

Critique Assignment

Your name: Vida Yeung

Website: thriftbooks.com

Part 1: Heuristics Report Card

	Heuristic	Evaluation to support the grade given (1 to 2 sentences)	Grade (1 to 10) 1 = lowest 10 = highest
1	Findable	I applied three searches to the query box: 1) Stefan Gates- first 9 search results were of three of his books I already have, four that I didn't know of, and two related to his niche subject in food writing. Search result about eating insects led to page with one format in two conditions available. 2) Lasse Rouhiainen- 6 results for four titles, two of them available, the first one in two editions and two conditions 3) Rumiko Takahashi- first 9 results were primarily of her first comics series to make it big in the English-language market, <i>Imuyasha</i> . The first result was in Spanish, next was Japanese, and the third –the only different one- was <i>Ranma ½</i> in English.	The first two gave commendable arrays of results, while the last were cluttered at the top with one title. So, 7
2	Accessible (channels & ADA)	Not required for assignment	NA
3	Clear (easily perceptible)	Owing to most's familiarity with online shopping sites, thriftbooks.com is intuitive to navigate with a query box at the top of the page with popular categories on drop down menus right below. However, there's no 'contact us' or 'follow us (on social media)' link until a long way down to the bottom. Shoppers may have questions are have gotten used to gauging the legitimacy of businesses through their social media presences.	Shopping part's easy, but not information about the site users would like sooner than the bottom of the page. So, 8
4	Communicative	A lot of information on the page at any scroll, though some headings were without subtitles/descriptions. 'New and Trending' according to whom? A 'Deal' compared to what? Many categories can use descriptions, too. Because how is 'Crime' different from	Commendable amount of categories but labels only

		'Detective', or 'Mystery' from 'Suspense'?	good for knowledgeable users. So, 7
5	Useful	The site is quite good at letting users find books the business has in inventory.	10
6	Credible	The 'For the Love of Reading' portion lets me know what they're about, and the transparency comforts me about what business I'm giving my money to.	9
7	Controllable	Left side search-refine options narrows the results down very well by price range, binding, language, and condition, among others.	10
8	Valuable	Students, budgeters (me), and businesses are in need of material at cheaper than full retail.	10
9	Learnable	Depends on tech-familiarity of user. Those who didn't grow up with the internet, or got on that internet train as it rolled out, might just stick with the query box and not use the categories lists for browsing, which will make the site only a single use destination.	6 Because they could've explained better on the home page what 'Book Tok' is to entice a user to visit.
10	Delightful	The light (not bright) color scheme is easy on/pleasing to the eyes, and the layout encourages browsing like a bookstore, kind of like a trip out while online. With the variety of links to choose from, many things to explore.	So, 8, because its information architecture is not as dynamic compared to other established online bookstore like Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

Part 2: Summary of Strengths & Weaknesses

A running theme for thriftbooks.com's strengths was its high level of findability. From the prominence of its homepage button (a commendably assuming '**thriftbooks: #sharelovebooks**' in the top left, generally the area where most look to at the start of a document) followed immediately on the right by a basic search query box, the exhaustive search-refine features lining the left side of a results page, and the dozens of browse-able categories –like by price, genre, popularity- that can help users find books, DVDs, Blurays, CDs, or video games. I found also these features were further supported by thriftbooks.com's overall design that mimics other successful online bookstores that came before it; Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com's 'Books' homepage also have a basic search query box with links to categories (some more prominent than others) cascading away below them. There was also mention of the orderly layout of the sitemap which, I agree, was pleasing to the eyes and the pattern making parts of my brain with the main category headings highlighted in white over olive green, and sub-categories underneath in black on light grey –enough to delineate groupings, but not in a way that would put any categories over the others-, while at the bottom the three not content-related categories have white-on-black headings, to differentiate from the browsing behavior of the average online book shopper. All of these components come together to provide an intuitive search process that should support the majority of (online) information seeking behaviors.

An oft-discussed weakness was how thriftbooks.com can cornucopia its contents too readily into a user's perception. The problem starts on the homepage, with all the book cover thumbnails throwing color all over the twenty-eight(!) main-heading categories, not to mention an ample amount of subcategories below those. Even if I were familiar already –especially if I were, actually- with online book-shopping on the more established sites listed above, I would blink after a short scroll, and head back to the basic search box at the top to find the exact title/author/performance artist/composer/video game I want, rather than waste time trundling through lists that could possibly lead me away from what I was initially searching for. Depending on the user's book-searching goal, that might not be the worst thing –that's why mega-malls can be fun, all that content to take in and sample-, but for shoppers on a mission, all that choice can be debilitating. This problem can be

solved with an advanced search feature –ideally located right after or under the basic query box- that’s much less exhaustive than the left-screen search results refining options. Thus, users can get a search experience that’s more targeted at the start than from just simply inputting search terms into a box, that won’t do Boolean searching.