UX Writing

This flexible textbook provides an integrated approach to user experience (UX) writing and equips students and practitioners with the essential principles and methods to succeed in writing for UX.

The fundamental goal of UX writing is to produce usable and attractive content that boosts user engagement and business growth. This book teaches writers how to create content that helps users perform desired tasks while serving business needs. It is informed by user-centered design, content strategy, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital marketing communication methodologies, along with UX-related practices. By combining writing-as-design and design-as-writing, the book offers a new perspective for technical communication education where UX design and writing are merged to achieve effective and desirable outcomes.

Outlining the key principles and theories for writing user-centered content design, this core textbook is fundamental reading for students and early career practitioners in UX, technical communication, digital marketing, and other areas of professional writing.

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Contents

Foreword xi
Preface xv
Acknowledgments xvii

PART 1
Perspectives

1  Introduction to UX Writing 2
Chapter Overview 2
Learning Objectives 2
A Brave New World 2
UX: The Design of Experience 3
The Rise of UX Writing 7
Writing at Multiple Intersections 8
UX Writing Goals 12
UX Writing Technologies: AI, Data Analytics, Oh My! 15
UX Writing Career Facts 17
Conclusion 19
Chapter Checklist 19
Discussion Questions 20
Learning Activity 1 20
Learning Activity 2 21

2  The UX Writing Process 23
Chapter Overview 23
Learning Objectives 23
Content as a Product and a Process 23
The UX Writing Taxonomy: Three Continuums 25
Content Lifecycle 28
Major Theories That Inform UX (and) Writing 30
From Design Science to Design Thinking 33
Phase 1: Empathizing with Users and Understanding Their Needs 36
Phase 2: Defining Problems and Opportunities 36
Contents

To Push or to Pull, that Is the Question 148
Conclusion 149
Chapter Checklist 150
Discussion Questions 151
Learning Activity 151

8 Tracking and Measuring Success 153
Chapter Overview 153
Learning Objectives 153
Attract, Engage, and Sustain Your User: Creating a Content Framework 153
Tracking Your Users Online to Better Understand Their Attitudes and Behaviors 154
Data Analytics Help You Understand Users in Their Journey 155
How to Analyze Users' Interactions Before, During, and After Content Deployment? 157
Understanding Audience and Their Behavior through Web Analytics 159
Building Content that Attracts, Engages, and Sustains Your Users 164
Using Key-Performance Indicators (KPIs) to Measure Content Performance 166
How Can You Use Metrics and KPIs in UX Writing? 167
Adopting KPIs to Frame Your Content for Actionable Insights 170
A UX Metric Framework: The 3x3 Method 171
Validating Your Successful Metrics 173
What Is Benchmarking and How to Validate Measurements? 173
Sustaining User Engagement through Ongoing Measurements 174
Conclusion 175
Chapter Checklist 175
Discussion Questions 177
Learning Activity 177

PART 3
Practices 179

9 Popular UX Writing Genres and Tasks 180
Chapter Overview 180
Learning Objectives 180
UX Writing Products 180
Microcopy and Microcontent 181
Onboarding Experiences 183
Help Guides and Contextual Tooltips 185
Error Messages 186
Forms and Labels 187
Legal Notices 189
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settings and Specs</th>
<th>191</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designing Content with Style and Tone Guides</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing Non-Textual User Interfaces: Video and Voice</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Checklist</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Activity</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 10 The UX Writing Portfolio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Overview</th>
<th>198</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objectives</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Do You Need a Portfolio?</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Should You Begin?</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Does a UX Writing Portfolio Look Like?</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component 1: About Yourself and Your Goals</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component 2: Your Problem-Solving Process</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component 3: Your Project Samples and Results</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Review</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Checklist</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Activity</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11 Using Generative AI and Automating Your Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Overview</th>
<th>210</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objectives</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Is Artificial Intelligence, Again?</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Limitations of AI and the Importance of Human-in-the-Loop Approaches for UX Writing</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Generative AI: A Demo</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Generative AI Actually Function</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automating Your UX Writing Content: Different Tools</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Checklist</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Activity</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 12 AI Recipes for UX Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Overview</th>
<th>226</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objectives</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI Characteristics That Are Important to UX Writers</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Cook Up Good AI Prompts: Using the 6W and 1H Method to Frame AI Prompts</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Prompt Commands for AI</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

