For libraries frustrated by information design and usability issues in hosted vendor solutions, Reidsma offers an empowering framework for addressing these and other user experience concerns. While most vendor tools provide some customization options like settings for colors and branding, these options are often too limited to accommodate any structural or interactive changes identified as problems by local usability tests or other user research methodologies.

The thirteen chapters and associated exercises of this book carefully demonstrate the practical techniques used to customize vendor systems. Beginning with the basics of both web development and web scripting environments, the solutions described in the book use JavaScript, a lightweight scripting language that runs in a user’s web browser rather than on a web server, to change elements within an existing web page. While some experience with JavaScript is helpful, knowledge of coding is not required.

Using existing customizations as case studies, each chapter includes code examples as exercises. Readers can follow the code examples in the book or they can work with the code directly. Reidsma, who has over ten years of experience working with libraries and the web, details the code and the coding process in the text and online where the reader can use the browser’s development tools or a text editor to generate the customizations. As the book progresses and the customizations become more involved, a brief final chapter introduces the use of PHP, a server-side scripting language, to work in conjunction with JavaScript to power data-related customizations.

As an endorsement of the customization process, Reidsma notes that many of the changes he has made with JavaScript have been incorporated by vendors, such as ProQuest and
Springshare, into their products. While such system updates may signal that, with enough
patience, these local customizations are unnecessary, the approach of the book holds substantial
value as a dynamic framework for enhancing often unwieldy remote tools with agile local
extensions, as well as for seeing new opportunities and creating better user experiences.

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