

# Best practices for user-centered design

ACRL 2019

---

## Plan

- **Create user personas.**
  - Define the user's context, including their motivations, goals, concerns or frustrations, demographic information, and physical, social, and technological environments.
  - Data is invaluable if you have it; hypotheses are useful if you don't.
  - Empathy maps help illustrate persona information succinctly.
- **Consult resources for creating personas.**
  - [Usability.gov: Personas](#)
  - [Interaction Design Association: What are User Personas?](#)
  - [Nielsen Norman Group: Empathy Mapping](#)
- **Decide which personas and goals are most important for your institution.**
- **Decide what to measure based on what success metrics matter to you.**
  - Consider how your goals and the user's goals may or may not overlap.
  - Consider how to measure. What information do you need to determine that the user was able to reach their goal successfully?
- **Determine how the design will mirror the rest of your institution.**
  - Consistent branding adds to the credibility of the experience.
- **Consult planning resources.**
  - [Information Needs Assessment Toolkit](#), prepared for PALNI by Eric Bradley and Ruth Szpunar

## Collect input

- **Choose the most appropriate methods for collecting feedback.**
  - For a deep understanding of context, goals, and workflows—including things people wouldn't think to mention—use ethnographic methods (diaries, maps, contextual inquiries, etc.).
    - For more about ethnographic research in libraries, see the [ERIAL project guide](#).
  - To explore understandings, goals, and concerns in depth, use interviews.
  - To gather data at scale, use surveys.
  - To generate consensus, debate, or new ideas, use focus groups.
  - To see behavior at scale, use activity logs.
  - Perform task-based studies with low-fidelity prototypes—even paper prototypes—early on to see what people actually do and whether a proposed design fits the way they work.
  - Perform usability tests to confirm that an implemented design works as expected.

- **Follow guidelines for usability testing.**
  - Test at least five users of the same type. This helps avoid outliers.
  - Test users on their own devices.
  - Test users remotely to minimize social and personal dynamics. In person, people feel observed, and that changes their behavior.
  - Test participants where they would normally do their research: in dorm rooms, faculty offices, etc.
- **Separate roles to ease and accelerate the work.**
  - One person for recruiting, screening, and scheduling
  - One person for planning, test scripting, and analysis
  - One person for setting up equipment and conducting test sessions
- **Consult testing resources.**
  - [Rocket Surgery Made Easy: The Do-It-Yourself Guide to Finding and Fixing Usability Problems](#) by Steve Krug
  - [How Many Test Users in a Usability Study?](#) by Jakob Nielsen
  - [LibGuides UX Toolkit](#), prepared for PALNI by Eric Bradley and Ruth Szpunar

## Analyze and share results

- Ask developers and other stakeholders to observe sessions remotely (or review recordings) to build empathy and humility.
- Rank discovered issues by impact, frequency, and severity.
- Use verbatim feedback from the research to drive home key points.
- Collect and share video excerpts or highlights reels.

## Ensure accessibility

- Check against accessibility standards throughout the design and development processes.
- Evaluate against [seven Universal Design principles](#).
- Consult accessibility resources.
  - [WCAG 2.0](#)
  - [Siteimprove Accessibility Checker \(Chrome browser extension\)](#)
  - [Section 508 compliance](#)

## Consider additional factors

- Keep in mind color psychology and cultural associations.
- Think about [localization and translation](#) needs.
- Consult other resources.
  - [10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design](#) by Jakob Nielsen
  - [The Design of Everyday Things](#) by Don Norman