

Eyetracking Web Usability

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by Jakob Nielsen and Kara Pernice

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A Review by Gregory West

Have you ever wondered why certain parts of a website catch your eye and you ignore or completely miss others? Whether you are designing a corporate website, simply working with a private site, or setting up a blog for the first time, this book will take you into the world of design and what works.

Authors: Neilson and Pernice take us on a detailed journey demonstrating what works and grabs your attention longer than a split second. Eyetracking technology allows you to see what people see on mainstream websites.

This book's main focus is "to study look patterns and how they relate to Web usage". It is "not a general book about Web usability", although it gives an excellent insight into why people go to certain areas on a page. Throughout the eight chapters, we learn how "Eyetracking" technology works. Also, you will find a summary covering human behavioral patterns, resulting from these extensive studies.

The second chapter is a little dry as it explains how this technology works, data collected, fake tests, study participants and cost evaluations. Other chapters get into the heart of page layout, navigation design elements and images. Chapter seven covers advertisements which is a major aspect of the Internet. Everything, from when people look at ads to the impact of ad placement, is detailed in a quite interesting fashion. Here is where you find out what works and what fails.

The authors point out the need for corporate executives to stand aside and let the professional graphic designers do their job. They show how upper-level management employees who know nothing about design and graphics can destroy the design due to ignorance of "web usability" and drive customers away.

Not contained in the book keeping "this book at a manageable size" are two "separate reports" made available online:

Eyetracking Methodology: How to Conduct and Evaluate Usability Studies Using Eyetracking: www.useit.com/eyetracking/methodology and How People Read on the Web: www.nngroup.com/reports/reading

If you are, in any way, part of a team that works on websites, or if you have your own personal blog and want your sites to work, this book is something that you will keep going back to as a reference guide. There is an excellent Table of Contents in the front and a well laid out Glossary in the back to make sure you find exactly the topic to research and learn.