

Pulkit Sharma | UX Designer | June 2025

Case study: reedsy.com

Transforming overwhelm into action: a usability-led redesign
for reedsy's publishing marketplace

This is **reedsy.com**

The screenshot shows the reedsy.com homepage. At the top is a dark navigation bar with the 'reedsy' logo, a dropdown menu for 'Apps', and links for 'Marketplace', 'Projects', 'Books', 'Learning', and 'Help'. On the right of the navigation bar are icons for notifications, email, and a user profile for 'Pulkit Muke...'. Below the navigation bar is a hero section with the text 'Meet world-class publishing professionals' and 'Browse profiles and collaborate on projects.', accompanied by an illustration of three people working. A horizontal menu below the hero section lists various services: Editing, Design, Publicity, Marketing, Translation, Ghostwriting, Website, and Reviews. On the left is a search filter sidebar with the heading 'Show me editors who specialize in:' and a 'Learn more' link. It contains checkboxes for 'Developmental Editing', 'Copy Editing', 'Editorial Assessment', 'Proofreading', 'Query Letter Review', 'Indexing', and 'Book Coaching'. Below this is a 'Refine your search:' section with dropdowns for 'Genre' and 'Languages', and a text input for 'Keyword (e.g. climate, essays...)' with a search icon. The main content area shows 'Showing 1680 professionals' and a 'Show skipped' button. A profile for 'Miriam S.' is displayed, featuring a 5-star rating (2 reviews), a 'Skip' button, a 'Select' button with a checkmark, a bio, and location/reply rate information. At the bottom, there are book covers for 'Breaking the Ice', 'Teaching the Story', 'LEARNING', and 'ROLL F INITIAT', along with an 'Introduction video' thumbnail.

It **connects authors** with **publishing professionals**

The authors can focus on the writing and **reedsy.com** can be used to find:

- Editors
- Designers
- Publicity
- Marketing
- Translators
- Ghost writers
- Web designers

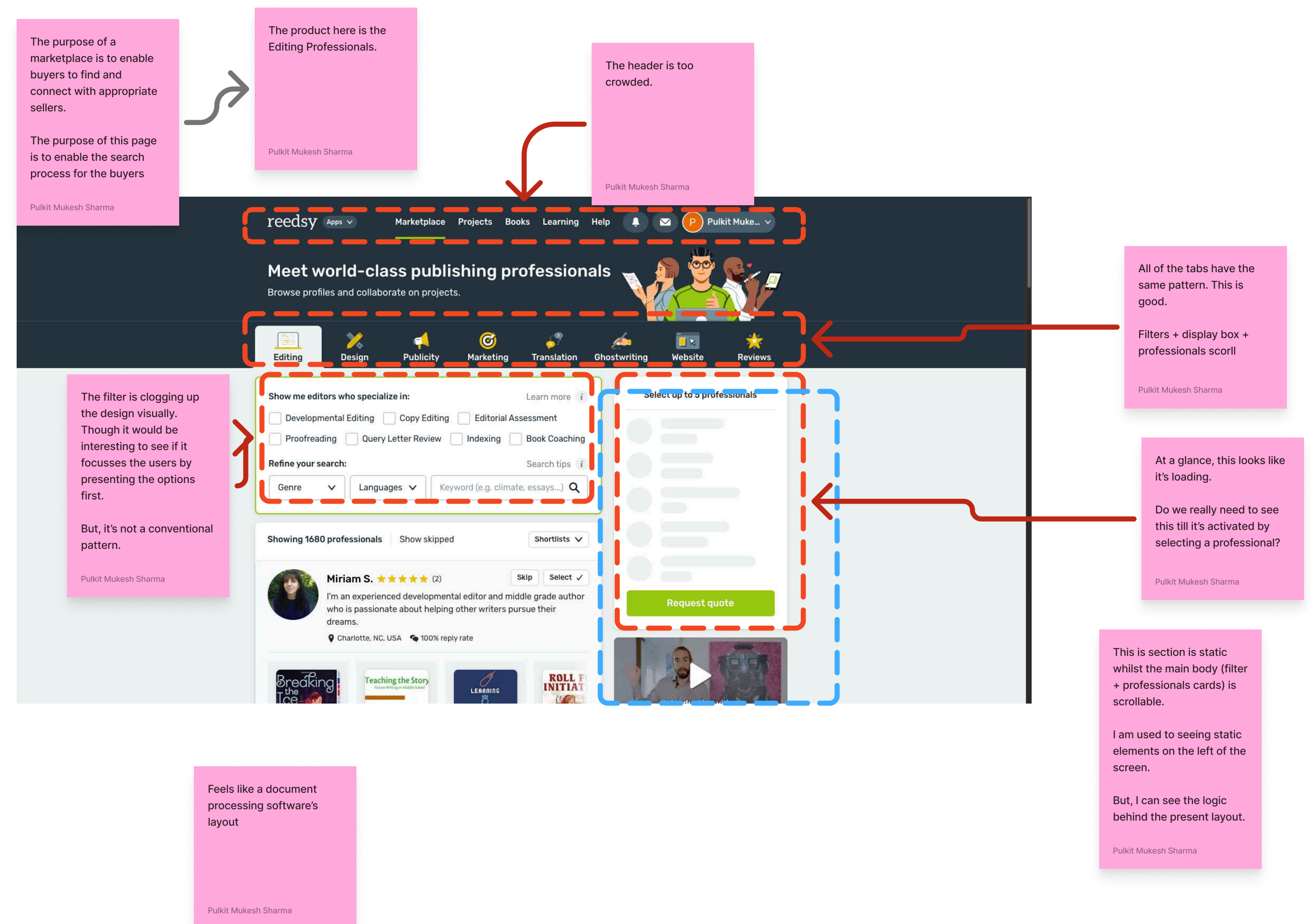
My heuristic evaluation found **reedsy.com** to be functional but **difficult to use. Users agreed.**

Highlights: heuristics audit

Crowded interface: no visual or information hierarchy

Lack of flexibility: efficiency is curbed by the interface

High cognitive load: unconventional patterns combined with a dense interface hinder understandability and usability