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When I first learned of this new textbook on UX writing, I was pleased for a number of reasons. The first was that this collaborative work resulted from the Louisiana Tech Usability Studies Symposium (LATUSS)—the event where the authors first met and first began to discuss these ideas. Second, the book represents the realization of LATUSS’s focus on “rethinking usability” by helping readers reconsider the role usability plays in design thinking, content strategy, and technical writing as these areas relate to the burgeoning field of UX writing. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the book does a masterful job of advancing LATUSS’s focus on cognition in communication—particularly in how the authors provide creative solutions to what I call the “3Cs of cognition.”

Usability is a matter of cognition or how the human mind processes information. Essentially, the cognitive dynamics that affect how we perceive our surroundings influence the way we use items in an environment. Such cognitive connections are not innate. Rather, they are shaped by our experiences over time, and these dynamics play a foundational role in the complexity of usability. Moreover, they often involve three interrelated factors, the three Cs: Conditioning, Context, and Content. The better we can identify, understand, and address these 3C aspects, the more effectively we can design items individuals find “usable” based on their experiences. Understanding such factors is central to integrating usability into more traditional technical writing processes.

**Conditioning** encompasses how we learn to use items based on our experiences and can generally involve three approaches: (1) **Active Instruction**: when someone actively teaches us how to use an item; (2) **Passive Observation**: learning from others and mimicking their behavior; and (3) **Independent Interaction**: when we learn by “playing” with a new item/technology.

In today’s technological environments, however, technical writers need to increasingly rethink the nature of conditioning as related to usability. This is because the increase in “out-of-the-box” UX now leads to a growing demand for independent interaction. Simply put, users want to immediately do things with a product, service, or design, and they want to do so without having to read a manual. This situation brings with it expectations that the related experience is pleasant, memorable, and personalized—all of which go beyond more conventional approaches to usability. This situation means usability is now expected and framed in terms of overall UX. As a result, an understanding of UX factors can help us better identify and address the usability and associated design expectations of different user
groups. Such factors can also help us better understand the dynamics of groups interacting in interconnected and wirelessly networked environments.

These conditioning situations are all closely connected to the second C of context or the location where individuals perform activities. This is because we don’t use tools and technologies randomly, nor do we always use them ubiquitously. Rather, we often associate their use (i.e., how to use them) with specific settings. Many of us, for example, are now comfortable using our mobile devices in public spaces. This situation, in turn, has led to different social expectations for meetings, as people can now change their meeting location on the fly by using their mobile devices to send their location to others.

This factor brings us to the final C of content. Content encompasses how we design information so individuals can use it to achieve an objective in a setting. Accordingly, for textual/verbal content to be usable, it needs to address what individuals expect to do and use in a specific location. In today’s mobile and interconnected contexts, a growing challenge involves addressing the growing need for “microcontent” (small snippets of information specifically tailored to an individual user) in a way that meets expectations for creating reusable content. For example, it is common now to ask for the weather and have a digital voice assistant such as Siri or Alexa provide us with an answer. Such new content expectations also extend to overall product design and affect whether individuals can recognize a tool or technology in order to use it in a given setting.

The difficulty of such situations is that expectations for what constitutes usability have shifted to the broader goal of achieving better UX. The result is a greater demand for positive experiences that are not only usable but also user-friendly, pleasant, and personalized to the user’s personal history. When combined with the challenges associated with creating microcontent and meeting the needs of networked users, the complexities of producing usable technical writing can seem overwhelming.

