

Case Study: OpenStax Book Details Page

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October 29th, 2018

Background

The book details page on the OpenStax website is the nexus of several key pieces of functionality. It serves as the primary method to view OpenStax's online textbook offerings, order physical copies of the book, view related educational resources, and, for instructors, report that they are using the book in their classroom ("book adoption").

It's redesign was identified as a key priority for early 2018.

The screenshot shows the OpenStax website interface for the 'College Physics' book. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for News, Contact, Give, Login, and the RICE logo. Below this is the OpenStax logo and tagline 'Access. The future of education.' followed by navigation links for Subjects, Higher Education, K-12, and Our Impact. The main content area features a large blue book cover for 'College Physics' on the left. To the right of the cover, the title 'College Physics' is displayed in a large, bold font. Below the title are links for Contents, Concept Coach, Resources, Details, and Errata. A descriptive paragraph follows, detailing the book's scope and features. Below the description, the 'Senior Contributing Authors' are listed: Dr. Paul Peter Urone and Dr. Roger Hinrichs. A link to 'See all authors >' is provided. On the right side of the page, a 'Get this title' section offers options: View online, Download a PDF, Order a print copy, Get it on iBooks, and DAISY or BRF. A note indicates that the online view is Section 508 Level AA accessible. At the bottom of this section, there is a question 'Using this book, or interested in adopting it for your course?' with two buttons: 'ADOPT THIS BOOK' (orange) and 'INTERESTED' (dark grey). A downward-pointing chevron is centered at the bottom of the page.

Book details page circa 2017

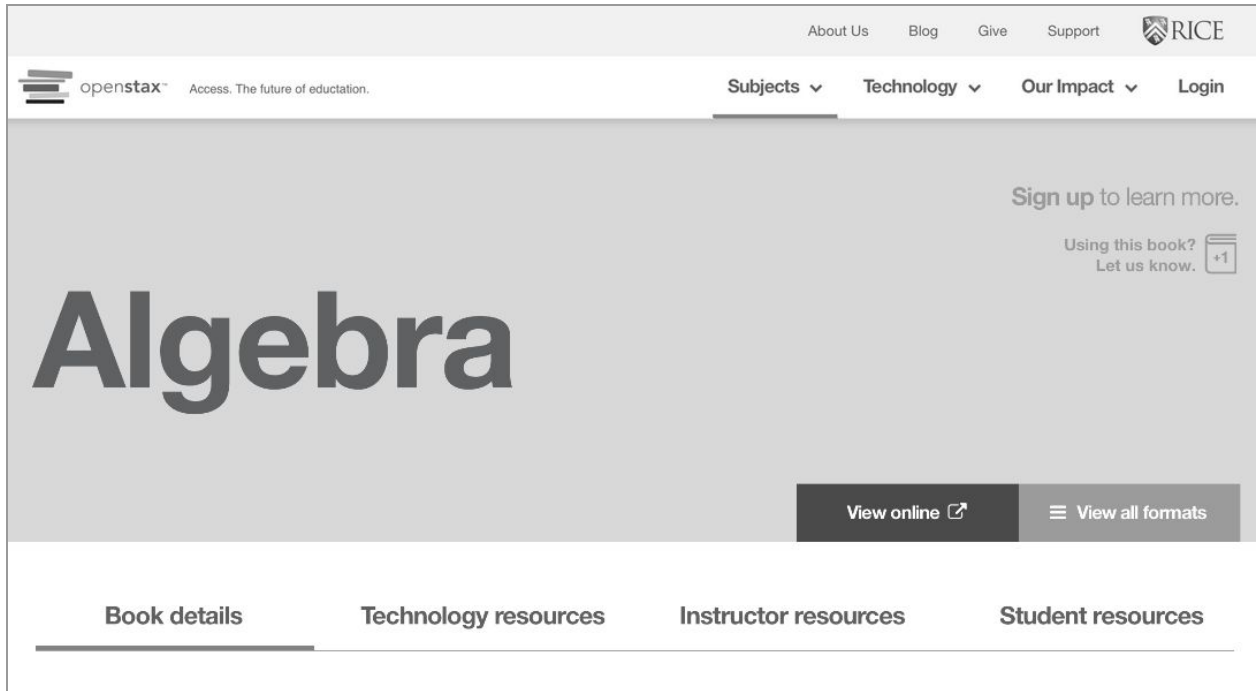
Objectives

- Generate more click throughs to partner resources for instructors
 - OpenStax gets a referral commission for each resource used by an instructor.
 - Resources were buried under a long page scroll, with an ineffective top nav, making them undiscoverable
- Receive more qualified clicks on the book adoption button
 - OpenStax's grant funding is directly tied to the reporting of this number
- Increase views of the online web view of OpenStax books
 - The longer-term goal is to move as many students as possible to this view, as it allows for richer content alternatives, and the ability to generate useful student data.
- Decrease downloads of of PDFs
 - Aside from being a static format, there is a considerable cost to the repeat downloading of high-resolution PDFs

Design

To address the the above objectives several key design changes were made:

1. "View online" was given the primary action button, with other versions of the book places behind a secondary button ("view all formats),
2. Content that was previously down the page -- primarily student and teacher resources -- was organized into tabs with headers for greater recognition and to facilitate scanning,
3. The paid teacher resources were placed under "Technology resources,"
4. The book adoption button was reworded to "Using this book? Let us know." and placed up the page.