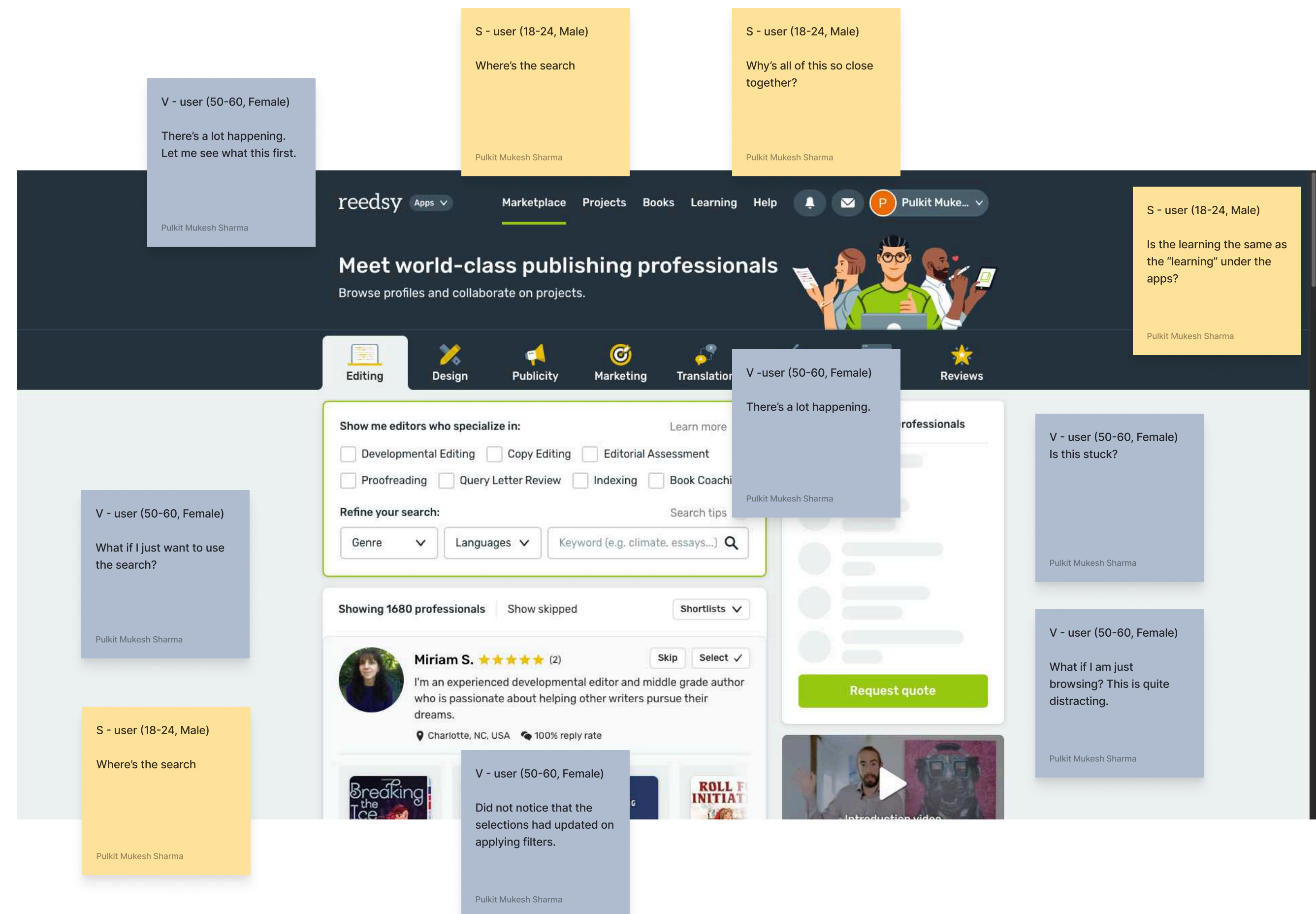


I observed and interviewed two target users: both **users were overwhelmed.**

Quotes: user testing

S, a 21 year old medical student who is helping his mother publish her cookbook. He said: **“Why is everything so close together?”** and **“Where’s the search!”**

V, a 57 year old writer, is looking for editors to work with. She said: **“What if I just want to use the search... will it work without the filters?”**



Meet world-class publishing professionals

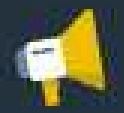
Browse profiles and collaborate on projects.



Editing



Design



Publicity



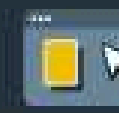
Marketing



Translation



Ghostwriting



Website



Reviews

Show me editors who specialize in:

[Learn more](#) 

- ☐ Developmental Editing ☐ Copy Editing ☐ Editorial Assessment
☐ Proofreading ☐ Query Letter Review ☐ Indexing ☐ Book Coaching

Refine your search:

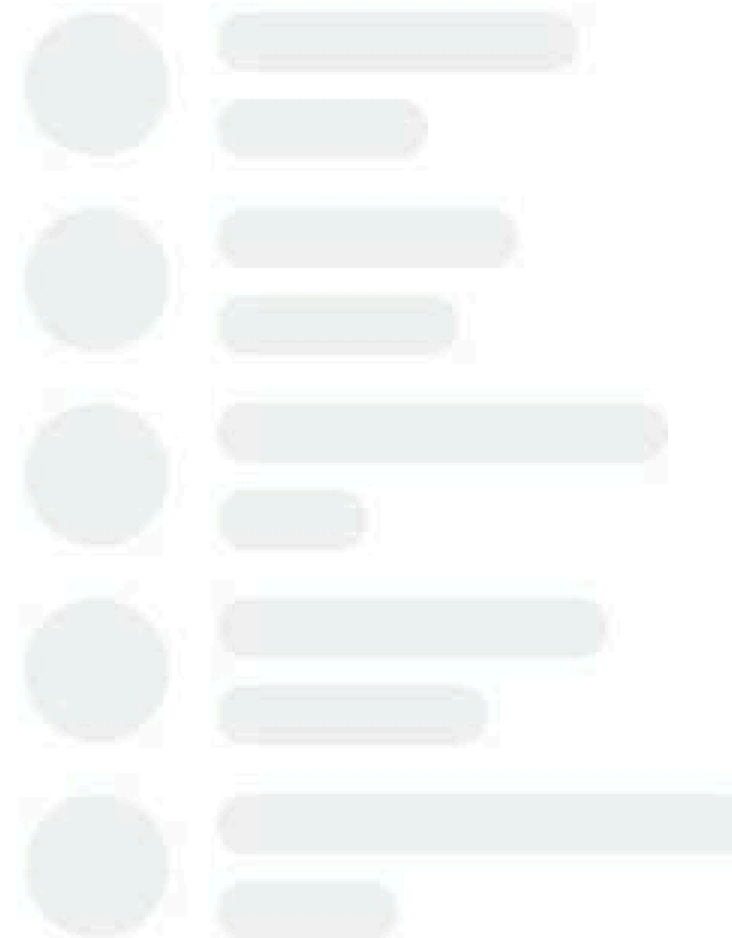
[Search tips](#) 

Genre 

Languages 

Keyword (e.g. climate, essays...) 