The authors of this book, however, have found a new approach to addressing this situation. It involves rethinking UX writing as a combination of technical writing, design thinking, content strategy, and UX design. It is an approach that both adapts and combines existing areas of study into a method for mapping the conditioning, context, and content factors affecting usability expectations. What makes this approach particularly powerful is that it also addresses usability in terms of the experience surrounding how we use products, services, and overall designs. In addressing such factors, the book offers a new and important perspective to academic researchers and industry practitioners working in UX, content strategy, and design.

To examine these issues, the authors focus on the idea that understanding UX design today means technical writers need to develop new skills—including those associated with design thinking and content strategy. The authors also seek to refocus technical writing practices to include new data analytics technologies—those that gather real-time data on what the user is doing with a technology while they are using it.

Rather than addressing the question of “Can we identify the reflexive behavior shaping an individual’s usability expectations?” the authors focus on the more fundamental, interconnected questions of “What factors have shaped UX to create such behaviors?” and “How can common industry practices help create the use and design of a broad range of human experiences?” To answer these questions, the authors have written chapters that examine seemingly different areas of design thinking, content strategy, and UX design. These entries, however, are organized and connected in a way that forms a coherent and easily applicable approach to usability in the context of UX. The result is a UX writing approach that is adaptive to different groups, settings, and points in time. It is an approach that identifies the
cognitive dynamics shaping user expectations while also addressing industry expectations for incorporating iterative design thinking techniques. In so doing, the approach uses content strategy to develop and manage content. Additionally, it presents UX research strategies to help engage and study how users are interacting with one’s content.

By interconnecting such factors, the text represents an important approach to addressing many of the complex topics faced by society today. Moreover, it does so by mixing academic research with industry application in a way that connects to educational practices. As a result, this book can easily be used within academic, industrial, or educational spheres as well as across them. This adaptability makes the text a reference resource and a mechanism for generating new knowledge, novel approaches, and original ideas around the core topic of UX writing. Moreover, the adaptive nature of the approach presented in the text positions it well to stand the test of time.

The better we understand how experiences and exposure shape usability expectations, and vice versa, the more effectively we can create tools and technologies for each other. Likewise, by understanding how cognitive factors of conditioning, context, and content shape such expectations, we can better contribute to society on local, regional, and global levels. Ideally, such a process is a lifelong one as we learn from, think about, and adapt to changing situations that shape our expectations for how to interact with the world around us.
Preface

UX writing—writing for UX—may be new terrain for many readers who picked up this book. You may see UX writing as a growing discipline that promises exciting trajectories and opportunities for seasoned communicators or designers. Others may see UX writing as the merging of technical writing, UX design, and content management—a sign of disciplinary growth. At any rate, UX writing is becoming an expected skill for those who work with digital products and user-facing communication.

As academics who keep our fingers on the pulse of the latest industry trends and innovations, we are excited to share what we’ve learned from our colleagues and on-the-job practitioners who are leading the curve in establishing field standards and expectations for writing and designing UX. By combining writing-as-design and design-as-writing, we aim to break new ground for technical communication education where UX design and writing share common missions and values toward social good. This book is an attempt to theorize user-centered content design and apply time-tested, cardinal principles for writing user-centered content. In doing so, we hope to create a new space for technical writing and communication practitioners to expand their expertise and result in positive and desirable outcomes in content design.

Preview of the Book

We have partitioned this book into three major parts. In Part 1: Perspectives, we introduce the profession and principles of UX writing by discussing its relationship with technical writing, UX design, usability research, and product development. If you are new to the world of UX, you may appreciate how Chapter 1 gives you a succinct overview of its influence on current technical communication practices. In conjunction with this introduction, we unveil the emergence of UX writing as a profession and offer a summary of its objectives. In Chapter 2, we explain the design thinking model that powers the UX writing process. You will learn the key principles, values, and phases of design thinking as they relate to the content lifecycle. Then, closing out Part 1, Chapter 3 specifies the desirable traits of those who perform UX writing—preferred skills and expertise—and qualitative attributes for a successful career.

