

Book Review

Assistive Technology: Essential Human Factors, Thomas W. King, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999, 305 pp., \$41.50.

Understanding human factors in assistive technology practices, particularly the essential considerations related to how people use assistive technology, receives emphasis in Thomas W. King's *Assistive Technology: Essential Human Factors*. The author stresses the key human elements in the successful use of assistive technology by individuals with disabilities. From years of experience in the field, the author shares actual accounts of individual assistive technology users and the reader receives a practical view of human functioning within the context such use. The book describes human factors, provides a framework for understanding human factors in assistive technology, and explains strategies for maximizing human use of assistive technology devices and services.

The general highlights of this book

- Several areas contain persuasive arguments for consideration of essential human factors.
- The author provides convincing examples of the importance of human factors in the consideration of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.
- There are well-told stories, profiles, and scenarios of real people and their use of assistive technology throughout the book.
- Chapter Eight contains a thought-provoking section on assistive technology across the life span.
- Chapter Nine draws attention to relevant factors on implementation, use, and non-use or abandonment of assistive technology.
- Human factors and their importance are highly accessible to readers unfamiliar with the topic.
- Readers familiar with the topic will further expand their knowledge base.

Specific areas of excellence

- The content is extraordinarily well-organized.

- The book has plentiful examples of actual assistive technology-related experiences by real users.
- The author includes practical tips on considering the individual's physical, cognitive, and linguistic skills for example one tip is to examine the tools and technology in your own life to understand the human factors in a product's design.
- Consideration of factors related to the person including the special needs, capabilities, limitations, preferences, and satisfaction with a particular assistive technology.
- Consideration of human factors related to success with assistive technology devices including, transparency, cosmesis, affordances, and constraints.
- Consideration of factors related to assistive technology services including assessment, evaluation, diagnosis, and intervention.
- The author makes well-drawn connections between physical devices, their design, components, and how people use them.

Areas in which the publication can be enhanced

- Decrease redundancy of definitions of human factors like cosmesis and translucency.
- Include a section in preface on targeting an audience for the book.
- Strengthen the special education and general education teacher perspective.

Common threads throughout this publication

- Human factors and issues related to considering human functioning and assistive technology are major themes throughout this publication.
- Throughout the majority of the nine chapters, the author maintains focus on the human factors, their contribution to success with assistive technology devices, and their paramount importance for professionals working with individuals who may benefit from such devices.
- A second consistent element throughout the book is the use of illustrations, pictures, graphics, and tables to communicate and reinforce major points.

- The “Quick Human Factors Quiz” is an effective use of illustrations.
- Each chapter concludes with study questions designed to engage the reader in review, application, or synthesis of material, making this feature another common thread through the book.

Recommendations of its utility to rehabilitation professionals

- Since the author cites many diverse references from a variety of fields including concentrations in the areas of rehabilitation, communication, psychology, and human factors, the book serves as a resource for professionals who seek an understanding of the multifaceted considerations in the human factors associated with assistive technology devices and services.
- Professionals learning to assess, evaluate, design, and implement assistive technology services will benefit from the numerous examples and practical tips presented by the author.

- Professionals unfamiliar with assistive technology and the consideration human factors will find the topics covered accessible and connected to their own use of technology for their everyday productivity and functioning.
- Individuals teaching assistive technology courses to graduate or undergraduate students will also benefit, particularly in the elements related to how people use assistive technology devices and benefit from support services.

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