Select up to 5 professionals



[Request quote](#)

Showing 1680 professionals

[Show skipped](#)

[Shortlists](#) 



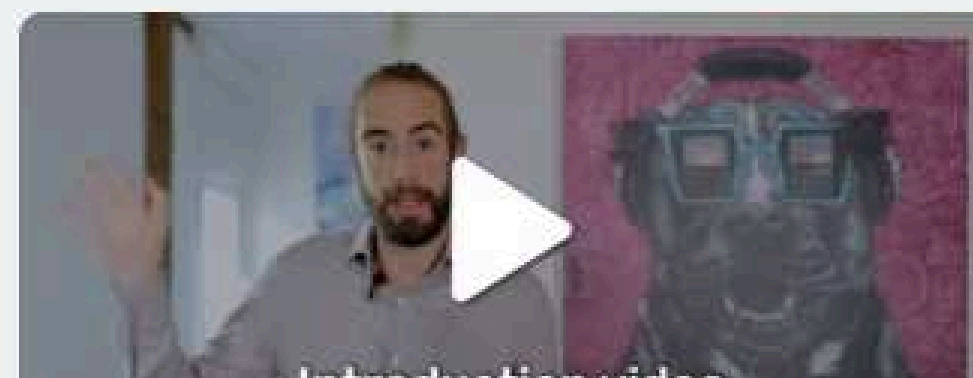
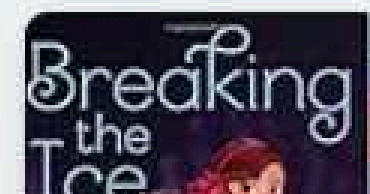
Miriam S. ★★★★★ (2)

[Skip](#)

[Select](#) 

I'm an experienced developmental editor and middle grade author who is passionate about helping other writers pursue their dreams.

 Charlotte, NC, USA  100% reply rate



How might we **make this page less overwhelming** for the user?

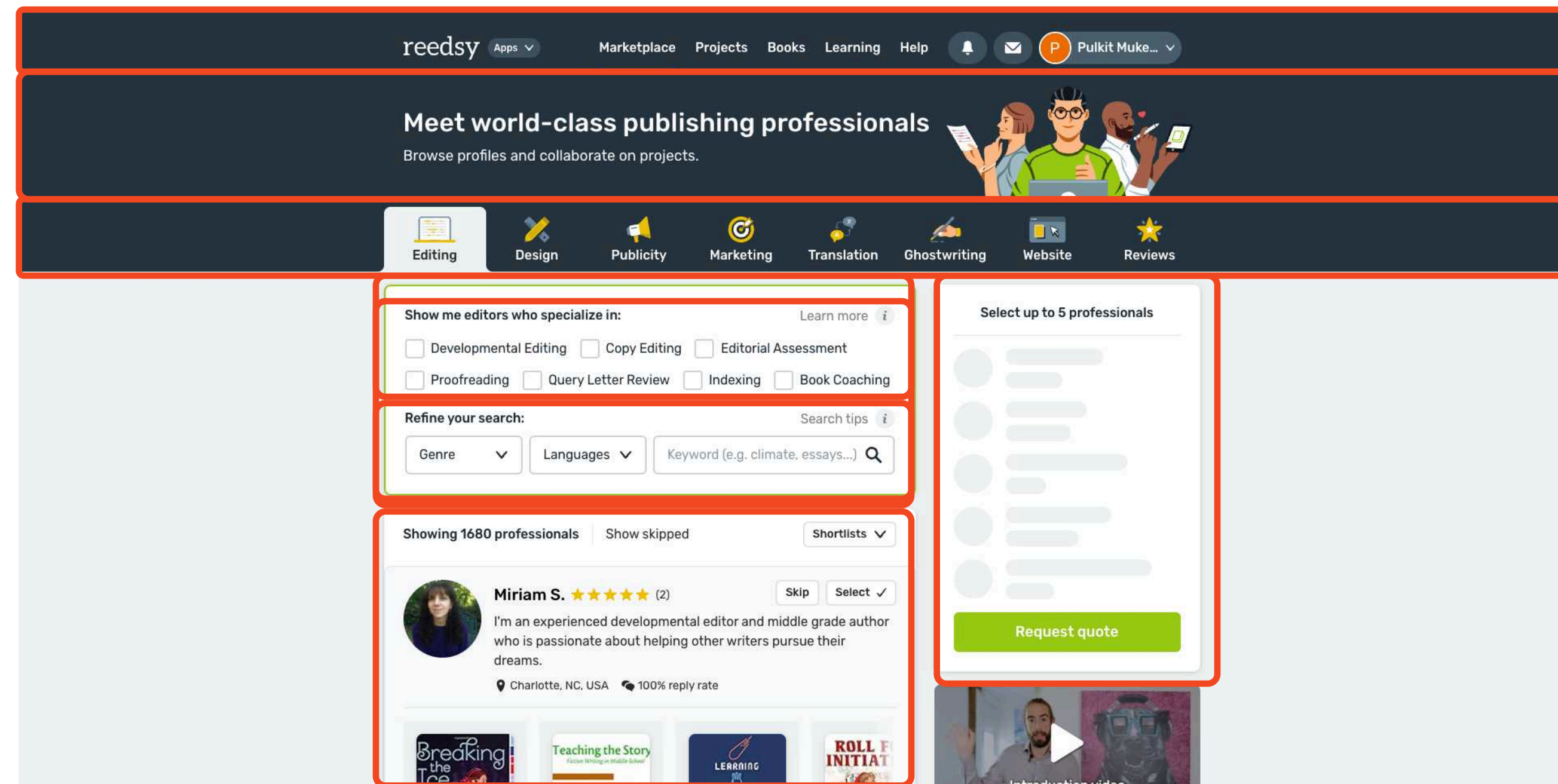
Because, first impressions matter.

There were plenty of **opportunities**. Low hanging fruits.

Improve relevancy in nav bar: Two out of six items can be found within “apps”

Search process is feels **regimental**. Consider GDS style search and filter

Less information on “business cards” will make it easier to consume and compare.