Next, Part 2: Processes zeros in on the five core phases of design thinking, starting with Chapter 4, where we emphasize the importance of empathy and how it manifests in the practice of user research. After learning about ways to learn about people’s attitudes and behaviors with content, you can find methods for translating user needs into actionable insights for content design in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, you will learn and exercise ideating content solutions and making them into tangible, testable forms via prototyping. Chapter 7
teaches you how to test prototyped content and manage its deployment to the public. Then, Chapter 8 covers various technical and analytical tools to track content performance once it is live.

In the last section of the book, Part 3: Practices, we explain the common forms of UX writing and give you guidance on creating your own portfolio. Chapter 9 goes over six popular UX writing genres and their associated tasks and challenges. You will examine the forms, structures, and delivery of these content types. In Chapter 10, you can expect to learn tips and tools for building an attractive UX writing portfolio with confidence. We will show you how to apply the lessons from this book to land a career in UX writing. The final two chapters, Chapters 11 and 12, offer an in-depth discussion about generative AI and provide guidance on using it to augment UX writing.

**Intended Users**

We have written this book with the following audiences in mind:

- **Undergraduate students** in introductory professional writing and technical communication courses as well as special topics seminars in UX writing, usability research, and user-centered design.
- **Instructors** who need pedagogical materials to deliver UX writing assignments that align with technical communication objectives.
- **Graduate students** who require resources for their seminar papers, comprehensive exams, and dissertations.
- **Scholars and researchers** in technical communication who desire an introduction to a new area of research building upon UX, writing, and design theories.

This book is both a textbook and a playbook. It can be used to teach a course; it can also be a practical guide to evaluate existing designs and create new solutions. Students may find this book to be an introductory resource toward a UX writing future, whereas practicing professionals may benefit from the exemplary models included in the book.

UX writing combines user-design-centric methods and philosophies that attend to UX, usability, and business objectives. UX writing is integral to product and service design and integrates strategic content deployment. The fundamental goal of UX writing is to produce usable and attractive content that boosts user engagement and business growth. As UX writers draw upon various skills with agility and flexibility to address different work cycles, this book conceptualizes these processes. Our approach teaches writers to create content that helps users perform desired tasks while serving business needs. We strive to help writers develop expertise at the intersection of user research, problem and opportunity definition, content development and management, and continuous iterative design.

Designed to be a flexible core resource, this book offers students and practitioners the essential principles and methods to succeed in writing for UX. Through the perspectives of design thinking, content strategy, user-centered design, and data analytics, this book provides an integrated approach that leads readers into the exciting work of UX writing.
Acknowledgments

Four years felt like a lifetime ago. If you asked us back then in the autumn of 2019—when the three of us met for the first time at a usability studies symposium in Shreveport, Louisiana—whether we would write a book on UX writing, the answer would be a resounding yes!

Why, you asked? First, we have Kirk St.Amant to thank for igniting a passion for UX in the field of technical communication and for instilling in the three of us the trust to pull together a project that would wind up being a sustained discussion about modern UX, a series of journal articles, conference presentations, and then... this book! We are especially grateful to Kirk for his leadership and willingness to pen the foreword for this book.

Second, we had a hunch that UX is morphing into a whole new craft that requires specific attention to what technical communication folks have always considered foundational. We thank Ginny Redish for her insights and involvement with this project. Ginny has appeared as a guest lecturer in Tharon and Jason’s classes to teach aspirational UX practitioners about designing experiences. More importantly, she has helped provide comments and edited early versions of this book, which made this current iteration the strongest version yet, in our opinion!

Our confidence also came from the field, fueled by those who have taught UX and writing, like Tracy Bridgeford and Rebekka Andersen. We are grateful for their reading of our manuscript and for providing helpful feedback and endorsements.

Of course, producing a book is no solo effort. We are grateful for the support given to us by Routledge via former acquisition editor Brian Eschrich and current editorial assistant Sean Daly. Sean has been especially instrumental in helping us through the manuscript submission and production processes. We must also thank Wendy Howard for volunteering to proofread our book manuscript in the early stages of production. She has a sharp eye for details!

