanted to create a site that was easy to use, involved readers and created a strong sense of sharing reader experiences” (In Denham, 2003:176). Involving readers is central to the design of the Ask Chris site as it allows many different reviews of the same book to be added. This aspect is emphasised on the site which states “when you Ask Chris to suggest what you should read next, you’ll be tapping into the opinions of hundreds of readers” (Essex County Council, 2001).

Ask Chris actively responds to the possibilities of reader development on the Internet, “On the website, unlike library shelves, books can be highlighted simultaneously in as many categories as appropriate” (Turner in Denham, 2003:176).

Prescott describes Ask Chris as a “reader centred site containing thousands of recommendations from readers and reading groups” (2007:6), she also says that members of Booktalk reading groups make contributions to the Reviews on Ask Chris. Turner stresses that “the website is interactive: readers can add their own reviews, join in discussions, search for a reading group, check out any events for readers” (2002:171).
4.8.2. Heuristic Evaluation Results

Ask Chris performed reasonably well on the heuristic evaluation.

All of the options available on Ask Chris are available along the bar at the top of every page, this changes colour dependant on which section the user is currently in. Categories are in large bold type and at the top of results pages, which makes them very clear for the user. Various reviews of titles are available but only one is displayed at a time with others being available from the drop down box (see screen shot below). It may not be clear to users that there is a variety of reviews available.

The subtitle of Ask Chris is “What Should I Read Next” which is misleading for users as they are not asked what they have read first. BBC RaW
is a category given but there is no explanation of this term before selecting, although this would provide useful further information for users.

The Ask Chris logo does not link back to the homepage, which would assist with user navigation. The main graphic on the adult homepage does not link to anything, though there is an expectation that it should as “Inspirational” is not a category available anywhere.

The use of the bar along the top of all pages remains consistent throughout all the pages on the site and changes according to the colour scheme of the section. User options of “Type of Reading” and “Themes” are separated but the distinction is not explained. Further, all themes are available from a drop down list except “Something Different” and “Buzz”. It is unclear what these options are and why they are presented separately to the other options available.

Symbols >, >I, < and I< are used to navigate through the pages of results. The meaning of these symbols is probably clear to most users but their position along the left hand side of the screen between the top bar and the logo is partially obscured and they are further camouflaged by being in the same colour as the top bar.

An “Elan” link is provided along the top bar of all screens. This is the catalogue name for Essex Libraries and is useless if users are unfamiliar with the name. There is also no direct link from the book reviews to the catalogue which would be helpful to users.
Ask Chris offers an “Advanced Search” providing flexibility of use which combines themes but it is not explicitly stated that this is what it does. It is possible to search specifically for audio and large print titles here but this function would be more helpful to users separated from the advanced search option.

Ask Chris makes good use of colour in its design to assist in navigating sections however, the choice of black as a background colour on the main pages may be off-putting to some users – especially when combined with the bright colours used for sections.

In error recognition, when using “Advanced Search”, Ask Chris returns a “Sorry: no books were found matching your criteria” message when no titles are available. However, the original search terms are not provided in order to alter them and search again. At this stage an option to email your own review of titles is provided.

“Contact Chris” gives some information about the site but very little specific help on using the site is provided. The home page of Ask Chris does not provide useful guidance and states “Select your favourite kind of read from the options listed”. The “Have Your Say” section doesn’t give any help on adding to the discussion but instead provides warnings about inappropriate comments which does not help the user and may be off-putting.

4.8.3. Reader Development Results

Ask Chris promotes reading for pleasure through offering reviews on many different titles.
Ask Chris does not open up reading choices as well as it could do, users initially have to choose from a list of types of books (Frightening, Humour, Love and Families), or search for titles or authors. The themes “Something Different” and “Buzz” are available, but the website makes no attempt to explain or encourage users to explore these options.

Ask Chris recognises well the subjectivity of reading, with some books holding many different reviews of the same title. Users can also add their own reviews, though they will not appear immediately as they are screened by library staff. The variety of reviews available could be enhanced by showing them on the same page, as explained in the heuristic evaluation section above; Ask Chris does not do this but displays each review separately.

