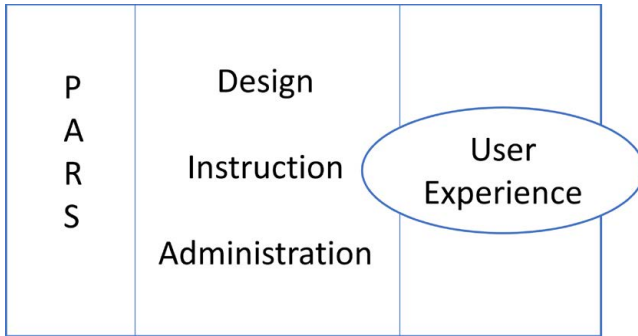# Section 4: User Experience (UX)

Welcome to the User Experience (UX) section of this collection! We selected the above golf course picture to illustrate how the user experience includes all the elements of the course (both golf course and writing course!). From the trees, to the fairway, from the sky to the mountains and the water, all of these elements create the user experience on this particular golf course. Similarly, in an online writing course, the elements of the course, including the assignments, announcements, discussion boards, interactions between faculty and student, interactions between student and student, etc. create the user experience in an online space. The chapters in this section provide various approaches and views on UX research. The audience for this section is scholars and researchers interested in the possibilities that arise from combining best practices in two different fields. While some of the chapters focus on more traditional definitions and approaches to UX, others look more generally at the user experience as a concept to understand the more complex issues that arise when students and instructors act within digital spaces. In their book, Rhetoric and Experience Architecture, Potts & Salvo (2017) argue that "Experience architecture requires that we understand ecosystems of activity rather than simply considering single task scenarios" (p. 4). We believe "Online writing courses are these complex ecosystems of activity, and user-experience design principles should be utilized to develop a more personalized view of learners' experiences and needs" (Borgman & McArdle, 2019). Since we argue that online courses are complex systems and complex user experiences, we feel the chapters in this section are for all three of our targeted audiences: instructors, administrators and scholars. The authors in this section of chapters grapple with the idea of online courses as complex ecosystems of activity and each of the authors illustrate how the PARS approach to OWI creates and facilitates the student and instructor user experience.

As we said in the introduction to this collection, PARS as an approach spans several layers (design, instruction, and administration) and these layers equal the student user experience (PARS + UX = OWI). The online writing course is a complex ecosystem of activity (Borgman & McArdle, 2019), so it's important that we treat it like one and that we consider all aspects of the user experience.

UX as a methodology became popular in the early 1990s when Norman's (1988) book *The Design of Everyday Things* was released. In this text, he emphasizes ways in which design serves as the communication between product and user, and that designers need to capitalize on that communication in order to make the experience of using the product more pleasurable ("UIUX Trend").

Borgman (2020) notes that, "Understanding connections between the user experience and design of educational materials is fundamental to student success, to teacher satisfaction, and, ultimately, to inclusive and accessible teaching and learning" (p. 55). The principles of UX such as usability comes first, focus on what the users need, factor in accessibility, use simple language, remain consistent, the user is in control (Arctic Leaf Team, 2020) are fundamental to creating, maintaining and ensuring an online course is successful. We hope the chapters in this section will give you the confidence you need to utilize elements of user experience as you design, build, and test your online courses and work to create more inclusive and accessible digital learning spaces.

As you teach and/or administer your online writing courses, you should remain receptive to feedback from students and colleagues on what is working and what is not working in order to create better user experiences. The chapters in this section will help you to keep the user experience as a focus. These chapters illustrate how PARS creates the user experience and is grounded in user experience design principles. Retzinger's chapter encourages readers to put themselves in their students' shoes. This chapter narrates a user experience learning how to play the bass from an online course experience. Retzinger ties together this experience with the student user experience and illustrates the valuable lessons that can be learned from considering how student users experience our courses. Getto's chapter illustrates how PARS can help to create a high-quality student user experience in an online technical communication classroom.

Getto's chapter argues that treating PARS as the definition of a high-quality user experience and incorporating the elements of PARS into one's course can aid facilitating better learning. Bartolotta's chapter is all about usability and illustrates the steps instructors can make to ensure usability in their online courses. This chapter walks readers through the logistics of a simple usability test and encourages them to try more usability tests in their online courses. Stone's chapter focused on how strategy plays a role in creating a more user-centered community engaged course. And finally, Ledgerwood's chapter focuses on how HyperDocs allow teachers to focus on the user experience in a unique way that highlights user-centered design. This chapter illustrates ways to use HyperDocs and how HyperDocs offer a system for strong lesson design that walks students through a process of learning, with students as the focus of the document's design.

References

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