The three of us are also thankful for the support given to us at our respective institutions and through personal connections.

Jason would like to thank his colleagues at Texas Tech University for mentoring him and encouraging his research trajectory. He is also grateful toward his students in UX research and design courses, where he got to learn from them the most current design challenges and immediate UX problems. He also thanks his colleagues in the field who have shared cutting-edge ideas at various venues like the ACM Special Interest Group on Design of Communication, the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication, and the Association for Teachers of Technical Writing. He is grateful to Tharon and Gustav for sharing their leadership in this project and teaching him all the new things in content strategy and emerging technologies.
Acknowledgments

Tharon would like to thank his students in the Usability Testing Methodologies graduate seminars, in UX Research seminars, and in the Content Strategy courses for all the examples they created, for giving their permission to use their work in this book, and for helping him see so many different and useful perspectives on UX writing. He would also like to thank his colleagues in the UTEST-L online community who have shared their professional insights into industry practices and the evolving nature of usability and UX research and design over the past 30 years. Thanks also to alumni from the Clemson MAPC and RCID programs now working in industry, who also shared their practitioner insights and their struggles creating UX writing positions and departments in their corporations. Tharon would also like to thank Jason and Gustav for their patience and for putting up with our team’s official “old fart” telling war stories about the ways we did things back in the 80s and 90s. Thanks for forcing me to think in 21st-century terms about the future of our profession.

Gustav would like to thank his colleagues at Central Michigan University, colleagues who he has worked with at the Digital Life Institute, met at various conferences, and collaborated in writing different articles. He also wants to acknowledge Jason and Tharon for being awesome collaborators who continuously push him to innovate in his thinking, research, and writing.
Part 1

Perspectives

We open with an introduction to the profession and principles of UX writing by discussing its relationship with technical writing, user experience design, usability research, and product development. If you are new to the world of UX, you may appreciate how Chapter 1 gives you a succinct overview of its influence on current technical communication practices. In conjunction with this introduction, we unveil the emergence of UX writing as a profession and offer a summary of its objectives. In Chapter 2, we explain the design thinking model that powers the UX writing process. You will learn the key principles, values, and phases of design thinking as they relate to the content lifecycle. Then, closing out Part 1, Chapter 3 specifies the desirable traits of those who perform UX writing—preferred skills and expertise and qualitative attributes for a successful career.
1 Introduction to UX Writing

Chapter Overview

This chapter offers an introduction to the characteristics of UX writing. It defines the scope and emerging practices of UX writing for readers new to UX as well as those who have worked in traditional technical communication areas like documentation writing, information design, content strategy and management, copywriting, and editing.

Learning Objectives

• Understand and define writing for user experience.
• Articulate the relationship between UX writing and adjacent professions.
• Distinguish the needs for UX writing in designing products and services.
• Outline the motivations to study UX writing.

A Brave New World

Imagine that you are a newly hired writer at Microcorp who has been put in a team that is working on the next release of Operating System Z (Figure 1.1). You have not met with the entire team, but you have already been asked to give a brief presentation on how the design team should begin working on the release. You may be asking yourself: What does a writer have to offer to the design of a product? Why put a writer on the team in the first place? What would you do in that scenario? If you were a technical writer in the 1990s, you would probably wait for directives from product engineers to write documentation after the prototype was done. But those days of using documentation as a “band-aid” for mediocre user interfaces are long gone. In the modern workplace, you will collaborate with the engineers in designing the experience for your users from the get-go. And this is because organizations and companies know nowadays that the user experience is paramount. Simply put, if a user isn’t happy with their initial experience with a service, they will most likely not continue to use it.

The role of a writer has evolved to be an integral part of the design process. According to design strategist Leah Buley (2013), nowadays many roles in the tech industry are expected to be a “team of one” and be able to fulfill many different roles in organizations, and this is particularly the case with writers. Writers contribute directly to the design of a meaningful
experience between the end user and a product or service. In this opening chapter, you will learn about the changing characteristics of writers in the digital age and the emerging practice of user experience writing or UX writing.