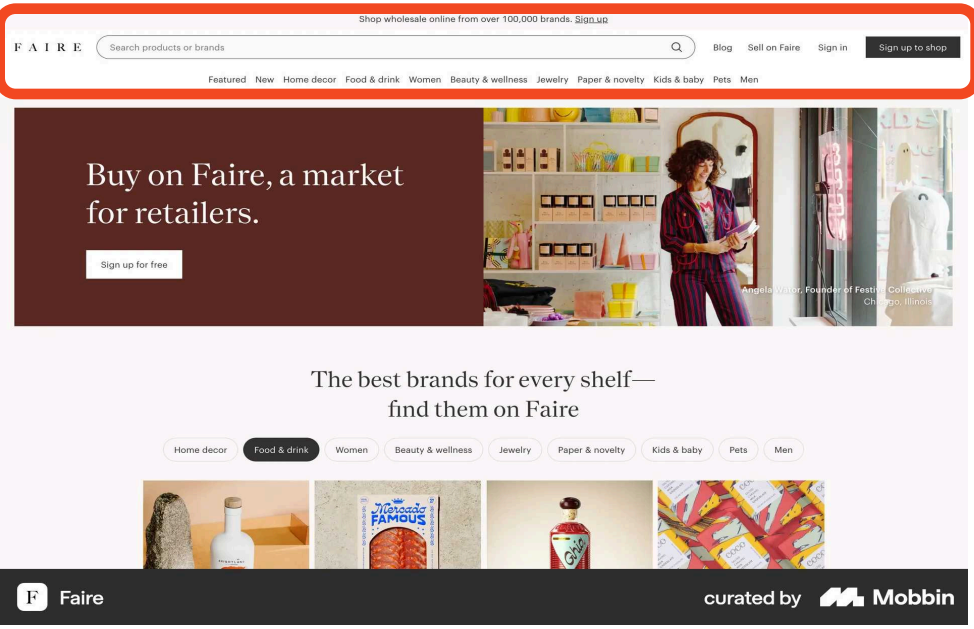
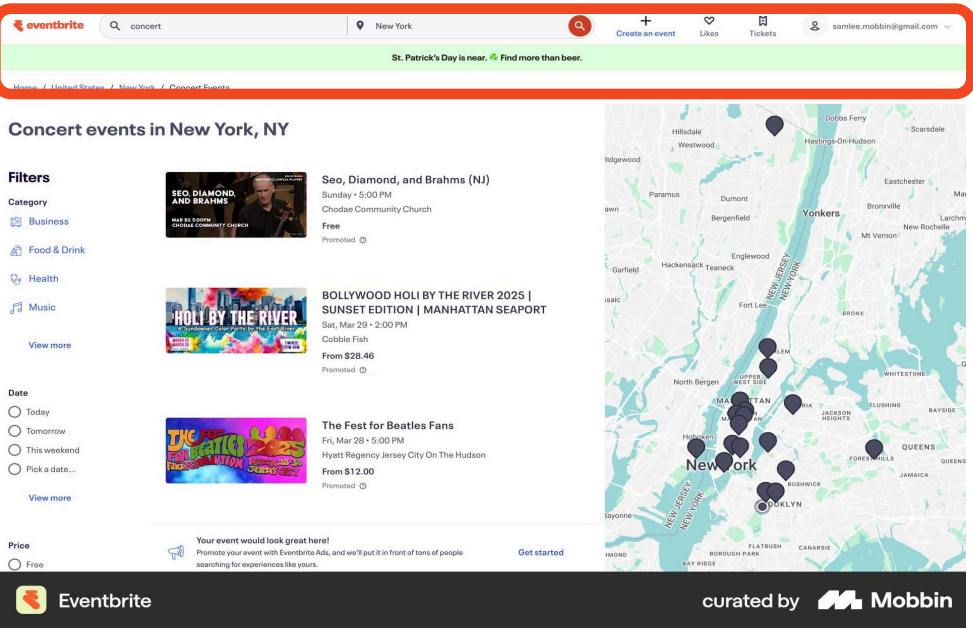


Current **header** takes up a third of the fold

You have to know what you want to search, there's **no scope for browsing**

The centre of the page is **dense**, and the sides are empty. Creates **imbalance**.

I studied search and filter experiences* as a part of the ideation

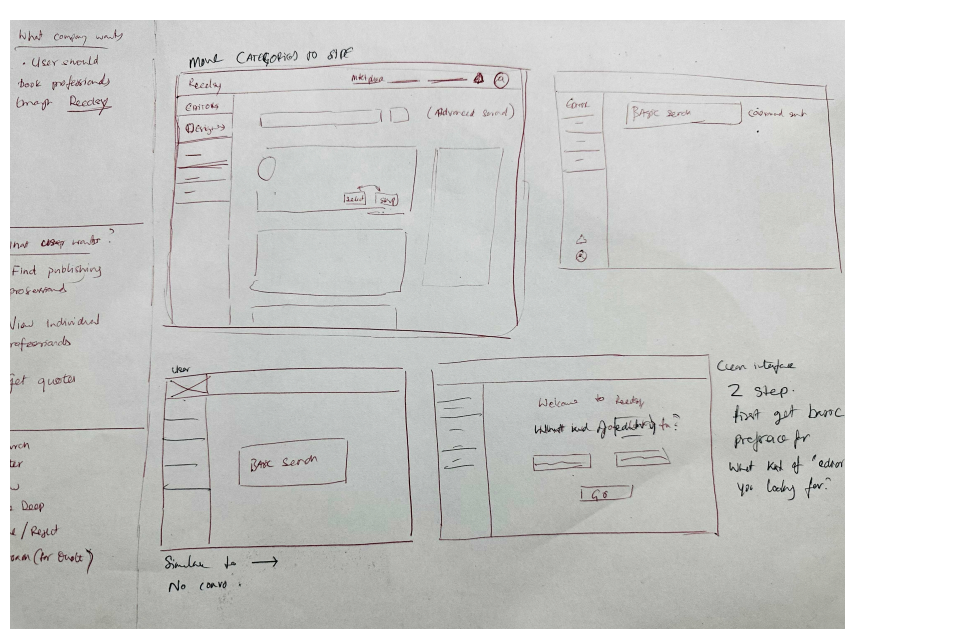
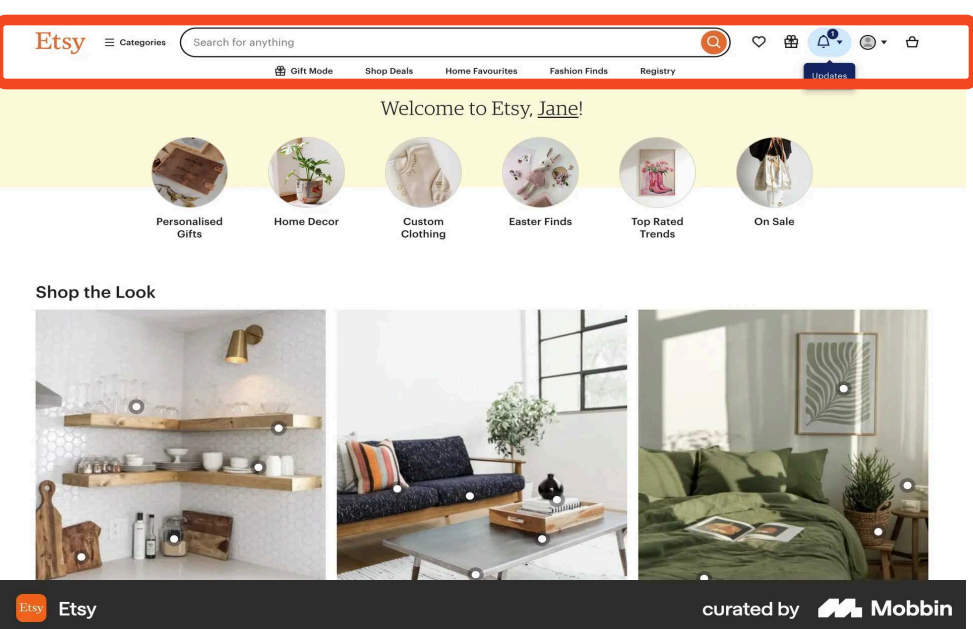
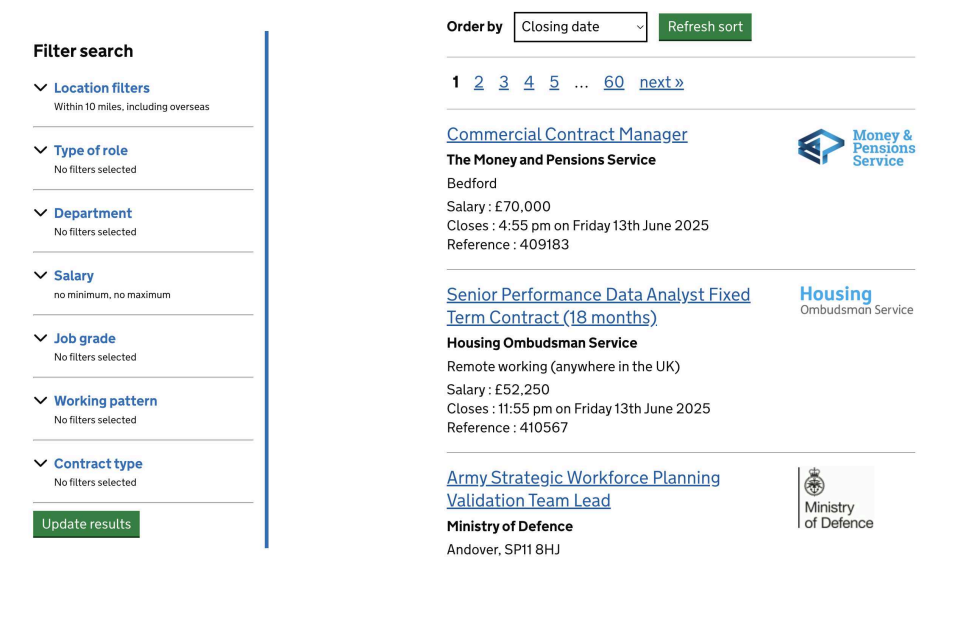
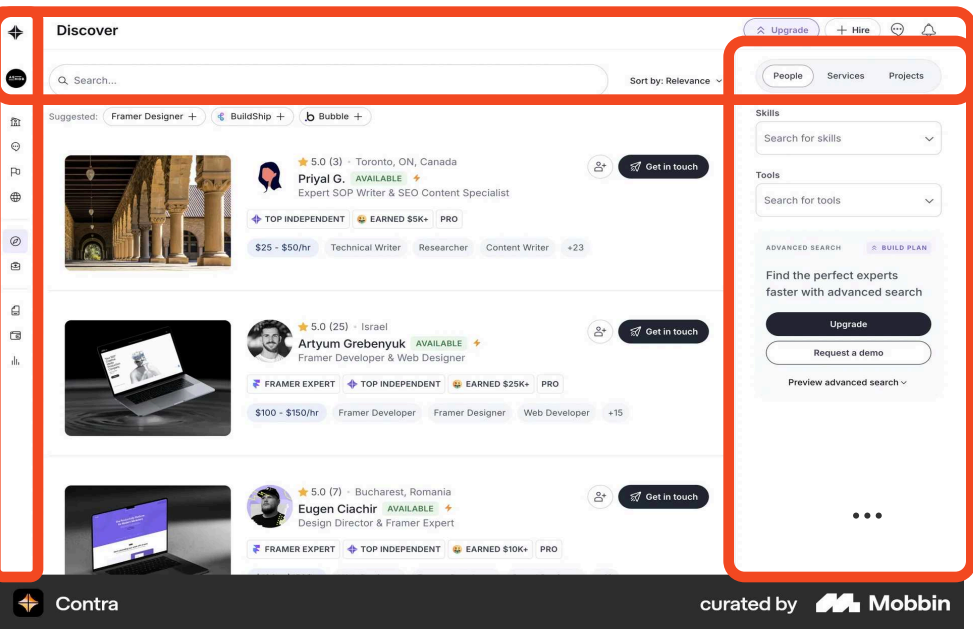