Ask Chris does provide information on the book groups in its own area of Essex so does to an extent encourage creative activities related to reading.

As is clear from the ability to add reviews, users can express their own opinion on titles though some users may be put off by the harsh warning “Essex County Council reserves the right to remove or edit what it considers to be inappropriate comments” given when adding reviews or contributing to discussions.

4.8.4. User Testing Results

The results of the user testing for the Ask Chris website were mostly positive. However, only five users either strongly agreed or agreed that the site was easy to navigate. Two users commented that they found the buttons confusing with two commenting that they found the forward and back buttons
difficult to use and one user commenting that “it wasn’t obvious how to scroll through results of book selections” (User three). Eight users agreed that they enjoyed using the site.

Seven users felt the site encouraged them to explore books and authors though unfortunately, as can be seen below, results were less positive for books and authors they would not otherwise have considered. Two users specifically mentioned it was very difficult for adults to explore children’s books and vice versa.

![Bar chart showing user responses to the statement: “This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered.”](chart.png)

Six users agreed or strongly agreed that the site encouraged them to consider their own opinions and seven agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to express their own opinions on the site.
The full results of the user evaluation of the Ask Chris website are contained in the table below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A (Q6 only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This site was easy to navigate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A (Q6 only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using this site</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>N/A (Q6 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it easy to express my own opinions on the books featured on this site</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.9. Comparison of Sites

4.9.1. Heuristic Evaluation

Most of the sites performed well regarding the visibility of system status in the heuristic evaluation. The exceptions to this were Scottish Readers, which proved to be unhelpful and confusing in navigating which options were on the site, and Give Me a Break, where links did not accurately match results given. Good aspects were noted in EnCompass’s use of the moving graphic to provide the user with information, and the colour scheme used in Ask Chris to inform the user which area they were in. Reader2Reader and Amazon both provided clear information when no matches were found.

For the majority of use, all sites performed well in matching concepts and terms to the real world. Reader2Reader, in particular, used recognisable terms in its “Browse”, “Chat” and “Search” options. Some of the websites tested did sometimes use unfamiliar or unexpected terms. Give Me a Break, while using recognisable concepts (“A Break From Ironing” etc.), did not match the results returned to these concepts.

Looking at user control and freedom, three sites - Reader2Reader, London Libraries Recommend and EnCompass - made use of breadcrumbs to assist users. Of these sites, Reader2Reader had the most clear and obvious breadcrumbs. On WhichBook, the logo on each page could be clicked to return to the homepage. However, on Give Me a Break and Ask Chris this was not possible.
Consistency and standards were followed well by most of the sites. The one exception to this was Amazon’s page, which changes each time the user visits. This could be disorientating for users. WhichBook was very consistent with use of colour, which made those items which did not follow the themes stand out particularly well.

Error prevention was particularly related to the availability of help for users, which is discussed below.

On recognition over recall, of the sites that linked to catalogues, Scottish Readers and Ask Chris did not carry book titles through to the catalogue. It would have been more helpful to users for them to follow London Libraries’ example, which does.

Of the sites that did offer flexibility of use, all but one of these were sites which offered accessibility options. The only site which offered the ability to tailor functions to specific users was Amazon.

The design of sites was generally aesthetically pleasing, though sites differed greatly in their approaches. The design of Give Me a Break could be perceived as confusing however. As previously mentioned, Ask Chris’s use of colour was very creative.

Error recognition and recovery was generally good with all sites offering “Try Again” or assistance with re-searching. One exception to this was WhichBook which gave some misleading user assistance.
With two notable exceptions, all sites were very poor at providing user help. One of these exceptions was Amazon, which provided a great deal of help divided into topics and subtopics. However, it may be partly due to its nature as a commercial site that this information is given. The other exception was in the help provided by WhichBook in the form of a demo of the system. However, even this help was not well designed and could be confusing for users.

