

## **Project Report-out & Lessons Learned**

ENSE 271

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Tristan Brown-Hannibal,

Qurrat Ulain,

Chirayu Patel

WordPress Backup:

<http://download.uregina.ca/DownloadAttachment/539cc41e254485499a8524ade91f8e27/>

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## Team name & members

Tattooines:

- Qurrat Ulain
- Chirayu Patel
- Tristan Brown-Hannibal

## Project sponsor

Dr. Tim Maciag (ENSE 271 Lecturer)

## Business need/opportunity

The IABC Regina chapter's website needs improvement. The ability for IABC Regina to communicate with its users is limited by a website which does not meet their wants or needs. A redesign of their front-end and back-end interfaces would certainly improve the ability for all IABC Regina members to gain access to the opportunities IABC Regina offers.

A redesign's main goals would be to fix the pain points IABC's executive team has. Fix the navigation and make it pretty and functional, on both desktop and mobile. Simplify the website as much as possible, including automated administration wherever desired.

The mission statement of IABC Regina is:

“Our mission is to connect our members through learning, networking and mentoring opportunities, and to promote business communications standards.”

Anything from the website that actively hinders that mission statement should be removed or improved. Allowing IABC Regina to help others, and themselves, flourish.

## Reflections on project planning

### North Star & Carryover Customers Selected:

The North Star customers our group agreed on are members of IABC Regina, as IABC Regina's mission statement is dedicated to their member's pursuits. Our Carryover customers are members of the general public not affiliated with IABC Regina or the communications profession, people in the field of communications that are not members of IABC Regina, and representatives of companies looking to advertise on the IABC Regina website.

### Assumptions made and constraints uncovered:

For this project, our group had various assumptions made since the beginning. The first assumption made was that this project would be developed via WordPress, and that WordPress would be satisfactory to meet IABC Regina's needs. We also assumed that all team members would remain enrolled in this course, and that Dr. Maciag would help us in guiding our design exploration, paired with regular meetings with IABC Regina.

Our group began with several constraints, including a limited budget, a threshold of maximum three developers working on building the site and that there was a deadline of April 16 for the project to be completed. Along with these constraints, our team also identified that we had to stay up to IABC standards and that all communication and collaboration would be done over the internet.

### Key findings from affinity diagramming, empathy mapping:

#### **Empathy Mapping:**

During the empathy mapping, our team settled on the main goals of our website design. Some common themes that appeared in the empathy maps for all the prospective customers were that they would be looking for a website that was easy to navigate, a website that clearly stated the resources available, and a website that made them feel excited to explore their options.

#### **Affinity Diagramming:**

Through the affinity diagram, our team was able to visualize the different tasks we would be designing on the website. We created the affinity diagram based on the notes IABC provided as well as extrapolating information from their current website. Some of the key changes we realized we had to make were cleaning up the website navigation, improving the mobile website design, increasing the available ways on the website to engage with customers and finding a way to take payments online. In addition, the information in the original website was either out of date or unnecessarily complicated. One of our tasks was to display the information in a coherent and engaging way and make it easy for the administration to be able to change it.

### Initial & Evolution of your USM/MVP (why is what you produced an MVP?)

Our initial User Story Map outlined several MVPs, including functionalities such as designing a website with a functioning desktop and mobile view, creating a responsive Events page that users can interact with and sign up for an event, designing a "Post an Ad" option that advertisers can use to add a job listing and pay for it as well. Additionally, we also wanted to create a page that users can connect with community members on. We decided to create this functionality by including an option for users to engage with IABC's social media or redirect them to IABC International's community hub.

Our final website reflected the previous MVP's closely, with a few changes. We were able to implement an engaging view for both the desktop and mobile display. Our events and careers page displayed the functionalities outlined by IABC such as being able to view event

details, sign up for events (through an external event sign-up page), view relevant job postings, and navigate through the various career resources available. We also implemented the option for advertisers to post a job, creating an information submission form and a payment option. Lastly, the functionality we included for users to be able to connect with the community varied slightly from what we had initially planned, as we did not include a link to the IABC International community hub. Instead, we decided to display IABC Regina's recent Twitter feed and include redirection links to their Facebook and LinkedIn.

