User Tests

        I chose to test my website in HTML/CSS because I felt it is a better way of delivering my ideas and how the website was going to work eventually to the users. I conducted my user tests on Oct 27th, Sunday, in the study room of William Keeton House on West Campus at 9PM. I live in Keeton and know many Keeton residents, so I figured it would be a good location for me to find Cornell students for the user test. Each test should take no more than five minutes to finish. The main goal of my user tests was to make sure that the website was fully functioning and met my target audience (college students in the Tompkins area)'s major needs. More specifically, I was aiming at testing the functionality, information architecture and visual design of my website. I designed four tasks for each aspect for testing, and they are listed below.

Subject	Functionality	Information Architecture
1	Go from Home page to Info	Find bus directions from Cornell to Applefest
2	Submit one contact form	Find the full event schedule and download it.
3	Go to the vendors section of Info	Find out when IC Circus is performing on Saturday
4	Use lightbox to view images in Gallery	Find the contact information

        I ended up having six users for testing, and they were all members of my target audience. Here is their information.

	Gender	Major	Class	Been to Applefest
1	F	Computer Science	2016	Yes
2	M	Operational Research	2016	Yes
3	M	Computer Science	2015	No
4	F	Economics	2016	No
5	M	Operational Research	2015	Yes
6	F	Hotel Administration	2015	Yes

        They were all Cornell students, who fell under the website's target audience. I was glad I had an even distribution of both genders, and two of the users had not been to Applefest, which provided the user tests two perspectives.

        After all six of them finished individual testing, I asked them some general questions as well. These general questions included: did you like the color scheme or general visuals of the website? Did you find the website easy to navigate? Was there anything you wished the website had?

According to their responses, the functionality of the website was satisfactory. There was no broken link or missing images. The lightbox worked especially well, making the Gallery very easy to use and aesthetically pleasing to look at. The submission of contact forms was successful as well; I received all of the forms they submitted in my mailbox. Four out of the six of them paid compliments about the visual designs and the color scheme, commenting that it was nice and simple. They especially liked the Gallery section because one thing they really wanted to get out of the website was what the Applefest was like, and the Gallery was a great help for them to get a basic understanding of the feelings of the Applefest. However, there were problems with the information architecture. Some of them was confused by the image on the home page and tried to click on it when the image was not clickable. Also, when one person was trying to find the bus directions, he ended up ignoring the Directions option in the navigation bar and went straight to Info, and wanted to find directions under Location&Hours. Some of them also reported confusion in response to my general questions. Student 1 told me it was hard for her to read the events' time from the calendar image I made with Adobe Illustrator. Student 4 reminded me that I should have a "Go Back to Top" button at the bottom of Info and Events pages, which are both one-page designs. Two people complained that when they clicked on one of the vendors' links, they wanted a new tab for the vendor's website. Student 6 suggested that I should do something about the thank-you page after users submit forms, instead of leaving it as two lines of text as it was then. Some of them also tried to click on the logo in the navigation bar to get back to Home page and the title on subpages to get back to Info.

Based on their feedbacks, I made the following changes to my final design:

- Make the Home page image a link to the Info page because the Info page contains what most people need to know about the Applefest and it makes sense to give it importance.
- Add a button under the Location&Hours sections that directs users to the Directions page, and make the address linked to Google Map.
- Added gray lines on the calendar images to more accurately show the time of each event. (One hour is divided into four parts, so one line for every 15 minutes)
- Add a "Go Back to Top" button at the bottom of Info, Events, and Directions pages.
- Modify all the vendors' links so that when clicked, the browser opens another tab.
- Make the thank-you page into a php file. This way the page itself will not be redirected, but still displays the thank you message.
- Link the logo in navigation bar to Home and the title in subpages to Info.

Redesign Rationale

Because I tested with functioning HTML/CSS after milestone 1 and there was no major structural problems, I will talk about my final design in general first and then move to some minor changes I made after user testing.