4.9.2. Reader Development Testing

All sites promote reading for pleasure, but the methods that they employ to undertake this vary greatly. However, as seen below in the user comparison results, different people appreciate different types of website approaches.

Some websites attempt to open up reading choices more successfully than others. Notably, several promote specific genres and types of reading – Give Me a Break promoting Welsh connections, EnCompass promoting Commonwealth writing and Scottish Readers promoting Scottish literature. Interestingly both Give Me a Break and Scottish Readers offer random selections of titles through “Surprise Break” and “Chef’s Surprise” respectively. Ask Chris and EnCompass, through their use of more recognisable genre categories, did not open up reader choices as successfully as they may have done.

Only three of the websites recognised the subjectivity of reading, which is a central part of reader development. Reader2Reader was especially good in encouraging their users to discuss the titles which they did not enjoy, as well as those that they did, and debate their opinions with other users. Ask Chris also responds positively by allowing users to add their own reviews, however, the warning given by the council may deter some users from doing this. Amazon,
through the prominence of the customers’ star rating also responded to subjectivity. The expressing of user’s own opinions clearly matched the recognition of subjectivity in the websites.

The creative activities offered by all the websites were limited and did not show as much innovation as Guy (2005) suggested could be. Several offered information on reading groups and discussion and chat facilities, but nothing more innovative. The WhichBook site can be argued to encourage creativity in users by the element of play inherent to the system.
4.9.3. User Testing Comparison

As can be seen in the graphs above, responses to which site users liked and which sites users least liked varied greatly. As befits its positive responses, no users chose Reader2Reader as their least favourite site, however only two
users chose it as their favourite site. One described it as a “fun site [and] easy to use” (User Eight), whilst the other user also complimented its design.

London Libraries Recommends site divided opinion with two users respectively choosing it as their favourite and least favourite site. Interestingly, the justifications given for these choices were similar, with one user who chose it as their favourite describing it as informative, with another choosing it as their least favourite describing it as too informative!

WhichBook again proved divisive with two users each respectively choosing it as their favourite and least favourite site. One user described it as “amusing to use” (User Four), whilst another, choosing it as their least favourite site believed what it offered was restrictive. The second user choosing it as their least favourite site particularly disliked that they could find no non-fiction books, their own personal interest.

EnCompass found the most number of people disliking a site – three – though two choose this site as their favourite. Reasons given by both users choosing it as a favourite site were that it was easy to navigate and contained a great deal of information. Two users gave the same reason for disliking the site which was the moving graphics, with one of these users and the final user both commenting that it was hard to navigate.

No users chose Give Me a Break as their favourite site and two chose it as their least favourite site. Both commented that the results returned seemed random with one stating “there is no logic to the books suggested, so whether I will like them is completely random” (User Five).
For Scottish Readers one user chose it as their favourite site and one as their least favourite. Both cited the design of the site as their reason for choosing it with the user choosing it as their favourite commenting that “it’s well laid out and thoughtful” (User Six), with the user who chose it as their least favourite finding it frustrating.

Amazon received no votes for least favourite site and one vote for most favourite. The user choosing it as most favourite cited that “I like to go straight to a certain category” (User Three).

Ask Chris did not receive any votes for either favourite or least favourite site. It would be interesting in conducting this user testing again to change the order in which the users looked at the sites. Ask Chris was the last site to be looked at, so this may be the reason for it receiving no votes in either category.

Overall, this aspect of the research was very revealing in that the users differed greatly in their opinions. Whilst some users liked text heavy sites such as London Libraries Recommend and Amazon, other disliked this type of site precisely for the same reason. Similarly, whilst some users liked the graphic heavy sites such as EnCompass and Scottish Readers, others disliked this site for its type of layout. These results demonstrate that different people respond well to different aspects of sites.

WhichBook was similarly divisive, with some finding it interesting to use and others feeling what the site offered to them was restrictive.
5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Significance of Research

This research has attempted to provide an analysis of eight websites connected to reader development. The results of this analysis have been interesting and it is hoped that they can be used to further the design and development of reader development websites in the future.

