

Website Review: NetGalley

by Katherine Picazo (SAIT ID #748066)

NetGalley is a website where professional readers (book reviewers, journalists, educators, etc) can request advance reading copies of new books from publishers. These readers then provide feedback in the form of a book review, which publishers then use for marketing purposes.

At first glance, NetGalley's home page elements are all self-explanatory. On desktop, there are two things that draw attention first: the big blue section in the top center that describes the website's main goal, and the orange buttons inviting the users to log in or to sign up for a new account. The use of complementary colors (blue vs. orange) to differentiate these elements is a nice touch. It only took me a few seconds of skimming to grasp all the important information on the home page.

After logging in, the main features of the website become available, but the layout also becomes a little more complex. This complexity is alleviated somewhat by having a green navigation bar appear in the top center, where users can access all the main features of the website.

Despite the layout including more elements (nav bar, sidebars, images, image slideshows) after logging in, the website makes good use of color, headings, and empty space to differentiate all the different buttons and sections of each page, which makes everything easy to find and click.

NetGalley also makes it easy to search for new books because of the way they've organized the books into genres. Some examples of these genres include: Biographies & Memoirs, Comics & Graphic Novels, and Literary Fiction. All of these genres are listed in a left-hand sidebar which the user can then click, and the main section of the page will then display all available titles.

The way NetGalley displays their book lists is with the use of book cover images in a slider, or an image carousel. It's not always obvious that it's a slider, because the arrow buttons to navigate the slider sometimes blend in with the cover images depending on the colors of the book cover, so this is one design element that can be improved on.

A brief skimming of the website shows that some accessibility basics have been met:

- Each page has a title
- URLs are always descriptive
- Images that need alt text have alt text (e.g. the website logo)
- Other images, such as book covers, do not seem to have alt text, but they are always accompanied by the book title and publication date in text so that the images can still be described
- The website can be navigated with a keyboard

However, some of the text can sometimes be hard to read because the text color is too light (some of these text colors fail the WCAG contrast checker for normal text size) or the text size is too small.

Overall, the NetGalley website is easy to use and navigate because of clearly defined buttons and nav bars, and good use of headings and space to define the different parts of a page. Using book cover images for their book lists in order to emulate real life bookshelves also makes the website feel good to use.