

# PWP User Interface Design

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## UI Development Process

In a book entitled *Designing Interfaces*, Jenifer Tidwell outlines the best practices for designing a user interface in these steps:

1. *Field research*: find out what users are like and what they already do
2. *Goal and task analysis*: describe and clarify what users will do with what you're building
3. *Design models*: personas, scenarios, prototypes
4. *Empirical testing* at various stages (mockups, prototypes, versions)
5. *Time to iterate*, because you won't get it right the first time

We are following a procedure like this with the design of the PWP.

### 1. Field Research

The goal of the field research step is to find out what the users are like and what they currently do to find sermon preparation resources on the Web.

There is a great deal of familiarity with the users and the tasks they accomplish among the members of PWP steering committee, but we also administered a survey to preachers to make sure we weren't missing any use cases and to get statistical data. An analysis of the survey results is available.<sup>1</sup>

### Who are the users?

The mission of the website is to provide access to resources to “preachers and worship/liturgical planners.” So although many others (e.g. faculty, students, study leaders, seekers, etc.) may find the site useful, the site will be designed to target the needs of preachers and worship/liturgical planners.

This has several implications. We can assume that the users are serious Christians who do not need convincing or evangelization. They are highly educated, generally with at least a baccalaureate degree, and they generally like reading and language. For such users, a text-oriented site with fewer images and graphics might be appropriate.

According to the mission, we are targeting “theologically moderate perspectives,” so although the site will be ecumenical, it need not cater to extremely liberal or conservative perspectives.

Our intended users are highly motivated to accomplish their tasks each week, so extraneous diversions, general interest articles, and the like, should be minimized.

The survey respondents were a self-selected sample of users of the Center for Excellence in Preaching website and a CICW mailing list, so this was not a broadly representative sample, but 65% self-identified as Presbyterian/Reformed. However,

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<sup>1</sup> Preacher Survey Analysis for the Preaching and Worship Portal, CCEL Tech. Report #3, November 2013, [http://www.ccel.org/tr/Preacher\\_Survey\\_Analysis.pdf](http://www.ccel.org/tr/Preacher_Survey_Analysis.pdf)

the mission of the site is more ecumenical and diverse; Catholics and racial minorities should feel as at home as others.

The survey results indicated that the congregations represented varied widely in size from <100 (31%) to >800 (10%). Some of the preachers were responsible for selecting hymns and developing the liturgy, while others were not. Some used contemporary music while others used traditional hymns. Some used images and video in sermons and others did not.

### What do they currently do?

The second part of the field research step is to determine what our intended users currently do to find preaching and worship resources on the Web. We tried to get at this matter with a number of survey questions, asking how users pick their sermon topic or theme, what resources they are looking for, what websites they visit, and what queries they use. For a full discussion see the attached survey analysis.

The top methods for choosing sermon topics or themes were

1. Following recommended bible texts in a lectionary
2. Choosing a book or section of the bible to preach through over time
3. Following the Christian calendar/liturgical seasons
4. Choosing a them, then finding bible texts about the theme

The top responses to the question of what sermon preparation resources our intended users were searching or included

1. Sermon preparation aids (illustrations, essays, blogs, full sermons, outlines, etc.)
2. Bible study aids (commentaries, alternate translations, blogs, exegetical studies, word studies, original language tools)
3. References to cultural elements such as popular books and movies
4. Visual art, movie clips, etc.

The top responses to the question of what worship service resources users were looking for included

1. Liturgical elements
2. Songs and hymns
3. Visual arts
4. Children's resources
5. Complete liturgies

The number of websites regularly visited nearly equaled the number of survey respondents. However, Textweek.com was by far the most popular. It is simply a very large list of a wide variety of resources organized by lectionary week. CEP, CICW, and Reformed Worship were very popular among this (biased) sample. Workingpreacher.org, a blog/commentary on the week's lectionary passage, was also very popular. Several large, commercial sermon/illustration sites were also popular. See the appendix for details.

We should examine the popular sites to see how they are organized, how they may be accessed, and what resources they offer to get a better understanding of what users are currently doing.

The seventh question asked users to write down several queries they recently used to find resources. This question gave much information on what users actually do to find the resources they are searching for.

Queries are notoriously hard to categorize, but rough categorization can give an indication of the important use cases. Users seemed to have two different kinds of search terms—terms indicating the topic or theme of the query and terms indicating the type of resource desired. Often these two would both be entered into a search query, e.g. “hymns for advent” or “sermon illustrations for Matt. 5:8.” One of the aspects could also be indicated in another way, e.g. a Google image search for images depicting compassion or a search for “children’s bulletins” at a lectionary site where the resources for the desired Sunday are being viewed.

An analysis of search terms that respondents entered into the survey was broken down into 164 terms indicating the topic or theme and 37 terms indicating the type of resource desired. In some cases one from each category came from a single query.

For the 164 **terms used to indicated the topic or theme**, 89 were topics of the sort that PWP might offer resources for—terms such as loneliness, servanthood, righteousness, obedience, sacrifice, church, justification, etc. 32 were bible passages (though I suspect this number was under-reported; many users just said “bible passage” rather than listing several different bible passages as they did for topics).