The researcher believes that the most significant finding of this research is that different people respond very differently to the same website design. This is clear from the preferences section of the user testing part of the investigation. The implications that this finding may have for website design is that sites should be designed to include different functions and flexibility of use.

This research did not reveal one clear website which matched all assessment criteria, as is practically to be expected, but the examples given below show best practice examples identified through the research.

- The use of colour to assist navigation on Ask Chris was identified through the research as being very useful.

- User assistance provided by EnCompass provided valuable help in aiding users to use the system.

- Amazon’s options for personalisation were good, as was stated by one user in the user testing.
• Reader2Reader’s approach to the subjectivity of reading, with both positive and negative categories was very good.

• WhichBook’s approach, as evidenced by user testing, did open up reading choices, in this sample anyway.

The next section offers recommendations for reader development website design, as concluded from the findings of this research.

5.1.1. Recommendations for Effective Reader Development Websites

Following on from the findings of this research, the researcher believes that the following recommendations should be considered when designing and developing websites to support reader development:

• Consider flexibility of use for users, not just in terms of accessibility, which is essential, but to encourage users to use the site frequently provide them with shortcuts and the ability to personalise the site.

• Ensure that help is provided for users, no matter how simple the interface appears to be. Help should cover not only the background of the site, but also how to use and interact with the site.

• Consider the promotion of reading outside of the user’s current genre. Themed promotions may be useful in this.
• Actively recognise the subjectivity of reading and the value of users’ opinions and contributions. This is an essential part of reader development and should be afforded much consideration.

• Consider how to be innovative in the use of the internet form to encourage creative activities related to reading. The websites assessed in this research did not make enough use of the possibilities of ICT’s and could go much further.

• Consider designing sites which can be flexible and used in different ways by different users. This research found that different users respond well to different types of websites. Though this finding suggests that there is no one foolproof design, it would be a useful point to consider when designing future reader development websites.

It is hoped that through the use of these examples of good practice and recommendations, reader development websites can be designed which will better support reader development in the online age.

5.2. Research Changes

Following on from this investigation, the researcher has identified several areas for improvement were this research to be undertaken again. Firstly, in looking at the heuristic evaluation, at the time of starting this task, the researcher was a complete novice in this field. Through reading around the subject the researcher became more familiar with the area but it may have been worthwhile
to have undertaken further heuristic evaluation to become more familiar with the evaluation method.

The analysis of the concept of reader development was very useful in informing the evaluation of the websites however, it would have been helpful, if time constraint would have allowed, to consider how reader development approaches were implemented in public libraries in the UK.

As a follow up to the user testing questionnaire the researcher asked all the user volunteers (including those taking part in the survey remotely) if there were any problems they found with any aspect of their involvement with the research. Happily all ten volunteers felt that the tasks and the questionnaire were straightforward and easy to understand.

However, three volunteers did find the fifth statement, ‘I found it easy to express my opinions of the books featured on this site’ problematic. One volunteer replied that for some sites they could not find areas to express their own opinion. This question did offer a ‘Not Applicable’ answer, which was also mentioned when introducing the task, however, if carrying out the research again, the researcher would attempt to make the variable nature of this question more clear.

Of the two other users who had problems with this question, one could find no books that they had read or wanted to give opinions on, and the other felt that they were answering this question on a theoretical basis only. In conducting the research again, the researcher would consider making the user testing longer, perhaps giving users a longer amount of time to consider the websites, and giving them more opportunity to use them, and, where possible, contribute more to them.
Though this question did prove somewhat problematic, it was an essential part of the research as the expression of opinions is a central part of reader development.

5.3. Recommendations for Further Research

Following on from this investigation, several recommendations for further research in this area have emerged. These are briefly discussed below.

