



Posted by Kerry Webb 25 comments

### User interface gripes

Even after all these years, we're still finding websites getting in the way of users. I tried to download my monthly report from a toll company (I assumed it was in PDF format) but it wouldn't print. A little detective work showed that it was indeed a PDF, but the extension on the file was .asp and my Mac couldn't interpret that in the way they wanted. After two calls to the company's helpline and two e-mails to their support address I was still getting responses that showed that they weren't listening to, or reading what I was saying.

A different gripe was on an online banking site. This one required you to set up an account by inputting a lot of information, but gave you no clear indication that your task had been successful - which would have meant that many users assumed the worst and went through the whole application over and over. Which in turn would have caused more work for the bank.

### ALT text explained

The most obvious accessibility feature on websites is the application of ALT text for images. It's also the feature that most Web managers get wrong: having too little or too much or the wrong information. Dey Alexander has spent a lot of effort providing some very useful tips, summarised by these questions: when writing text alternatives for your images, you need to consider the role of the image.

- What are you using the image for?
- What is it meant to do, say or mean?
- What is the context in which it is used?
- What else is on this page that might affect how you should provide a text alternative for the image?

See her answers at [tinyurl.com/4phqeeq](http://tinyurl.com/4phqeeq)

### All over the spectrum

I've seen a few explanations of colour theory over the years, but nothing has made so much sense as the post by Jason Cohen at

[blog.asmartbear.com/color-wheels.html](http://blog.asmartbear.com/color-wheels.html)

It takes a bit of time to get through, but after reading it you'll be much better informed about colour relationships, and why inks are CMYK and not RGB, and oh so much more.

### Be careful, be very careful

A word of warning to anyone planning on putting their photos up on Flickr - don't forget the back-up. Apparently the people who run it don't believe in such mundane concepts. A user named Mirco Wilhelm found he couldn't log on to his account, and when he queried this he found that they'd deleted the account, his 4,000 photos and all the comments and other social network aspects of his collection.

And they said that none of it could be recovered, but later they did manage to find the lost photos, although the restore wasn't completely error-free. The whole saga is reported at [tinyurl.com/4rtznkf](http://tinyurl.com/4rtznkf).

### Left hand and right hand ...

Pity the poor accessibility experts at Adobe. They are continuing to do their best to make progress in delivering PDFs that can be properly read by Assistive Technology, and they keep on sending out the message that training is essential in creating accessible PDFs, but they're let down by the other part of the organisation. According to the blog post by John Eric Brandt at [jebwebs.net/blog/2011/01/flaws-found-in-adobe-acrobat-pro-x/](http://jebwebs.net/blog/2011/01/flaws-found-in-adobe-acrobat-pro-x/), the latest release of Adobe Acrobat Pro has the wrong instructions for fixing problems in PDFs. The good(?) news is that the Acrobat team is on the case, but it may not be corrected until the next version is released.

### Data - free to a good home

Ah, the problems of analogies. Gartner's Andrea Di Maio is casting an ever more critical eye on Open Government initiatives ([tinyurl.com/4s2vrz6](http://tinyurl.com/4s2vrz6)) - and stimulating debate along the way. AGIMO's John Sheridan weighed in with a nice little illustration of some of the concepts of the release of government information by likening it to putting out an old bicycle on a kerbside trash pick-up day, and pointing out that you don't really care what happens to the bike - who picks it up, how safely they ride it, whether they turn it into a money-making venture and so on. Appealing as this comparison is, it ignores a few of the more contentious issues, like how do people know what you're leaving out and more importantly, that it can be used over and over with no impairment to the original data.

### Link forging ahead

And here's a tip of the hat to some Australian Internet history: Tony Barry (formerly of the ANU Library) has done a grand job over the past sixteen years in managing *Link* - an e-mail based discussion list that brought together librarians, computer scientists, networking specialists, journalists and many others to discuss important matters dealing with networks in general and the Internet in particular. Now the major topic of conversation is the National Broadband Network, but the discussion is still carried out in a good natured way and the community still regulates itself remarkably well. Tony has passed the baton to a willing group of volunteers and we expect *Link* to continue to be a source of useful discussion. You're most welcome to join at [mailman.anu.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/link](mailto:mailman.anu.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/link).

More on my blog  
[www.alia.org.au/webbsblog](http://www.alia.org.au/webbsblog)



Smart Library<sup>™</sup>  
RFID that works

[www.FETechGroup.com.au](http://www.FETechGroup.com.au)