UX: The Design of Experience

To understand user experience writing, we need to begin by defining user experience. Often shortened as UX, user experience “encompasses all aspects of the end-user’s interaction with the company, its services, and its products” (Norman & Nielsen, 2021). To put it simply, UX is concerned with the human experience when interacting with an interface like a website, user manual, or instructional video. Depending on the context of use, a user can be an actual or potential reader, viewer, shopper, customer, or consumer. In the digital age, users are afforded access to information and services from all around the world through the internet and the web. While in this chapter and throughout the book we commonly refer to UX examples that are online or digital, you should also apply the same concepts to local and physical situations where user interactions happen every day.

Marketing professionals already know that good UX is important to any product or service because we have to incentivize and attract users to a product by giving them something they want or need. Herbert A. Simon called this the “attention economy” (1971, pp. 37–52). We have to “remunerate” consumers’ attention, and the “economy” here is pretty straightforward and commonsensical. Users have a limited amount of time and capital to invest in their online experiences. Plus, they have a lot of competition placing demands on
that temporal capital, or, as Mitch Kapor, a pioneer of the personal computing industry and long-time startup investor, put it, we are always in “a competition for eyeballs” in the marketplace (Malik, 2003, n.p.). As writers, therefore, our job is to figure out how to convince users that the time they spend using our product is the best investment of their limited time and capital. For most of us, the answer to this question is going to involve providing a richer, more satisfying user experience.

We are essentially looking for ways to attract users to our products by convincing them that the time they invest in us will be rewarded with the experience they seek. The analogy that we think works well here is that of going to a restaurant. In his book, Design to Thrive, Tharon wrote:

If you think about it, you don’t really go to a restaurant to fulfill your body’s needs for sustenance. You could go to the grocery store, buy bread and peanut butter, and make yourself a sandwich if all you wanted to do is feed yourself, right? You’re really after something more than just food when you go to an expensive restaurant for dinner. What, for example, is the attraction of Japanese steak houses and sitting around a hibachi grill with a bunch of other people—usually complete strangers—watching your food cooked in front of you and worrying if your hair is going to be singed by the obligatory grease fire that you know is coming? Indeed, I asked my 18-year-old son about this recently when he chose to have the family go to a Japanese steak house in order to celebrate his birthday. Wouldn’t you, I asked him, rather go to the local, family owned steakhouse which serves a better quality 20-oz. Angus Porterhouse for less money than the 5-oz beef tips and 6 small shrimp you’re going to get at a hibachi grill? What’s the attraction, I asked. Wouldn’t you rather have a better steak?

Of course, answering a question like that takes far too much conscious effort on the part of an 18-year-old, so I got the same, long suffering, “you’re-so-clueless-Dad” look that I get when I ask questions about what makes being a member of a World of Warcraft guild so compelling. Still, I think the answer is pretty obvious. It’s not only about the food; you’re also paying for the atmosphere, the service, and most of all, it’s about the entertainment provided by the chef. The remuneration is the experience.

(Howard, 2010, p. 44)

So at this point, the importance of providing users, customers, and audiences with a positive user experience probably seems pretty commonsensical. Unfortunately, the problem is that it is so commonsensical that most people (especially writers and designers) never think about it. We have a tendency to take good UX for granted. As renowned architect and system theorist Buckminster Fuller famously said, “Ninety-nine percent of who you are is invisible and untouchable” (R. Buckminster Fuller Quotes, n.d., n.p.). In other words, we’re so immersed in the business of completing tasks and getting on with our lives that we’re usually no more conscious of user experiences than a fish is conscious of water. Good UX is part of the air we breathe, which is why it’s nearly invisible—just like the popular design podcast by Roman Mars also titled “99% Invisible” (https://99percentinvisible.org/).

