Letting Go of the Words is about creating great content for web sites, mobile sites and apps, and social media by thinking of content as conversation.

My goal is to help you give people a successful, engaging experience that satisfies both their needs and yours.

Together, through *Letting Go of the Words*, we'll plan, design, select, organize, write, illustrate, review, and test content.

In *Letting Go*, I call the people you are conversing with your "site visitors." I realize they may be "app users" or "people who read my blog" or "people who converse with me in social media." Please allow me to wrap all those phrases into "site visitors." Thanks.

What's new?

In this second edition, I've emphasized the theme of **content as conversation** even more than I did in the first edition.

- **Content** – Whatever you write, this book is for you. Copywriter? Technical writer? Subject matter expert who contributes content? Author or consultant creating your own web site? Editor? Content curator? Other team members working with content contributors? *Letting Go* is for all of you.
- **Conversation** – Every use of every web site and mobile app is a conversation started by your site visitor. In addition, today, we're all involved in conversations through social media, blogs and news with comments, and recommender sites where people post reviews. We use our smart phones for conversations (whether through text, voice, apps, or web sites).

In the new *Letting Go of the Words*, you'll find lots of guidelines for having great online conversations.

Lots has happened in the digital world since the first edition of *Letting Go of the Words*. In this new edition, you'll find tips and examples for content strategy, mobile, search engine optimization, and social media.

I found room for a chapter on usability testing and other evaluation techniques. Throughout, I didn't just add; I revised. I read every word and checked every example from the first edition. And I have lots of new examples to share with you.

What's the book like?

Let's talk about what this book is and what it is not, as well as about how you might work with it.

Letting Go is about writing and design, not technology

Letting Go of the Words is about strategy and tactics, not about tools. Technology changes too fast to be a major part of the book – and the principles of good writing transcend the technology you use.

Letting Go includes many examples

You'll find many screen shots – often with call-outs to show what works well and what I recommend changing. For many of the examples, I show how I might revise the content. In consulting projects, I work closely with the client to be sure that what I suggest is accurate and consistent with the web site's personality and style. But I haven't worked with all the groups whose sites I show in the book. So, sometimes, my revision is my best guess at what might work well.

Sites and apps change quickly. If you look for an example from the book, it may already differ from what I show. That does not invalidate my example. Even old examples can make excellent learning opportunities.

Letting Go reflects user-experience design

User-experience design (UX) is a philosophy, an approach, and a process for creating products that work well for their users. When you practice UX, you focus on the people who will use what you create: their goals, their needs, their ways of working, and their environments.

When you talk to others, you may hear terms like "reader-focused writing," "usability," and "plain language." To me, those are all names for what we are striving for. They are all part of the same idea; they are all aspects of UX.

You can jump around in the book

A book has to be linear, but you don't have to use it that way. The path I've set is a logical way to move through the book:

- planning (including content strategy), overall design, home pages, pathway pages, and destination pages

- organizing, headlines, headings, writing, lists and tables, links, and illustrations
- getting from first draft to final content, starting an organic style guide, and evaluating your site or app or social media strategy

But that may not be the most logical path for you or your project. Feel free to jump around in the book.

For example, if you are revising a web site, you might want to start with the first two chapters and the first interlude and then jump to the end of the book, doing a usability test of your current site and developing an organic style guide.

Many people tell me they use the book as an ongoing reference. They went all the way through it when they first got it. They come back to it over and over when they have a specific question or need. Some use the table of contents as a checklist. Find your own path through the book. Keep it nearby and use it often.

Let's continue to converse

Questions? Comments?

Write to me through my web site, the Elsevier web site, Twitter, LinkedIn, or other social media – or join me at a conference or webinar.

www.redish.net – includes my blog, a list of events where I'm speaking, and lots more.

http://booksite.mkp.com/redish/lettinggo – includes a link to a site for instructors (sample syllabi and suggestions for exercises)

Twitter: @GinnyRedish

LinkedIn and other social media: Ginny Redish