I studied **platforms that facilitate a buyer-seller relationship**. The common features were:

The **user was in control of how many parameters** they wanted to apply

The users could **explore the content without applying filters**

A **clear page hierarchy** made the act of searching and filtering easier

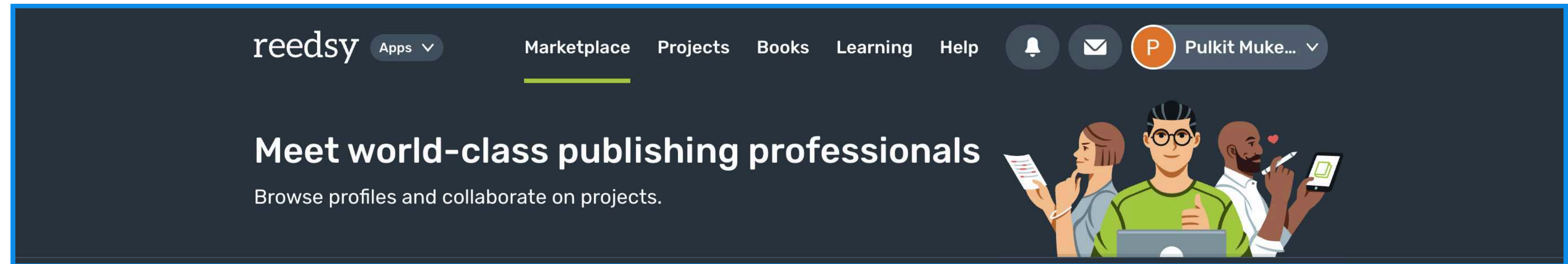


*using Mobbin

Decluttering for ease of use: A focussed top navigation bar was the first step

Before

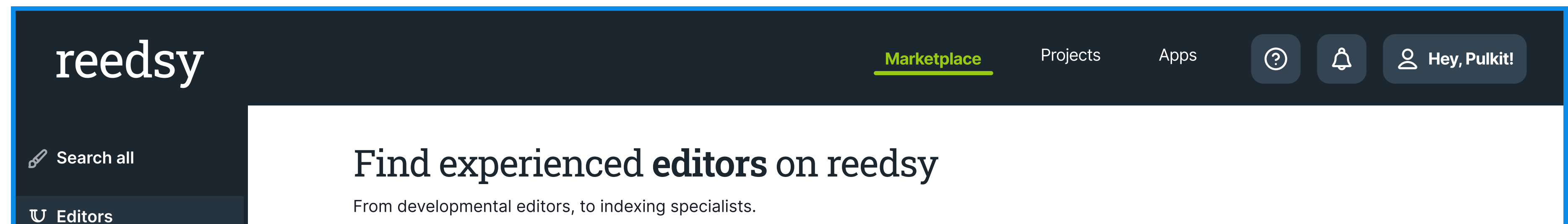
Bad use of space and overcrowded with too many unrelated options



Books and learning are both separate products (apps). They are independent. Putting the all together only creates distraction.