The target audience of my website is college students in the Tompkins area. I chose this specific group because I figured it would be either redundant to try to persuade Tompkins residents who have been going to the event or hard to persuade Tompkins residents who have not been going to the event, and I am sure that most Tompkins residents are already somewhat familiar with this annual event. Also, since Applefest is a local event, it would be less effective for the website to target anyone outside of the area due to a lack of relevance. Whereas local college students come and go every year, but they still need to spend a long period of time in Ithaca. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that local college students would be the major changing variable in terms of the make-up of Applefest participants, and they should be my target audience.

My website has five subpages: Home, Info, Events, Gallery, and Directions. When I was planning out my first draft, I asked around about what people wanted to know about Applefest and why some people did not go this year. The responses were somewhat general. For people who have been to Applefest in the previous years, their major request was to access updated events information and hours. For people who had not been to Applefest before this year, they said their biggest confusion or question before going to Applefest this year was they had no idea what Applefest was like and what they could find at the festival. As for people who have never been to Applefest, their reasonings were lack of directions information, bad weather, and too much work (I cannot really do anything about the latter two.) Additionally, I asked people who have been to Applefest about what they liked about the festival and what motivated them to go. Most people thought it was a relaxing experience; they went mostly to hang out with friends and take a break from the campus. Some also said they went because they really like apple and wanted to buy apple side products. I went to Applefest twice over the three-day period, and my personal impression is that it was a very cozy and local gathering for people's weekend entertaining activity.

With all these factors in mind, I set the main goals of my website to be the show the general feeling/atmosphere of Applefest, inform users of the activities/products available, and provide all the necessary logistical information.

To accomplish these goals, first of all, the keywords for the atmosphere of Applefest are relaxing and cozy, so I chose light blue and dark blue to be the dominant color, both of which have the effects of calming and refreshing. Then I figured, since it's about apples, and red gives a nice color contrast with blue, which is a good visual element, I could incorporate some redness into the website, so I made a red logo for the festival, made all the links turn red when hovered, and made all sub-navigations in Info, Events, and Directions pages red. Home page only has a navigation bar and a background image, which is a collage of pictures taken at Applefest. The reason behind is that I wish to use photos as the direct medium to give users a sense of the coziness and relaxation of the festival at first sight. I believe that pictures work better in terms of expressing feelings in a short period of time. I made only two pictures out of the many full color because I wanted to emphasize the apple element of Applefest. In order to produce repetition of the theme Applefest, I included a title in almost all the subpages except for Gallery (because Gallery already has a lot of pictures in it, the title would make the entire page look too messy visually) to create a feeling of unity, as covered in class. I kept on using the same 3 fonts to achieve unity as well.

I linked the Home page's image to Info page since Info page is the most informative and helpful for all users. I included four sections within the Info page and implemented it as a one-page design, which would make the Info page easier to navigate. These four sections are Overview, Locations&Hours, Vendors, and Contact. Overview contains a brief introduction of Applefest; Location&Hours contains the where and when information; Vendors contains a list of vendors that will attend Applefest with links to their websites; Contact contains an html form implemented with php and general contact information of the event host. Location&Hours and Contact are intuitive to include in Info, but I find Overview and Vendors important for the different reasons. Overview provides a good insight of the definition and nature of Applefest, which is a very fundamental thing that users might want to be informed of. It sets the tone for Applefest. As for Vendors, many people have been unclear about what they can find at Applefest, and a list of vendors with links to their websites would be a direct way of showing people what products will be available at the festival. It also shows that Applefest is not just about apples, which is a misconception a lot of people who have never been to Applefest have.

Another important component of Applefest is its diverse events held during the hours. Many people were not aware of the events until they were at the festival. Therefore, I decided to make one separate page for events just to explicitly let people know that Applefest has events going on all the time. However, I did not include the Additional Community Events on the original website because I feel that information would blur the focus of Applefest and is rendered somewhat pointless to put on this independent Applefest website. I hand-made three calendar images for three days of Applefest – Friday, Saturday, and Sunday – to give a clear message to people trying to find out what events will be held at what time. This is also a better way to let people know what events will be held simultaneously. Events page is also a one-page design so that people can check out different days' schedules. I also provided a download link for people to obtain a copy of the full schedule, which is posted on the original website. With these calendar images, people can also gain a big picture of what kinds of events they can attend, which meets the target audience's need of knowing what Applefest is like and what they can get out of it.