Additional ways of specifying the theme or topic included special days, such as Thanksgiving or Reformation Day, lectionary week, author, current events, etc. 22 of the terms were for topics we are unlikely to treat but which could be searched with Google.

The terms used to indicate the **type of resource desired** were more varied. The most common type of term indicated a liturgical element, e.g. “call to worship” (11 of 37 terms). Other types included illustrations, commentary, translations, sermons, quotations, word studies, images, etc.

## Use Cases

The most common way to characterize the tasks users are trying to accomplish is to construct use cases, which are small narratives describing typical users and the tasks they are trying to accomplish.

There is one primary use case indicated by these data, with several variations. A typical user is preparing for a worship service—sermon and/or liturgy and hymn selection. The user has a method of identifying the theme of the sermon, usually scripture passage and/or topic, but also possibly lectionary week, current events, church season, or special days or occasions. The user also indicates the type of resource desired. The website responds to such queries with a list of the best-matching resources, ranked by matching the user’s profile and preferences as well as resource popularity and rating.

## Implications for Website Function

To identify the topic or theme of interest users will type in a search term. We can handle the vast majority of queries by handling two types of search terms: entities and scripture passages. Entities include

- Topics
- People
- Places
- Seasons
- Special days
- Current events and issues
- Occasions
- People groups

Once the website is running, we will have search data indicating the most common queries for which we don't have a results page. This can guide our entity treatment and resource indexing process.

We should also offer a means of accessing resources by week of the lectionary. We may wish to have links for common searches on the front page—e.g. upcoming lectionary weeks, the current season (such as advent), current news and events, and the like. Since the site is ecumenical, it should handle multiple lectionaries equally, at least for denominationally-approved lectionaries.

The second part of the query indicates the type of resource desired. We should support a large number of resource categories and enable users to select the resource type of interest by adding a term to the query or narrowing the search to the resource type of interest after the topic/theme has been entered. Perhaps this could be accomplished with a list of resource types available for the query in a sidebar.

Resource types supported for topical searches should include

- Definition, background information about the topic
- Relevant bible passages
- Images, videos, art
- Sermons, illustrations, ideas
- Liturgical elements
- Hymns, songs
- Maps
- Quotations
- Articles, blog posts, etc.

Resource types supported for bible passages searches should be the types above as well as

- Bible translations
- Commentary
- Original language tools
- Bible study tools
- Word studies and exegesis resources

### Lessons for Site Design

Search is the key activity. Search should understand scripture passages, entities, and resource types. Searches that don't specify resource types could be handled with faceted search to narrow the result list.

We may wish to have links on the front page for common queries such as upcoming lectionary weeks, season, and current events.

### 3. Design Models

The third step of the UI design process is to develop prototypes and mockups of design. These are then evaluated according to how well they satisfy the use case. The models can be improved through further reiteration.

#### Graphical theme

In order to generate a consistent look and feel for the pages of the site, there will be a common header for all the pages, about an inch high to minimize wasted space. This should have the name and slogan along perhaps with an identifying graphic and primary site colors.

The site will not have advertising, but it will still need a sidebar. We will use a single right sidebar to minimize visual clutter. The sidebar will be used for related resources, suggested links, popular topics, and the like. It should have a non-white background color to visually separate it from the main content area.

The site should be responsive, adjusting to the width of the window, and hiding or inlining content blocks as needed for very small screens such as mobile devices. Primary usability consideration should be given to screens of tablet or desktop width, but we should support mobile-phone sized screens as well.

#### Home page

The home page should place the main activity of the site front and center: search. It should be apparent looking at the site that the primary activity is to search for preaching and worship resources.

The front page should also help build trust. It should have a sentence or two explaining that search results are tuned to user preferences for users who fill out a profile, perhaps with a link to a page with more information. It should be possible to fill out a profile without creating an account and to create an account with current profile information later.

The front page should also show partner sites and logos, perhaps with text indicating that we are a portal for these sites.

There should also be a block of links for currently-common searches including some of church season, seasonal topics and scripture passages, upcoming lectionary weeks, and current news or events.

Finally, there may be a section with excerpts of featured articles or resources, linked to the source, along the lines of Arts and Letters Daily.

#### Search results page for entities

The search results page should indicate at the top the way the topic or theme has been selected—either an entity name or a Bible passage. There should be a way to move to a related entity or change the Bible passage. There should also be a way to

type in an entirely new search query. It should say something like “Results tuned for John Doe:”

If no result type has yet been selected, it should show a list of result types with the number of resources after the type. The user would click on one of the result types to show those resources.

If the result type has been selected, it should indicate what is being shown, perhaps

Showing [sermon illustrations]

There should be a way for the user to get back from this view to the list of result types.

For each resource listed, we want to have enough context to enable the user to make an informed choice about whether to examine that resource in more detail. This might include a brief description if available, a star for PWP-recommended resources, percentage of users that gave it a thumbs up, a named recommendation if available, etc.

We can perhaps list the top ten resources on a page, with a link for “show more” at the bottom of the page.