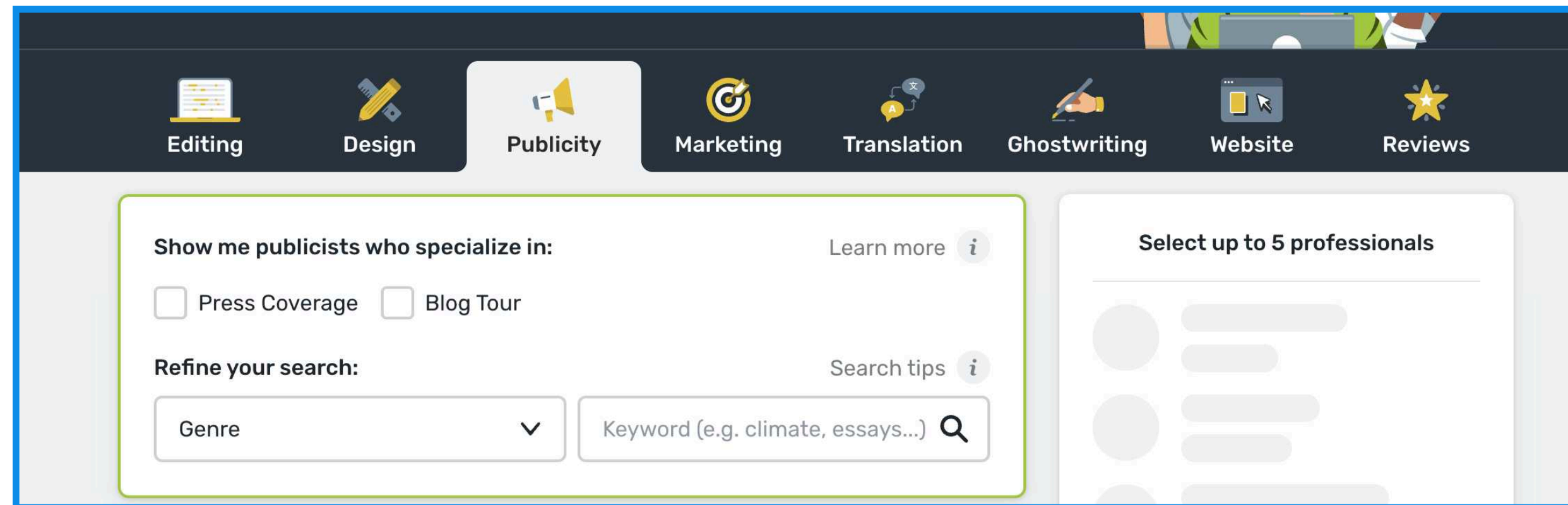
After

Improving the information architecture helped reduce the number of items needed



By moving “books” and “learning” into “apps” I created space, cognitive and physical, within the navbar. I also propose combining messages and notifications. Finally, I turned “help” into an icon button.

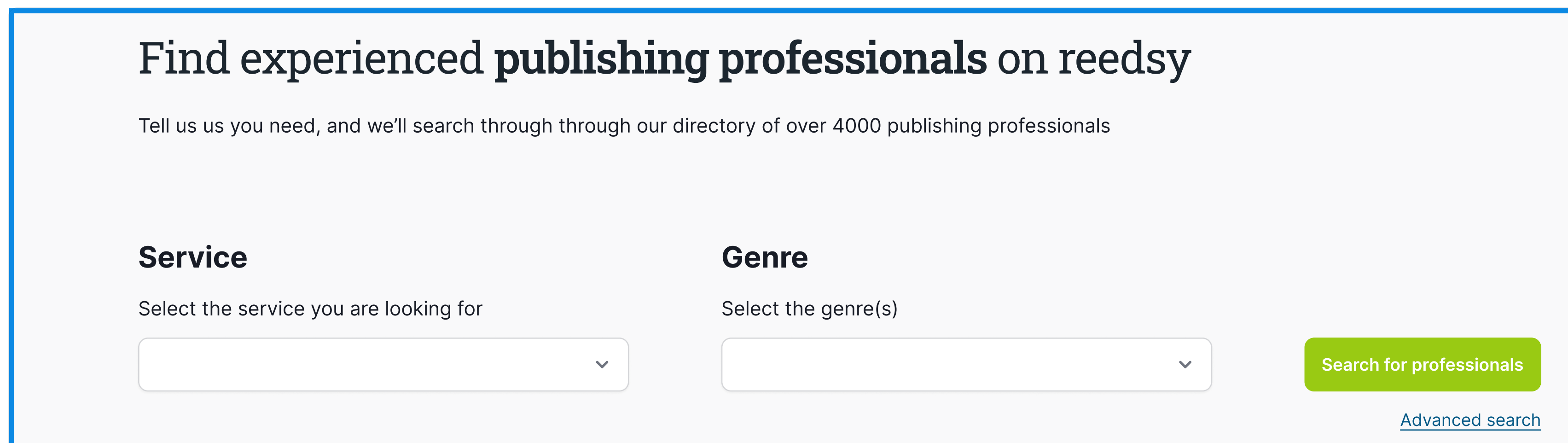
To give control back to the user, I used the GDS approach to search by splitting the search into basic and advanced



The 'Before' interface features a dark navigation bar with icons and labels for Editing, Design, Publicity, Marketing, Translation, Ghostwriting, Website, and Reviews. Below this, a search form is divided into two main sections. The left section, titled 'Show me publicists who specialize in:', includes checkboxes for 'Press Coverage' and 'Blog Tour', and a 'Refine your search:' section with a 'Genre' dropdown and a 'Keyword (e.g. climate, essays...)' text input. The right section, titled 'Select up to 5 professionals', shows a list of professional profiles. The search form is highlighted with a green border.

Before

Here the user has to know exactly what they want, the **search pattern left the users confused by having to decide the specialisations.**



The 'After' interface is a simplified search form titled 'Find experienced publishing professionals on reedsy'. It includes a subtitle 'Tell us us you need, and we'll search through through our directory of over 4000 publishing professionals'. The form is divided into two main sections: 'Service' and 'Genre'. The 'Service' section has a label 'Select the service you are looking for' and a dropdown menu. The 'Genre' section has a label 'Select the genre(s)' and a dropdown menu. A green button labeled 'Search for professionals' is positioned to the right of the dropdowns. A link for 'Advanced search' is located at the bottom right of the form.

After

This pattern allows the user to drill down by focusing on the basic requirements first.

If they wish they can go straight to the advanced search.

To give control back to the user, I used the GDS approach to search by splitting the search into basic and advanced

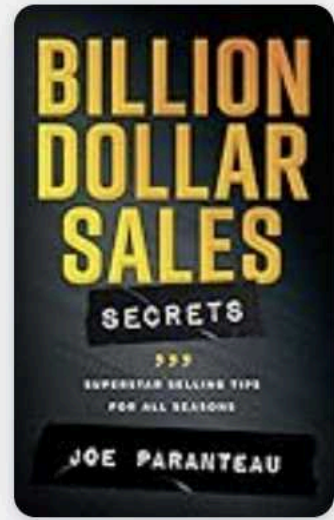


Vicky L. ★★★★★ (0)

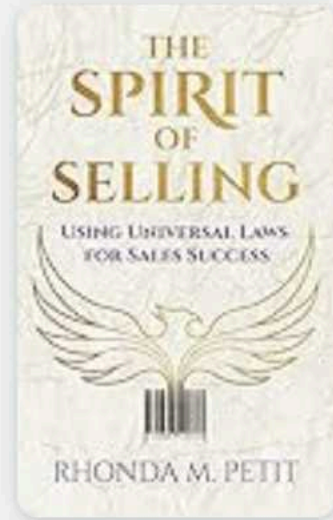
SkipSelect ✓

I've worked in PR for twenty years, starting in-house at publishing houses including Sourcebooks and Tyndale House Publishers.