While a person’s experience with a product may be so tacit that it’s unconscious and invisible, the key takeaway here is to remember that good UX doesn’t just happen. Good UX is designed and intentional, even though users don’t always notice it. How often, for example, do you think about the products and components in your bed when you lay down to sleep at night? If you’re like most people, chances are you snuggle under the sheets and blankets and curl up on your pillow without a conscious thought about why the experience feels good. It just feels. And yet every aspect of that experience is the result of very
Figure 1.2 Grease fire entertainment by a hibachi grill chef.

Source: Howard (2010).
careful and conscious design decisions by a large number of product design teams. Take the bedsheets, for example. Most people won’t be able to tell you the “thread count” of the sheets that they use every night, but the designers of your sheets certainly can. They know that thread count is a measure of the number of horizontal and vertical threads per square inch in the cloth, and (more importantly) the higher the thread count, the softer the sheet and the more likely it will be to soften over time. Good sheets have thread counts ranging anywhere from 200 to 800, and the highest-quality sheets have over 1000. And thread count is only one factor in the UX design for a sheet; designers spend extraordinary amounts of time researching materials (cotton, linen, bamboo, etc.), weave patterns (percale weave, sateen weave, etc.), and new manufacturing processes. Sheet designers invest tremendous amounts of thought in finding the best balance between the cost and the user experience of our bed sheets so that we don’t have to. And the same thing goes for your pillow, mattress, bed springs, blanket, bedframe, quilts, etc.

However, while good UX design is often so tacit that it’s unconscious and invisible to the end user, the same can’t be said for poor UX. Earlier, we said that we are often no more conscious of user experiences than a fish is conscious of water. But we definitely notice bad UX design. When you try to make a purchase on a shopping website, but the interface won’t allow you to select the item you wish to buy, that’s bad UX—and your frustration makes you notice it. And you probably won’t come back to the website if it is frustrating.

One really famous example of people noticing bad UX is from former Apple employees, Donald Norman and Bruce Tognazzini. Tognazzini (better known as “Tog”) was Apple’s very first application software engineer, and he is famous because his early usability testing and work with software interfaces in the 1970s led to Tog’s “Apple Human Interface Guidelines,” which provided the foundation for Apple’s early success in the 1990s. Through Norman and Tog’s work, Apple became successful because of the simplicity and ease of use of its operating systems and software application designs. However, this all changed when Apple developed its gestural user interface for use with iPhones and touchscreen devices operated through hand movements and gestures. Apple abandoned the user interface guidelines that had made the Apple II and the Macintosh successful, and they adopted an approach that, according to Norman and Tog, focused on “look” rather than “feel.” In their critique of the new gestural interface designs, Norman and Tog famously wrote:

Apple is destroying design. Worse, it is revitalizing the old belief that design is only about making things look pretty. No, not so! Design is a way of thinking, of determining people’s true, underlying needs, and then delivering products and services that help them. Design combines an understanding of people, technology, society, and business. The production of beautiful objects is only one small component of modern design: Designers today work on such problems as the design of cities, of transportation systems, of health care. Apple is reinforcing the old, discredited idea that the designer’s sole job is to make things beautiful, even at the expense of providing the right functions, aiding understandability, and ensuring ease of use.

(Norman & Tognazzini, 2015, np)

One of the things that makes this quote so famous is that it is full of lessons for students of UX and design. Of course, the first of these is that users notice and respond to bad UX. But the quote also provides one of the best and most succinct definitions of modern UX design. It rejects the idea that designers merely make things look nice and pretty. We tend to think that, for example, an interior designer’s job is primarily to pick out complimentary colors for furniture and wallpaper, but the definition here extends the idea that design is
intentional because it recognizes that it “combines an understanding of people, technology, society, and business.” In other words, it requires research into what users need in all aspects of their lives. It begins by defining users’ problems and the environments in which those problems emerge and then designs experiences that solve those problems.

And even though it looks invisible and easy, good UX design is actually really hard. And because UX design is challenging and in high demand by organizations, some jokingly refer to the desire of companies to hire a “UX Unicorn” who can do it all, combine a great deal of skill sets, and do all of these perfectly. That is why all three of us have an image of the UX unicorn on our office door, to remind our students that you cannot expect to do it all perfectly but that you do need to know something about each of these areas.

