

Value Sensitive Design Assignment #2 (submit with your final project)

[General]

1. Briefly describe the website you are building (its purpose/functionality/etc.)
Our website, “Hello Books” is a forum for users to connect and discuss books. Each book accessible through the Goodreads API has a page with a short description, and users can create threads about different topics.

2. What problem is your website meant to solve? (If your website wasn’t intended to solve a problem, instead answer the following: what problem or problems *could* a website like yours solve?)

While Goodreads has the ability to create discussions around books, it is not the primary focus of this website (the primary focus is reviewing, not discussing). Our website provides a platform for readers to talk about different books, and all users of our site will *want* this particular feature, rather than it just being an off-to-the-side option, as it is on Goodreads.

3. Identify the stakeholders (direct and indirect) whose interests are relevant to your website.

The readers (direct)

Administrators (direct)

Authors and publishers of discussed books (indirect)

4. What values are at stake for these stakeholders?

For readers:

- The ability to have free, open, and honest discussion about books
- The assurance that they will not be harassed by other users

For writers/publishers:

- They probably don’t want negative feedback of their books

5. Is your website likely to undermine or compromise any of these values? Which ones, for which stakeholders, and how?

In the spirit of free and honest discussion for our readers, we will have to compromise the desire of the publishers and authors to not have any negative feedback about their work.

6. Which values does your website promote, for which stakeholders, and how?

Free and open discussion for the readers (by not removing reviews/discussions based on an option towards a particular book) and assurance that said readers will not be harassed (by removing comments that exhibit harassing behaviors. Some level of healthy debate is encouraged but direct personal attacks are not).

7. What counts as “success” for the website you are building? Given the relevant problem(s), stakeholders, and values that are at play, why is this account of success reasonable?

Getting a decent amount of readers to discuss and review books (particularly discussion, we don’t want to have just a bunch of reviews shouting into the void)

8. How does the broader social context surrounding your website affect the likelihood it will succeed?

This website is similar in content to Goodreads, however, the layout is a lot more similar to a site like Reddit, which encourages dialogue between commenters on a particular subject, so we hope the design similarity will encourage similar behavior.

[Privacy]

9. What user data will you have access to, and what might this data reveal about its subjects?

We have data about the user’s username and password, as well as which books they comment on or discuss. We don’t look at cookies for any other website, so we aren’t looking at Facebook/Twitter/etc data of our users. As such, the only user data we collect is data that users know they are giving us, i.e. data that they directly enter on our website. Since usernames are public on reviews and discussions, and user profiles with past reviews/discussions are also public, a user’s reading preferences and discussions are public knowledge. However, this isn’t tied to a user’s real life identity unless the user wants it to be (i.e. by making their username their full name).

10. What values are relevant to your website’s privacy policy? (Note that the relevant values will depend in part on the kind of website you are building).

Making sure that users can have free and open discussion: we won’t give data about their opinions to other websites/entities and we won’t link usernames to personal info.

Allowing moderation/preventing toxicity: We require users to be logged in to comment on books and participate in threads, therefore allowing us to deactivate accounts of users who harass others.

11. Describe how you took the relevant values into account in writing your privacy policy (e.g. what decisions and tradeoffs were made, and why).

Again, we value free and open discussion over not hurting publishers/authors feelings (or bottom line) so we don’t give user data to said publishers/authors. We also don’t tie personal data to usernames for the same reason.

[Autonomy]

12. In what ways might your user interface “nudge” users? Analyze a minimum of 3 features.

- 1) Users are required to make an account to access certain features on the website, and when they attempt to use those features, they are prompted to log in or register.
- 2) Users are encouraged to make a review/thread if no reviews/threads exist for the book yet
- 3) Users are told on the homepage that they need to make an account to “do more”

13. Do any of these constitute “dark patterns”? For each previously identified feature, explain why it does or does not.

- 1) This would constitute a dark pattern if we were manipulating people into making an account so that we could steal their information. However, we don’t collect any personal data, nor do we intend on misusing the data we do store, so no.
- 2) No, as discussion of books is the purpose of our site, and the data is only used for that purpose.
- 3) There is a chance that this could pressure users into creating an account. However, as previously stated, there are no evil intentions, and the amount of data stored with the creation of an account is the necessary minimum.

[Privacy Policy]

Here at Hello Books, we pride ourselves on only collecting the data that we need for our website to function. We do not collect any additional data for advertising purposes, nor do we sell any of your data to third party vendors. We collect the following data from our users: username and password, as well as threads, comments, and reviews that users make on books. The data is stored in a remote database, and after account creation, the password is never again accessed, keeping it secure. We use cookies only to keep track of the current logged-in user, and our website is not connected to any sort of social media, so you won’t be tracked by facebook/twitter/etc on our site. If you do not want us to collect any data whatsoever, you can opt out by not making an account. You are free to look at the books on our website and view any reviews/threads/comments, however, in order to participate in discussion, we need to collect the aforementioned data from you.