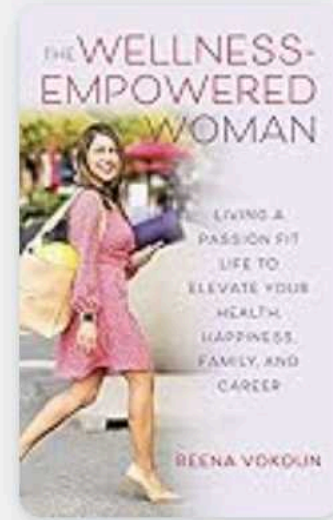
📍 Chicago, IL, USA 🗨️ 100% reply rate



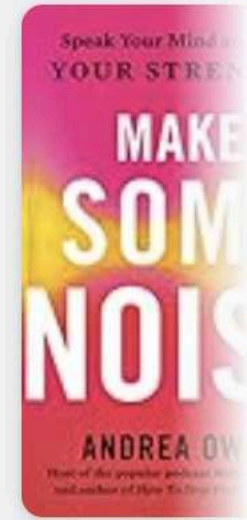
Billion Dollar Sales Secrets: Superstar Selling Tips for all...
Paranteau, Joe



THE SPIRIT OF SELLING: Using Universal Laws Fo...
Petit, Rhonda M.



The Wellness Empowered Woman: Living A...
Vokoun, Reena



Make Some Noise Speak Your M...
Owen, Andrea

Before

The card relies on the user to read and engage deeply. It does not allow the user to easily compare one professional to another.



Olivia Rhye
★★★★★ (12)

📍 London, UK 🗨️ 98% reply rate

Writer and eagle-eyed editor, specialising in art, design and fashion, with extensive experience in the higher education industry.

3 years
Experience

2 works
Published

Get quote

Skip

Add to list +

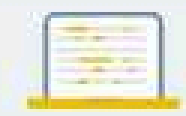
After

This card has been designed to help the user quickly assess the professional before deciding whether they want to read further.

Objective experience and publications statistics facilitate easy comparison.

Meet world-class publishing professionals

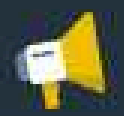
Browse profiles and collaborate on projects.



Editing



Design



Publicity



Marketing



Translation



Ghostwriting



Website



Reviews

Show me editors who specialize in:

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Refine your search:

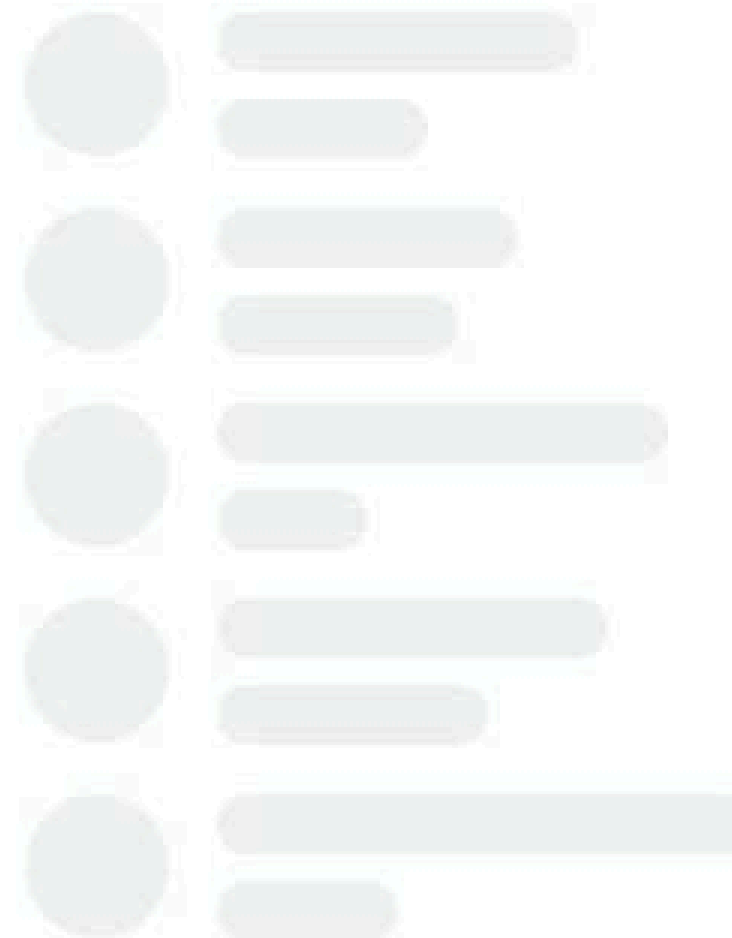
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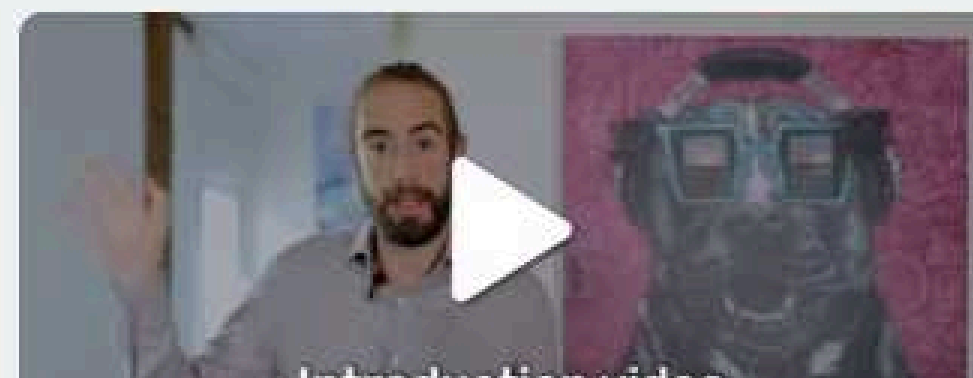
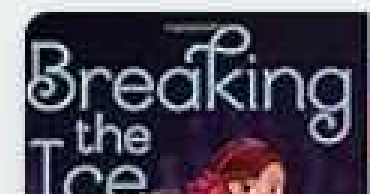
Miriam S. ★★★★★ (2)

[Skip](#)

[Select](#) 

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 Charlotte, NC, USA  100% reply rate



