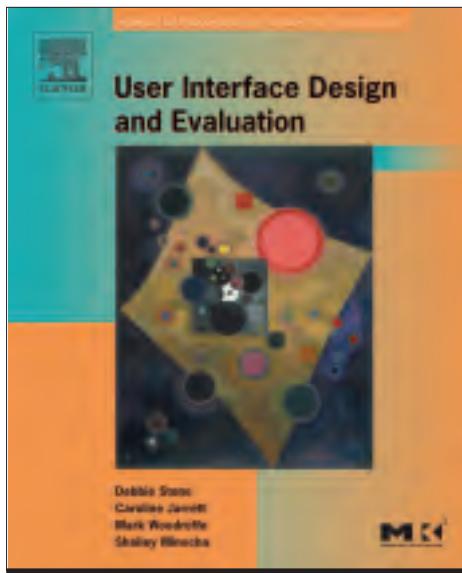


# Keeping Up with the Field: A Textbook You'll Want to Save



## User Interface Design and Evaluation

By Debbie Stone, Caroline Jarrett, Mark Woodroffe, and Shailey Minocha  
Morgan Kaufmann, 2005

Reviewed by Alice Preston

**Are you headed for that proverbial desert island anytime soon?** Will you have with you someone who wants to learn how to be a user interface designer, programmer, or technical communicator? If so, take this book with you. At 700 pages, this book is not a quick study, but then, nothing worthwhile ever is. At less than \$60 from Morgan Kaufmann, *User Interface Design and Evaluation* is not only good value, it's almost a necessity if you want to keep up with the field.

The book is used as text by the Open University (OU) in the United Kingdom (<http://openuniversity.com>) and was written by instructors in the OU's course of the same name (User Interface Design and Evaluation). Given that several noted practitioners were involved in the effort, it is perhaps not surprising that the text is thor-

ough, straightforward, and written in plain English. It includes information about established HCI topics such as visibility, metaphors, mental models, and affordances, and about topics of more recent concern, such as design issues for web pages and accessibility. It also contains discussions about designing for a variety of platforms, with special attention to the web and to embedded computer systems. It's almost worth the price of the book just to have access to, and use of, the guidelines in the design area alone. Additional information for instructors and sample exams can be found at the book's companion site (<http://books.elsevier.com/companions/0120884364/>).

After an introduction, the book is divided into four main parts: Requirements, Design, Evaluation, and Persuasion. It's especially nice to see the final part, since a frequent problem in our discipline seems to be the failure to elicit follow-through on test results. Perhaps even those of us who've been in the field for some time should review the argument types discussed in Chapter 29, which also provides an outline of the process an organization goes through before becoming usability aware: skepticism, curiosity, acceptance, and partnership. It's important for all of us to understand how other organizational goals must be balanced against the need for usability improvements and how best to work within reality—and the book contains an excellent description of the tension between our ability to change things and the facts of corporate life. It's refreshing to see these topics discussed sensibly in a text, and especially to see practical advice that will lead to success over the long term.

The book has more than just prose:

- ⊙ Extensive case studies take students through many aspects of the process on a single project, showing how realistic

trade-offs can be made while still following a standard methodology.

- ⊙ Exercises include not only a scenario to analyze and solve, but also a recommended time limit and—especially useful for those studying without benefit of an instructor—discussion points to ponder after each exercise.
- ⊙ Smaller examples permeate the book, with many of them concerning tangible products as well as computer systems. There are numerous illustrations to draw attention to the important points in each example, and many of the illustrated products and systems are likely to be familiar to students.



Personally, I only regret that I don't have enough time to work my way through this book in the detail it warrants. I'm certain that, whatever I already know, there is likely to be all kinds of additional information in here that I could use next week in my job. Maybe sometime I'll sign up for the Open University course and experience the total effect. I bet it would be worth it. **UX**