We also added another MVP that was not initially included in our USM. This was the “Newsroom” page that displayed the latest blog posts made by IABC Regina. It was a functionality that would keep customers engaged and connected to IABC Regina's latest developments.

The reasons that make the functionalities we chose into minimum viable products is that they were necessary to reach the objectives stated by IABC Regina. They wanted their website to be user-friendly, engaging to customers, easy to navigate and highlight the main purposes of IABC Regina. By implementing the Events page options, the different things a user can do on the Career's page, displaying the Newsroom posts and including the redirect links to 3<sup>rd</sup> party websites when necessary, we were able to achieve the goals imagined by IABC Regina.

Prototyping activities and findings. Ensure you discuss how your team linked design ideas back to a minimum of three topics discussed in class relating to people-centred design (affordances, gestalt, constraints, etc.)

In our prototyping stage, our team wanted to ensure we created a website that included the design components IABC Regina desires as well as use the design lessons learned in class. This meant creating a website that had a low threshold and a high ceiling and ensuring that the design prioritized concepts of usability, utility, and desirability.

While prototyping our website on Adobe XD, our team employed various techniques to make it as easy as possible to use while also including all the different MVPs.



For instance, on our homepage, we tried to include many of the topics learned in class. We maximized utility by highlighting the main functions available on the website (i.e., the Events, Careers and Newsroom page highlights). We wanted to make the website easy for the users to navigate, so we made sure the navigation bar highlighted each link as clearly as possible and included a search bar as well for users looking for specific information. The layout of the homepage is consistent, with only the information changing dynamically. This improves the memorability of the website but also makes the design desirable. Users are engaged when they find the information of the website relevant to them and based on the empathy maps and feedback from IABC Regina, our team was able to narrow down the main information users would be looking for on the website. This included upcoming events, career opportunities and exciting updates from IABC Regina. Following that, we prioritized those pages on the homepage. Overall, our website design has lots of features and is straight-forward to use for any customer, regardless of whether they are a member with IABC Regina or not.

## Reflections on Project Results

### Summarize how you felt about this project (likes/dislikes):

In general, we as a group feel positive about the entire experience. The main aspect that was the main contributor to a feeling of positivity, was having IABC Regina folks to talk to. It was a neat experience to have a 'homework' assignment that was an equivalence to a real-life career activity. It is rare to have an opportunity to talk to an actual customer in the academic side of things. When interacting with the IABC, there is an extra incentive to do a good job and provide a useful experience for them. This also leads into what the main drawback of the project was.

The main dislike of this project for our group was the stress of working with a robust creator like Adobe XD, and showcasing the results to IABC, only for WordPress to slightly hinder the results. Going from Adobe XD to WordPress felt like breaking a promise to the IABC folk. It feels like you build something very modern and useful, only for the end result to be slightly lesser.

### Summarize what went well during the project:

We as a group feel like the conversations with IABC went well. We seemed to be on the same wavelength in our discussions, and if there was a questioning of our priorities from either side, we would try to address it and achieve an outcome which both sides desired. The main contributor to our meshing was the steps we made early on in the project. Things like finding the NorthStar customer, empathy mapping, and user-story boarding helped to keep things straight in our brain.

### Summarize what not went well during the project:

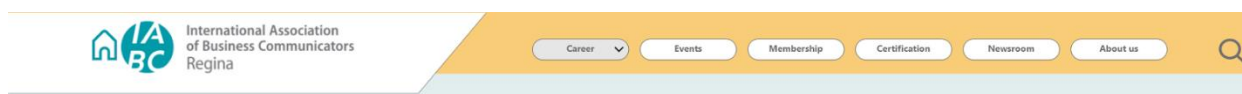
Initialing collaborating on WordPress was a very difficult obstacle. In our initial exploration we looked into using GitHub and merging our project by hand. This was extremely unproductive and caused a lot of time waste in the initial steps to project activity #4. We eventually found a simple solution in using AWS to host a LightSail instance with a WordPress image. Once we got this implemented, collaboration became a breeze.