Firstly, an investigation into the use of reader development websites created for children and young people, such as Stories from the Web (UKOLN, 2007), together with user testing with age-appropriate users could be undertaken. It could consider if reader development for children differs significantly from adult reader development. Hill suggests that sites which offer book reviews by other children are “more helpful and more suitable to them” (2005:181). Sites such as Cool Reads (Cross & Cross:2006) and Kids Review (Kids Review Ltd., 2007), which have significant child-created content, could be included in this analysis. Mynott, Denham and Elkin say of Stories from the Web that “the activities linked to each book encourage the child to interact creatively with the story thus stimulating his/her interest” (2001:135). It would be worthwhile to consider if this type of approach should be used in adult reader development websites.

Testing the website use of those with impairments, which may prevent the same level of use of website could be undertaken. For example, user testing for those with impaired visibility, colour blindness, hearing impaired people with British Sign Language as first language, people with limited English language skills or learning disabilities such as dyslexia. This type of investigation could attempt to determine if reader development websites are
following the accessibility guidelines as set down by the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C, 1999). Theofanish and Redish’s 2003 research which observed blind users using screen readers to view websites would provide a useful template for this kind of research. By observing users with disabilities in real life situations much could be learned which would improve the design of websites.

Further investigation of how region based websites appeal to people from those areas could be carried out. During the user testing, one user registered interest in their region’s own website. This was due to being interested in books being related to their own locality. This research could have different users based in or from Wales, London and Scotland testing the three specifically regional websites (Give Me a Break, London Libraries Recommend and Scottish Readers). It would seek to determine if there is a correlation between locally based websites and people from that locality. Bird and Tedd specifically note on the Give Me a Break website some titles “have a Welsh connection through theme, being by a Welsh author, in Welsh or published within Wales” (2004:164) and it would be interesting to test if this approach makes titles appeal more to those from targeted areas.

Another research area could be an investigation into how reader development websites can be used in public libraries, providing examples of strategies to involve them in service provision. Such research could follow Bird and Tedd’s (2004) investigation, into the use of reader development and ICT, where questionnaires were sent to all Welsh public library authorities. Further work could follow this up, targeting different areas, and asking for specific examples of initiatives.
Finally, an investigation into the attitudes of public library staff towards the use of internet and reader development websites could be undertaken. This study could build upon the research undertaken by Coxall (2006) into staff attitudes to IT overall, but focus more specifically on reader development tools on the internet and their use by public libraries in the UK. This would be especially useful as research by Train and Elkin (2001:5) found that librarians involved in Branching Out felt a lack of confidence in ICT skills.


Coxall, O. (2006). A study of library staff attitudes to IT and the provision of public access to IT and the People’s Network on public libraries. MA, University of Sheffield.


http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/jumpstart.jhtml?recid=0bc05f7a67b1790e7898ed99d755f11452154146c22fb69a7c50f960b331a6d52037fd1fd0fab573&fmt=p [Accessed 14 April 2007].


http://cplis.shef.ac.uk/What%20do%20you%20like%20to%20read.pdf [Accessed 26 August 2007].


Appendix 1 – User Testing Questionnaire

Investigation into Reader Development Websites: User Testing Questionnaire

This research is investigating websites concerned with the promotion of reading.

All questionnaires will be confidential. You are free to withdraw from this research at any point. The outcomes of this research will be presented as part of a dissertation at the University of Sheffield.

Please be assured that it is the websites, their design and content under investigation and not you as a website user.

By answering and returning this questionnaire, your consent to be a part of this research is assumed.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research, your participation is greatly appreciated.

Instructions

Please look at each of the eight website in turn and explore the options and links available to you. Try to find on each website a book or author that interests you.

Then answer the questions giving your personal opinion on each site. If you wish, please add any further comments at the bottom of each page. Each website has the same questions, with a final section asking you to choose your favourite site and your least favourite site.

