

Better designed documents for biodiversity stewardship schemes Thomas Lee, Rachael Wakefield-Rann

People are impacted by the way documents are designed. Some combinations of image and text seem colourless, impersonal and bureaucratic, whereas others are friendly, vibrant and captivating. In the absence of humans communicating messages, documents play an important role, they speak for us. This research looks at the way biodiversity monitoring documents are designed and how they might be designed differently to increase engagement with voluntary stewardship programs.

Poorly resourced government institutions needing to communicate and engage private landholders for the purpose of biodiversity stewardship is one example where documents play an important role. Organisations that rely on customers doing things of their own free will (rather than by paying them to do it or by law) face increased demands associated with user and customer-centeredness. New and ongoing participation in specific environmental initiatives is in part contingent on pleased and interested customers. This doesn't always align with contrasting institutional processes and cultures associated with the internal needs of government bureaucracy. In such a context, documents are often used by different people for different purposes, for example: by scientists for monitoring wildlife, by lawyers to validate contracts for stewardship agreements, by businesses to improve relationships with customers, and by landholders who want to learn about their land. Often documents in such contexts feature bodged together features aimed to appeal to different audiences in the absence of a coherent overall design. Design research and knowledge of literary genres can help understanding why certain visual and textual features of documents are the way they are, and what other options might be available for better alternatives. This article outlines some directions for research where these alternatives might be investigated more rigorously.



Personalised field guide prototype.

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