Another issue that was trying to pick and choose lo-fi designs to proceed with when going to high-fidelity. It was difficult to choose designs from a low fidelity, and then go straight to implementation to a high fidelity because the time commitment to making a high-fidelity is much greater. We wanted to make sure we picked the right design to continue with, while still managing our time in the semester. This is a constraint fairly specific to the academic structure, as the design timeline was greatly condensed. On reflection it may have been helpful to do a merging or continuation of our preferred ideas into a medium fidelity and then continue from there.

### How successful was your team and translating prototypes into WordPress reality?

In general, we believe we were not that successful in translating our design from our prototypes to our WordPress reality. For example, a small thing in our header.

Our Adobe XD prototype:



Our WordPress solution:



Our Adobe XD design has a little notch, which is visually appealing, but try as we might, we couldn't achieve that desired result with our knowledge of WordPress and CSS. These types of small changes add up over a design, and in the end the final design was dictated a lot by a combination from our lack of WordPress experience and the lack of base WordPress features.

### Did you find that the people-centred design ideas discussed in lectures helped/hindered your design explorations?

It is a funny thing to talk about helping or hindering in the context of a project. In general, the aspects of people centered design are useful and help provide meaningful outcomes to our customers, but the ability to produce work is hindered from our process of learning a new topic. That is, sometimes, we know just enough to know we don't know the correct thing. And when that occurs you must think deeper.

An example of this friction we felt can be found in the about us page, on the about us page we have a button which pops out a sidebar which contains anchor links on the page. Originally, we just had a little blank box which when clicked produced the outcome. From our discussion in class, we knew this was bad, as the user would have no way to know that was the function. But we also didn't like it when it had a label with a sidebar, as it felt non elegant. In this case we were hindered in our progress by our knowledge of people-centered design but helped in a way to create a better product.

What would you do the same on future projects?

Diving into requirements and having discussion into our outcomes was vital to the positive success we had during this project. If we were to take anything from this project into future projects, we would take the understanding stage, where we looked into empathy mapping and affinity diagramming. Having a better understanding of the actual problem we are trying to solve as well as who we are solving it for, is invaluable.

What would you do differently on future projects?

We think we would create more prototypes in our design for future projects. The number of prototypes we designed regarding low fidelity was not enough to truly explore the types of ideas we wanted to implement. Having more prototypes means we have a more accurate picture of what the benefits and drawbacks are of different designs are, and we can merge our designs from a more expansive pool of thoughts, which we believe would've helped us in our implementation of high-fidelity design. And as previously mentioned, a look into medium-fidelity designs would also be beneficial.

Summarize opportunities and design ideas for future work:

We think the next MVP we would include is more community interaction. That is the IABC were interested in having a more involved connection with their community. It may be helpful to implement a forum type system or perhaps a commenting system that allows members of the community to have more public conversations with their users. It may also be wise to have community polls or user content such as blogs and such. This is the route we would go down with more time.

## WordPress Themes and Plugins

Document the WordPress theme(s) and plugin(s) selected in your proposed WordPress instance.

Ensure to include in your summary:

- o Theme/plugin name
- o The user rating (and the number of users who rated the theme/plugin)
- o When the theme/plugin was last updated?



- o How many active installations there are of the theme/plugin?
- o What, generally, the theme/plugin does?

Theme/plugin name	User Rating	Last Update (as of 16/04/2021)	Active Users	Utility
<b>Astra Theme</b>	★★★★★	2 weeks ago	1+ million	<p>Astra is a very popular WordPress theme. It is well supported because of that. It is also extensible, being compatible with numerous plugins.</p> <p>The main reason for our use is the ability to easily customize it to our goals. For example, the header and footer builders allow for easy creation of more complex headers than when compared to other themes.</p> <p>Astra does have a paid for version which allows for even further customization. It helps the developer to create more unique layouts, which include things such as a specific mobile header, or adding different levels of headers such that they aren't always on the top of the page. We don't think this is extremely relevant to the IABC, so we don't recommend it, but it costs \$47 annually or \$249 once</p>
<b>Contact Form 7</b>	★★★★☆ 1 881 ratings	2 months ago	5+ million	<p>Allows for custom forms to be built. We believe generally to be inferior to WPForms as it is more difficult to use, but it has a perk that it has a plugin extension that allows for multi page forms. WPForms only allows for multi page forms in the premium version.</p>

