

Librarian's Book Improves Website Design Beyond GVSU



Grand Valley State University librarians engage in research and scholarship in their areas of expertise,

disseminating their work in the form of books, book chapters, journal articles, grants, and presentations. Matthew Reidsma, Web Services Librarian at Grand Valley, recently published his second book, *Customizing Vendor Tools for Better User Experiences*.

The book provides smaller libraries with the opportunity to learn design best practices from around the world, subsequently improving online experiences for library users everywhere.

To broaden the impact of this scholarship and to reach as many small libraries as possible, Reidsma negotiated with the publisher to allow open access to the book after a three year embargo. In 2019, the book will be available freely at ScholarWorks@GVSU, the institutional repository. Matt Ruen, Scholarly Communications Outreach Coordinator for University Libraries, assisted Reidsma in the process of negotiating a publishing contract that met Reidsma's goals—any Grand Valley faculty interested in discussing their own publishing agreements can contact their liaison librarian for similar assistance. Accompanying Reidsma's book is a supplementary website that is also already open to everyone.

Reidsma finds library websites unique in that they are often made up of a dozen or more different websites cobbled together as a suite of online services. Large libraries often have the resources and technical knowledge to modify these tools to better serve their users, but smaller academic libraries and many public libraries end up with expensive tools that do not always meet local needs.

“My goal with the book was to easily distill the techniques and relevant code so libraries without software developers or designers can make the kinds of small, local changes that will improve the library for their users,” Reidsma said.

Numerous libraries from around the world, including Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan; St. John Fisher College in New York; Queen's University in Ontario; and Sheffield-Hallam University, and the University of Huddersfield in England have used Reidsma's code to modify vendor tools for their library users. Vendors have also taken note of Reidsma's work and have used his code to make their own product modifications, improving the experience of these tools for library users everywhere.

ABOVE: Matthew Reidsma's cartoon sketch of himself.

For more information about Matthew Reidsma and his work visit <https://matthew.reidsrow.com/>