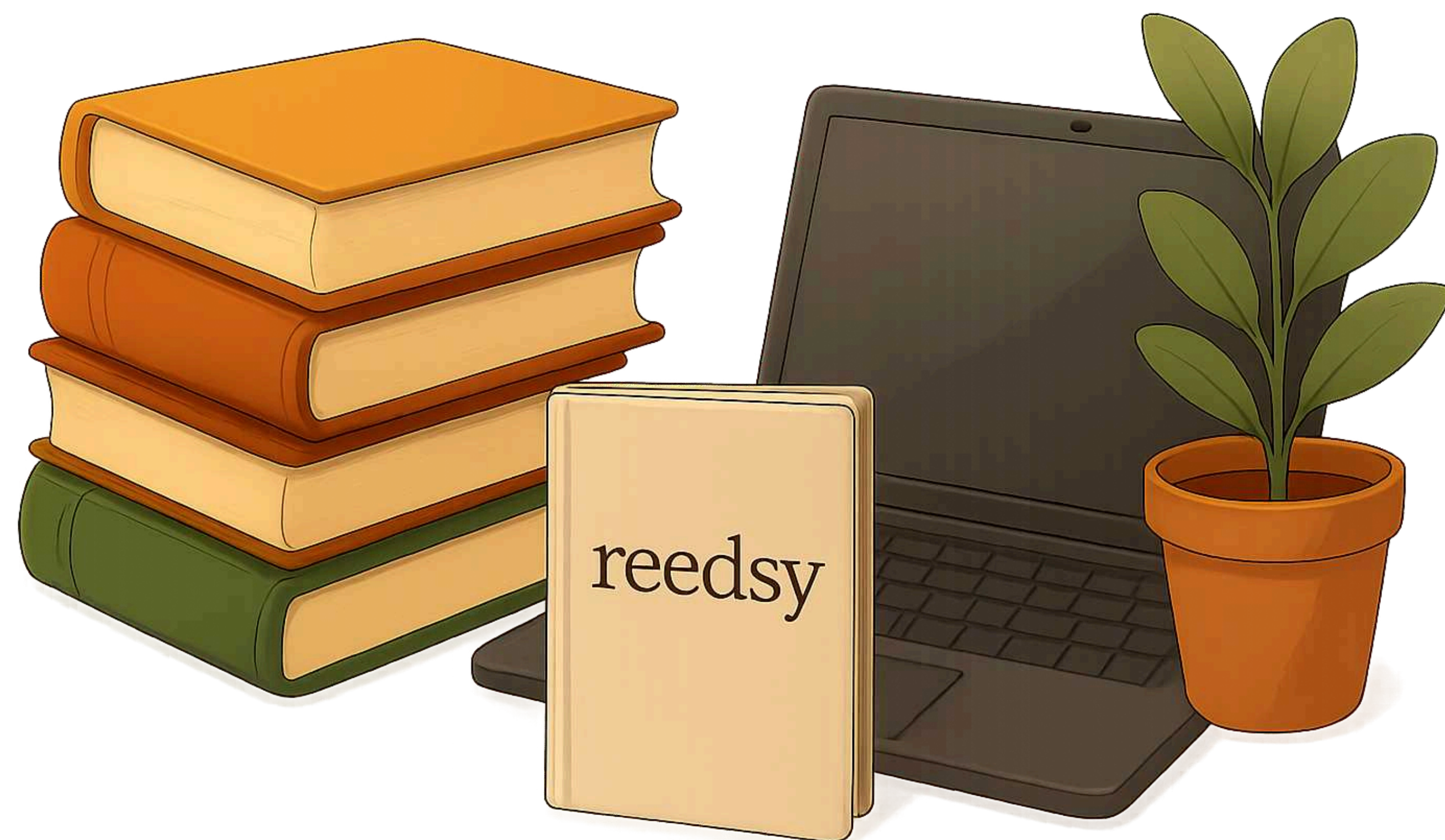
How it started.

A dense interface that came with a high cognitive load.

The users did not know how to initiate a search for their publishing professional.

Search and results display had morphed into one identity. An identity that made the user think and work hard.

How it's going. (1/3)



Find experienced publishing professionals on reedsy

Tell us what you need, and we'll search through our directory of over 4000 publishing professionals

Service

Select the service you are looking for

Genre

Select the genre(s)

Search for professionals

[Advanced search](#)



How it's going. (2/3)

Though the cost of the **two step search** may have a **higher interaction cost**, the user has to face a lot less mental load.

There are only two search parameters to deal with.

A clean and controlled landing for the user through progressive disclosure.

reedsy

MarketplaceProjectsApps

Hey, Pulkit!

Filter search

Specialisation

Languages

Apply filters

My lists (3)

Service

Select the service you are looking for

Genre

Select the genre(s)

Search for professionals

Order by

Response rate

Olivia Rhye

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (12)

3 years Experience

2 works Published

London, UK

98% reply rate

Writer and eagle-eyed editor, specialising in art, design and fashion, with extensive experience in the higher education industry.

Get quoteSkipAdd to list

Dr James M.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (12)

24 years Experience

7 works Published

Ark., USA

74% reply rate

I am a freelance proofreader, helping writers, editors, and publishers strive for perfection and sell more books.

Get quoteSkipAdd to list

Elena Cooper

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (12)

3 years Experience

2 works Published

Brighton, UK

67% reply rate

Experienced crime, thriller, and contemporary fiction editor. Books published with Big Five as well as

Get quoteSkipAdd to list

Select up to 5 professionals

Request quote

How it's going. (3/3)

The additional filters of the advanced search have been placed on the left side. But, access to the basic search hasn't been lost.

Common regions create **separation between search and display areas.**

The white space is important as it contributes to the brand perception.

With the changes, finding publishing professional through reedsy.com is a pleasant and delightful experience.

Focusing on usability, will create and deliver business value.

Higher engagement:

Users can explore without friction, which improves browsing and shortlist behaviour.

Lower bounce rate:

Users no longer feel overwhelmed or confused about how to begin.

Perceived trust &

professionalism: Clean layout and intentional design elevate the brand perception

Better conversion:

Clearer CTAs (“Get quote,” “Add to list”) help users proceed confidently.

Find experienced publishing professionals on reedsy

Tell us what you need, and we'll search through our directory of over 4000 publishing professionals

Service

Select the service you are looking for

Genre

Select the genre(s)

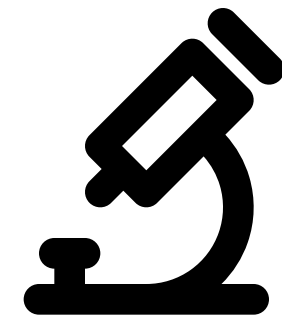
Search for professionals

[Advanced search](#)

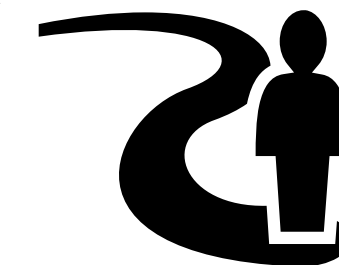


What's next for this redesign of reedsy.com's homepage (if I was in-charge of it)

Testing the new concept through **comparative usability testing** and **A/B testing**.



Continue **refining the search experience**, especially for first time users. I would also **examine the next steps within the journey** (getting quotes, and selection)



Go-live and **use analytics to track performance, looking for drop-offs** within the search journey

