Design Research: Methods and Perspectives

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How the tools of design research can involve designers more directly with objects, products and services they design; from human-centered research methods to formal experimentation, process models, and application to real world design problems.

The tools of design research, writes Brenda Laurel, will allow designers "to claim and direct the power of their profession." Often neglected in the various curricula of design schools, the new models of design research described in this book help designers to investigate people, form, and process in ways that can make their work more potent and more delightful. "At the very least," Peter Lunenfeld writes in the preface, "design research saves us from reinventing the wheel. At its best, a lively research methodology can reinvigorate the passion that so often fades after designers join the profession."

The goal of the book is to introduce designers to the many research tools that can be used to inform design as well as to ideas about how and when to deploy them effectively. The chapter authors come from diverse institutions and enterprises, including Stanford University, MIT, Intel, Maxis, Studio Anybody, Sweden's HUMlab, and Big Blue Dot. Each has something to say about how designers make themselves better at what they do through research, and illustrates it with real world examples--case studies, anecdotes, and images. Topics of this multi-voice conversation include qualitative and quantitative methods, performance ethnography and design improvisation, trend research, cultural diversity, formal and structural research practice, tactical discussions of design research process, and case studies drawn from areas as unique as computer games, museum information systems, and movies. Interspersed throughout the book are one-page "demos," snapshots of the design research experience. *Design Research* charts the paths from research methods to research findings to design principles to design results and demonstrates the transformation of theory into a richly satisfying and more reliably successful practice.

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Cindy says

"A great summer read" - sarcasm intended

Al Matthews says

I'm sort of pretending that this is in-scope, which it is, and that I'm reading it thoroughly, which I'm not. I like Brenda Laurel... and this is job-pertinent, vaguely.

Procrastination in a good way.

Ninakix says

I have to say, on the whole I was actually pretty disappointed in this book. It came off frustrating, I think, partly because there was no cohesive voice. Usually, one would say this is indicative of the design research community as a whole, but I found myself having a hard time switching from topic to topic so fast - the essays were pretty short, and as such, didn't contain a whole lot of information and/or depth to them. The most disappointing section, to me, was the first on "People," because while this is one of the topics (ethnography and the study of people) that I'm most interested in, the essays only seemed to wade into the area knee-deep. That said, there were a few interesting gems in the "Process" section, especially Sean Donahue and Eric Zimmerman's essays. But in reality, I'd pass the book up for a book that more consistently and deeply approaches the topic of design research.

Zara says

Absolutely essential guide to the different ways designers approach the huge concept of 'research.'