UX-inspired recommendations to design accessible digital representations of physical spaces, or,

**It’s Time To Take Another Look At That Floor Plan.**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nielsen Heuristic</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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| Aesthetic, minimal design | • Inconsistent or inaccessible color use.  
• Nonexistent/incomplete keys.  
• Use of “You are here.”  
• Unresponsive (did not resize with screen). | • Use color minimally and never as the only piece of information.  
• Re-evaluate key each time the floor plan is updated.  
• Design web-first floor plans: don’t upload the print-out you use for tours or the architect’s floor plan. |
| Consistency & standards | • Lack of street names or other identifying features directly outside library building.  
• Main entrance isn’t clearly marked or centered in design.  
• Lack of adjacent information about parking or navigating through the rest of campus.  
• Missing information about environment: quiet zones, study areas, food availability, etc. | • Have a different image/visualization for each floor and organize them by when a user will encounter them.  
• Pair written floor descriptions with an image carousel instead of a floor plan.  
• Provide audio files with explanations of each floor/distinct area.  
• Show off variety of informal learning spaces within the library. |
| Match between system and the real world |                                                                 |                                                                                                                  |
| Error prevention | • Inaccessible floor plan PDFs.  
• Lack of descriptive alt text for floor plan images.  
• Use of special software/code that breaks or can only be used in some browsers.  
• Other space representations found on other sections of the library website.  
• Formal names used to identify rooms or spaces, not common names. | • Create TRULY descriptive alt text.  
• Minimize text inside floor plan images.  
• Consider SEO when choosing where a floor plan will live on a website.  
• Choose information and language based on target audience.  
• Provide adjacent contact information for users with accessibility questions. |
| Help & documentation |                                                                 |                                                                                                                  |
| Recognition rather than recall | • Different images and views require use of a back button or swapping between windows.  
• Library floor plans evaluated bore no resemblance to campus maps.  
• Use icons and colors in predictable ways. | • Condense floor plan on one web page using accordions, carousel, tabs, etc.  
• Adopt language, features, colors, or designs from campus maps.  
• Reserve red for emergency features. |

**Conclusion**

If we continue to post floor plans on our library websites, they should be fully accessible and assist ALL users as they plan their journey to our physical spaces.