Screenshot from user test mockup version one

Testing

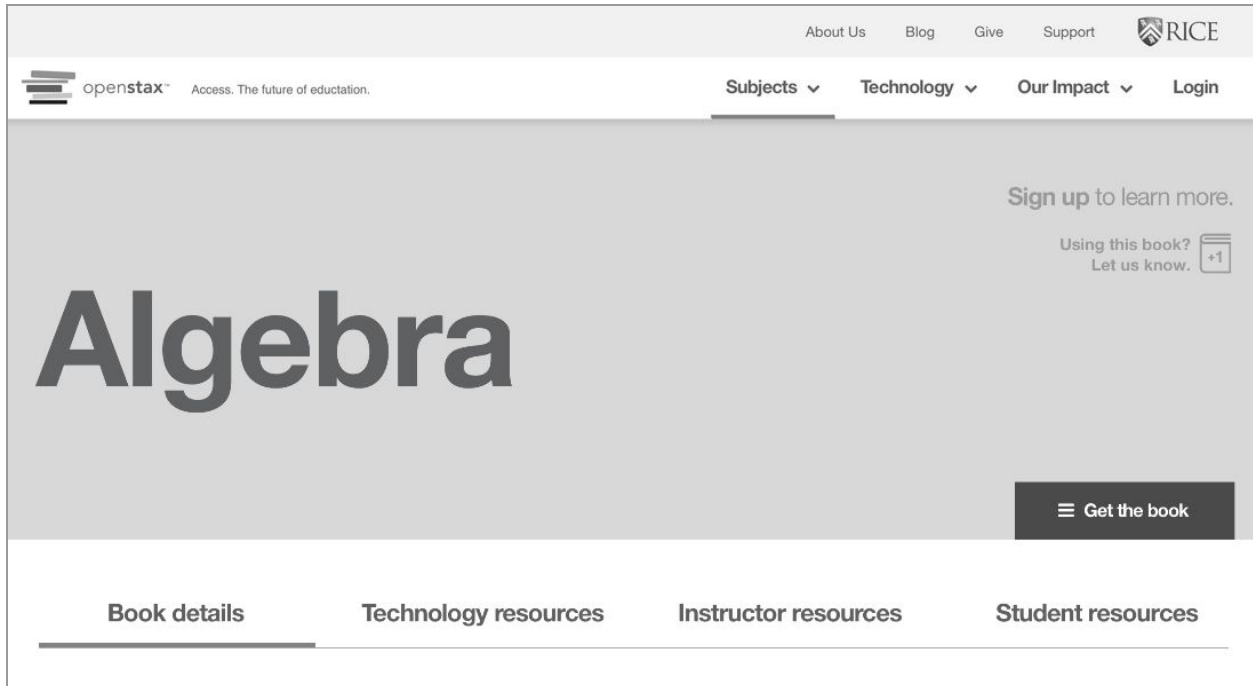
The design was first tested on college instructors using a moderately-interactive grayscale mockup. We learned the following:

- Instructors were successful in finding both the online and PDF versions of the book,
- they were more easily able to identify and click through to resources,
- the language on the button was more readily understood,
- The term technology resources not well understood,

The same design was then tested on students, we learned:

- Critical error - students were not able to find the book -- the “view online” vs. “view all formats” was not understood

Halfway through the test we replaced the two buttons with one single button -- “Get this Book” -- and all subsequent tests were successful.



Screenshot from user test mockup version two with button change

Unfortunately, this terminology was not effective in communicating with instructors for several reasons:

1. They thought it was a purchase link (the book is free to use),
2. they weren't sure what other versions were available,
3. they weren't able to reliably view the book's content (important when making an adoption decision)

Final Design

Based on the previous round of testing, we realized we couldn't find a button that could effectively speak to both audiences, so we decided to bring back part of the previous design, with modifications:

- The "Get this book" header was returned with all available formats listed underneath. This section was then placed under the book details tab, which is the default view.
- This section also contains the link to report a book adoption -- "Using this book? Let us know."
- "Technology resources" was folded back into the instructor resources section.

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Elementary Algebra

Book details Instructor resources Student resources

Get the book

- Table of contents
- View online
- Download a PDF
- Order a print copy
- Download for Kindle

Sign up to learn more

Using this book? Let us know.

Summary

Elementary Algebra is designed to meet the scope and sequence requirements of a one-semester elementary algebra course. The book's organization makes it easy to adapt to a variety of course syllabi. The text expands on the fundamental concepts of algebra while addressing the needs of students with diverse backgrounds and learning styles. Each topic builds upon previously developed material to demonstrate the cohesiveness and structure of mathematics.

Senior Contributing Authors

Lynn Marecek, Santa Ana College
MaryAnne Anthony-Smith, Formerly of Santa Ana College

Errata

All OpenStax textbooks undergo a rigorous review process. However, like any professional-grade textbook, errors sometimes occur. The good part is, since our books are web-based, we can make updates periodically. If

New book details page circa 2018

This design was subsequently tested with instructors and students with both group successfully completing major tasks.

Results

Overall, the newly designed page was a success. This includes:

- Student resource downloads went up.
- The number of instructor resource downloads stayed flat. From this we realized we needed to break paid resources back out into their own tabbed section and highlight them with a new name. This is scheduled for a subsequent release.
- Vastly improved numbers on instructor adoption -- A conversion rate of 42.86%, up from 8.37% in the same period the previous year.

- No change in online vs. PDF views. No surprise here as no significant change was made to this functionality. As it is a longer-term goal for the page, we were satisfied with this, and are looking to explore new ways to address this using what we have learned in the previous tests.