The Rise of UX Writing

In an age of content marketing and digital design—where users actively seek information and where marketers find it an opportunity to sell products through information services and experience design—content-first design promises short-term as well as long-term success. UX-centric content makes for efficient design and a greater return on investment (King, 2022). The idea of content-first design is based on figuring out what content your user is looking for before designing the interface, rather than creating an interface and hoping to fill it with relevant content (Johnson, 2020). The same principle applies to UX writers—they have to know how good content can be created first so the design meets the user’s immediate needs and wants.

Many companies hire professionals trained in UX to support their product and service designs. For instance, “UX researcher” and “UX designer” are well-established career positions that involve the study of consumer experience and the application of insights to the design of products and services. A UX researcher develops and conducts user research such as UX journey mapping, persona development, ethnographic studies, or think-aloud protocol analyses, whereas a UX designer’s role is more strategic—devising product structure, content strategy plan, and prototypes using the data collected by the UX researchers. In some companies, these roles converge and could be performed by a UX specialist or a UX team.

We are seeing an increase in the number of job descriptions that appeal to writers who care about UX (see Snapshot 1.1). Many companies are seeking to hire writers with UX expertise to work in collaboration with designers to integrate content with interface design in order to cultivate a good user experience.

Real World Snapshot 1.1: A UX Writing Job Description (Archived in 2021)

UX Content Writer – Opportunity for Working Remotely!
Location: Boulder, CO – Remote
Salary: $95,000 – $162,000 a year
Job Type: Full time
Full Job Description:
We are looking for a UX Content Writer with experience in complex cloud applications to help us transform the cybersecurity industry. In this role, you’ll collaborate with cross-functional
Since our experience with products and services is heavily influenced by the content we consume—think about the number of posts, text messages, videos, memes, and audio signals you encounter each day—UX writing is concerned with the integrative experience between the user and product/service as it is mediated by different content. They include texts or copy, images, videos/animations, sounds, haptics (touch senses), or a combination of them. Good UX writing leads to a seamlessly positive experience between the user and the product.

UX writing isn’t just a product, however. UX writing is also a process involving writing, designing, thinking, iterating, strategizing, and developing content using different technologies to create a desirable user experience. This integrative approach urges you to see content development as an interconnected activity that leads you down many different paths with one goal: making a better user experience for the user.

Now, think about your smartphone (well, if you use one, or else ask a friend who does). What was your experience like when you took it out of the box for the first time? Looking at the shiny black mirror that reflects your excitement, what was your initial reaction? Were you confused by it? Did you feel the need to read the user manual? Like most users, we bet you just turned on your new phone and started swiping away immediately. You’re greeted with a friendly welcome message and a quick-start wizard that walks you through the setup process. And if it so happened that you stumbled upon something you were unsure of during the setup, like pairing the phone with other devices you own, you’d have probably quickly found the option to just skip it. Just like that, in less than a few minutes, you were all set and ready to post a new selfie on your Instagram with a whimsy hashtag like #newphonewhothis.

People want to enjoy products rather than learn how to use them through user manuals. UX writing eliminates the dreadful process that hinders good interactions by designing content that facilitates a desirable user experience (Figure 1.3).

**Writing at Multiple Intersections**

Good UX writing helps users perform desired tasks while serving the needs of marketing or selling a product/service. To be successful in UX writing, you need to develop expertise at the intersection of several connected areas, such as user experience research, content strategy, and interface design, to list a few. The UX writing compass (Figure 1.4) is our attempt to map out the different expertise required for doing UX writing. At times, your job may require you to focus on one area, and other times you may need to draw from each of the directions to consider how to develop your content for users more successfully. The compass helps you consider which areas you need to draw upon.

UX writers need to develop a 360-degree situational awareness so they know which competencies and complementary skills they need to draw from (e.g., design thinking, content...