Rebecca Blakiston

Summary

User experience strategist with over 15 years of design and research experience. Broad skillset including discovery and evaluative research, product management, consultation and training, and leadership. Values collaboration and inclusive design, and balances long-term strategy with getting things done.

Education and Certification

2020   Nielsen Norman Group, Certification in User Experience with Management Specialty

2007   University of Arizona, Master's Degree in Library and Information Science

2005   University of Arizona, Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies (English, Philosophy, Sociology)

Employment

2022-present   Senior User Experience Researcher, Ad Hoc

- Designed research, analyzed findings, and made recommendations to inform improvements to digital services within government; worked on cross-functional design and engineering teams.
- Led research to inform a website redesign for the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry: ldaf.la.gov. Included competitive analysis, user interviews, first-click testing, card sorting, tree testing, surveys, and usability testing.
- Conducted research for Veterans Affairs with a focus on the creating digital tools for accredited representatives, including Veteran Service Organizations, attorneys, and claims agents. Included focus groups, user interviews, persona development, a comparative analysis of platforms, journey mapping, and service blueprinting.
- Supported projects outside primary contract including a Library of Congress data reporting system, an internal staff directory and expertise management system, and bid writing.

2014–2022   User Experience Researcher, Librarian, and Strategist, University of Arizona Libraries

- Led user experience initiatives and priorities, and advocated for a human-centered organization.
- Supervised researchers, designers, content writers, data analysts, and engineers.
- Oversaw myriad design projects and led UX research including user interviews, journey mapping, service blueprinting, competitive analysis, web analytics, impression testing, preference testing, card sorting, tree testing, prototype testing, and usability testing.
- Collaborated with designers and engineers to iterate on and test prototypes.

2008-2014   Instructional and Undergraduate Services Librarian, University of Arizona Libraries

- Served as the first product manager for Drupal-based websites, establishing a road map and system of digital governance for the first time in the organization's history.
- Served as instructional designer, building and testing interactive digital learning objects.

Select Articles

Blakiston, R, Liu, B., & Miller, L. (2021). DesignOps in an academic library: Reducing barriers, improving efficiency, and scaling impact of design and research. *Journal of Library Administration*.

Blakiston, R. (2021). Where's that data again? Helping our future selves with a research repository. *UxEd: Sticky problems and design stories from the University of Arizona*.

Books

Blakiston, R. (2017). *Writing effectively in print and on the web: A practical guide for librarians*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Blakiston, R. (2015). *Usability testing: A practical guide for librarians*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Select Presentations

Blakiston, R. & Huang, F. (2024). Break down silos and scale impact with research operations. Service Design in Government, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Blakiston, R. (2023). A spring cleaning sprint: Let's tidy up our websites. Designing for Digital, Austin, TX. [3-hour workshop].

Blakiston, R. (2022). A human-centered approach to shifting organizational culture. UXLibs, Newcastle, UK. [Keynote]

Blakiston, R. (2022). Lightweight and impactful: UX in action and on a budget. UX Wellington.

Blakiston, R. (2020). Fostering a UX culture across campus. CNI Spring Meeting, San Diego, CA.

Blakiston, R., Brinkerhoff, M., Nichols, J. & Wallace, N. (2020). New ways of thinking about enrollment: Design thinking. Arizona Head Start Association, Phoenix, AZ. [Full-day workshop].

Blakiston, R. (2020). Advancing student success: A design thinking workshop. Annual retreat for University of San Diego Copley Library, San Diego, CA. [4-hour workshop].

Blakiston, R. (2019). Empathy as a daily practice. UNYOC/MLA Annual Meeting, Watkins Glen, NY. [Keynote].

Blakiston, R. (2019). A human-centered strategy for advancing library value. Michigan Academic Libraries Association Annual Conference, Saginaw, MI. [Keynote].

Blakiston, R. & Shivers-McNair, A. (2018). Do no harm: Making better forms for people. edUi, Charlottesville, VA.

Blakiston, R, Mayden, S., & Pete, D. (2017). Creating usable websites: An introduction. Training for Education Department, Tohono O'odham Nation.

Blakiston, R. & Hagedon, M. (2017). Iterating on agile: Making it work in real life. Code4Lib, Los Angeles, CA.

Blakiston, R. (2013). User research methods on a budget. UX Cambridge, UK.