Contact Details

Should you have any further questions or queries, or are unhappy with any aspect of this research, please contact either myself (lip06cct@sheffield.ac.uk) or my dissertation supervisor (S.webber@sheffield.ac.uk).
1. **This site was easy to navigate**

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<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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2. **I enjoyed using this site**

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3. **This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors**

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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4. **This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered**

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5. **This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors**

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6. **I found it easy to express my own opinion on the books featured on this site**

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If you would like to make any further comments on this site, please do so here:
7. **This site was easy to navigate**
   
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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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8. **I enjoyed using this site**
   
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9. **This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors**
   
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10. **This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered**
    
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    |-------------------|----------|---------|-------|---------------|
    |                   |          |         |       |               |

11. **This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors**
    
    | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
    |-------------------|----------|---------|-------|---------------|
    |                   |          |         |       |               |

12. **I found it easy to express my own opinion on the books featured on this site**
    
    | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Not Applicable |
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*If you would like to make any further comments on this site, please do so here:*
**Which Book** [http://www.whichbook.net/](http://www.whichbook.net/)

13. **This site was easy to navigate**

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14. **I enjoyed using this site**

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16. **This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered**

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17. **This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors**

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18. **I found it easy to express my own opinion on the books featured on this site**

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*If you would like to make any further comments on this site, please do so here:*

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19. **This site was easy to navigate**

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24. **I found it easy to express my own opinion on the books featured on this site**

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*If you would like to make any further comments on this site, please do so here:*

[Blank space for comments]

25. This site was easy to navigate

![Ratings](chart)

26. I enjoyed using this site

![Ratings](chart)

27. This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors

![Ratings](chart)

28. This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered

![Ratings](chart)

29. This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors

![Ratings](chart)

30. I found it easy to express my own opinion on the books featured on this site

![Ratings](chart)

*If you would like to make any further comments on this site, please do so here:*

[Blank space for comments]
Scottish Readers http://www.scottishreaders.net/scottishreaders/

31. This site was easy to navigate
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
   [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]

32. I enjoyed using this site
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
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33. This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
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34. This site encouraged me to explore books and/or authors I would not otherwise have considered
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
   [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]

35. This site encouraged me to consider my own opinions on books and/or authors
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
   [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]  [ ]

36. I found it easy to express my own opinion on the books featured on this site
   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree  Not Applicable
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If you would like to make any further comments on this site, please do so here:

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37. **This site was easy to navigate**

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38. **I enjoyed using this site**

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42. **I found it easy to express my own opinion on the books featured on this site**

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*If you would like to make any further comments on this site, please do so here:*

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*If you would like to make any further comments on this site, please do so here:*
Comparison of Sites

25. Overall, which website did you most like using?

Reader 2 Reader  ☐  London Libraries  ☐
Which Book  ☐  EnCompass  ☐
Give Me a Break  ☐  Scottish Readers  ☐
Amazon UK Books  ☐  Ask Chris  ☐

26. Please give your reason(s) for choosing this site:


27. Overall, which website did you least like using?

Reader 2 Reader  ☐  London Libraries  ☐
Which Book  ☐  EnCompass  ☐
Give Me a Break  ☐  Scottish Readers  ☐
Amazon UK Books  ☐  Ask Chris  ☐

28. Please give your reason(s) for choosing this site:


This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you again for your participation.
Appendix 2 - Email Instructions for Remote Users

Thank you for agreeing to undertake this task. Attached is the questionnaire and instructions for this task. Please save the questionnaire to your desktop and then email it back to me when you have finished.

This task involves looking at a series of websites relating to reading promotion in order to try to find a book or author which interests you. I would suggest a maximum of five minutes looking at each website.

After looking at each site please record how far you agree with each of the given statements. Click on the grey shaded box to select your choice. If you wish to add any further comments on each website, type your comments into the grey shaded area at the bottom of the page.

The final section of the questionnaire asks you to determine your favourite and least favourite site to use and why.

If you have any questions at all, let me know.

Please find below the website addresses for this task:

Reader to Reader
http://www.reader2reader.net/

London Libraries
http://www.londonlibraries.org/servlets/llr

Which Book
http://www.whichbook.net/
EnCompass
http://www.encompassculture.com/

Give Me a Break
http://www.givemeabreak.org/givemeabreak/

Scottish Readers
http://www.scottishreaders.net/scottishreaders/

Amazon UK Books
http://www.amazon.co.uk/books

Ask Chris
http://askchris.essexcc.gov.uk/

Thanks again for your help