<b>Contact Form 7 Multi-Step Forms</b>	★★★★☆ 40 ratings	1 week ago	20 000+	<p>This is the plugin that extends Contact Forms 7 to allow multi page forms. We would recommend using WPForms over this, but we used this to show the IABC a proof of concept of using multi page forms, without paying for WPForms pro.</p>
<b>Elementor</b>	★★★★★	1 month ago	5+ million	<p>This is a wonderful plugin that allows for a replacement of Gutenberg blocks in the building of a WordPress website.</p> <p>It has many blocks which extend the functionality of the Website builder. For example, an accordion or counter widget. And When compared to Gutenberg blocks, it's in our opinion superior for its ease-of-use and effectiveness in making beautiful designs.</p> <p>The free version is highly usable and has many great widgets which come out of the box. Though some things we did on the website were done with custom CSS (e.g. The parallax on the main page) that could be replaced with the premium version blocks. This would allow for the IABC to have an easier time modifying the website in the future.</p> <p>We would recommend the purchase of the pro version, which cost <b>49USD/year</b> for 1 website.</p>
<b>Essential Addons for Elementor</b>	★★★★★ 2 119 ratings	2 days ago	1+ million	<p>For the reasons why Elementor is great, this addon is great. This addon extends Elementor even more by allowing for additional and more complicated blocks to be inserted.</p> <p>An example of this would be the post on the main page. These are an Essential Addon block and allow for a more dynamic website.</p>

Essential addons does have a premium version which contains 29+ more widgets, but we believe that this addon would suffice without paying for the premium version. This is because we believe the premium version adds more specific use cases than IABC requires. For example, the premium version includes an Advanced Google Map, which we believe is the sort of thing that IABC does not need.

<b>Modern Events Calendar Lite</b>	★★★★☆ 440 ratings	1 week ago	80 000+	<p>This plugin is a featureful, out of the box, extension which allows for the managing of events. It allows for the easy creation/editing and displaying of admin created events. We believe this addon is super simple to use, which makes it perfect for the IABC.</p> <p>The pro version allows for an integrated booking solution which the IABC folk may want to look into. The premium version costs a one-time payment of <b>\$75</b>.</p> <p>To alter the appearance, one has to alter the code, which the MEC creators will do for websites for a fee.</p>
<b>Search and Filter</b>	★★★★☆ 143 ratings	3 months ago	40 000+	A simple plugin which allows for dynamic filter of search results based on tags. We use this to filter the news stories by year.
<b>Smart Slider 3</b>	★★★★★ 932 ratings	1 month ago	700 000+	<p>A solution to having a dynamic and customizable carousel. This allows the creation of sliders which can be used throughout the website. These sliders can contain dynamic information from WordPress posts.</p> <p>The creation of these sliders is done through a custom interface in the dashboard. We believe this custom</p>

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				<p>creation is a fairly straightforward process and makes for stylish viewing of information.</p> <p>We use this on the newsroom page, to showcase recent stories.</p>
<b>SVG Support</b>	★★★★★ 233 ratings	4 months ago	600 000+	<p>This is a simple plugin which allows for SVG format vectors to be uploaded as media. Very simple, a must have.</p>
<b>WP Mail SMTP</b>	★★★★★ 2020 ratings	3 weeks ago	2 million +	<p>This plugin changes the default mailing function from PHP to SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol). This plugin is used to ensure that popular clients like Gmail, Yahoo, etc. receive the mail the WordPress sends. Basically this solves the issue of WordPress emails (From things such as forms and the like) not being sent and received.</p>
<b>WPForms</b>	★★★★★	2 weeks ago	4+ million	<p>This is a drag and drop WordPress form builder. It contains a super easy and intuitive interface which allows for many types of forms to be created.</p> <p>This is an extremely useful plugin when considering utilizing payment options, as it integrates with PayPal and Stripe. And if you have SSL, you can directly use a credit card.</p> <p>The ability to use it as payment solution is restricted to the premium version however, which costs \$199.50 on the cheap end. We believe that this is a worthy investment, as it greatly decreases the amount of effort needed to collect payments from customers.</p> <p>The premium version would also come with multi-page support, supplanting the need for Contact Form 7</p>

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