As I have mentioned before, I think photos are a better medium to convey a general feeling of Applefest. Therefore, my design has a special page just for picture display. All pictures are taken at Applefest this year, and users can look at the pictures with lightbox, which does not interrupt the flow of usage. Users can simply click on the darkened area around the picture to close the lightbox and keep on browsing through the website.

One of the reasons that some students did not go to Applefest was that they could not find a way to figure out the directions/transportation, which was discouraging enough for them to give up after one try. Therefore, I took directions out of the Info page (normally directions go with Info) and made it a separate page. Especially because I am targeting at college students, who normally do not have cars and highly dependent on public transportations, it is extra hard for them to physically get to Applefest. I embedded Google Map to provide information of the exact location of Applefest and made another section just for bus directions from either Cornell or Ithaca College, providing convenience for students.
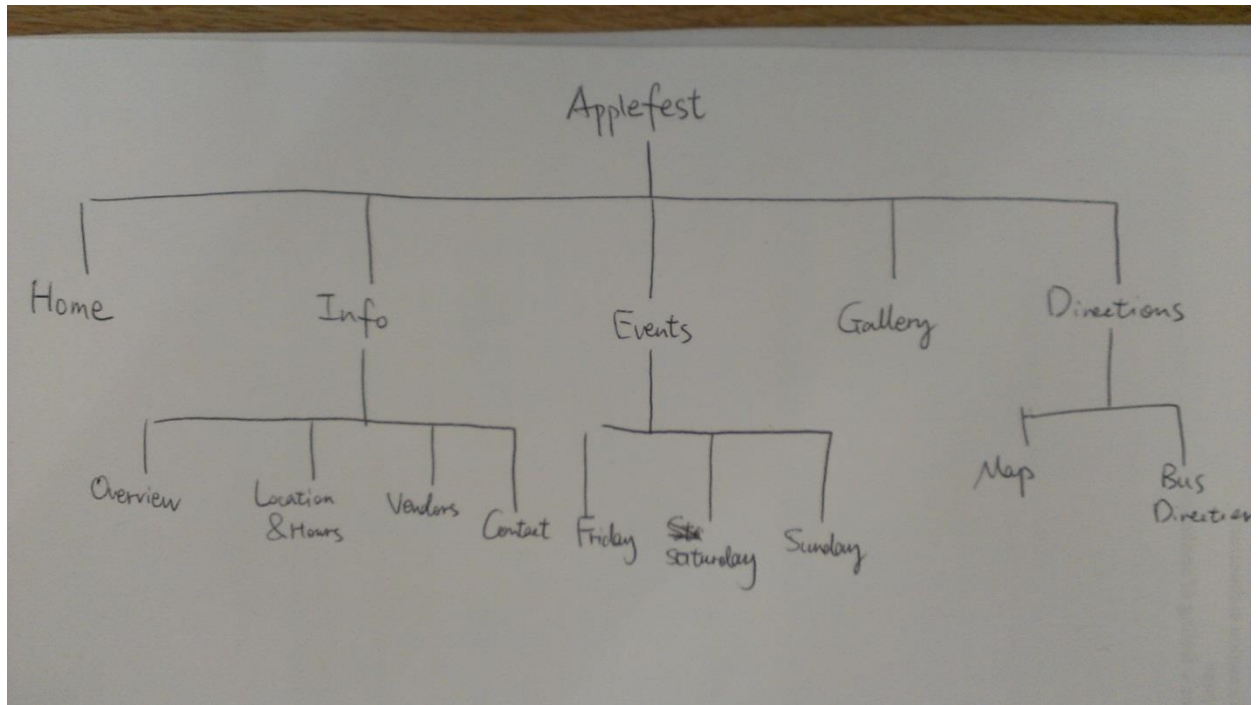
(Information Architecture Illustration)

When organizing information, I mainly used Category as the dividing factor. The only place I used something other than Category out of the "5 Hat Racks" principle was Events. I used Time instead to organize the scheduling information of events.

Originally, when I was drafting the website for milestone 1, I was planning on making the entire website one page since I felt the content available does not need multiple pages to deliver and a one-page design might even be better to create a sense of unity for all the information relating to Applefest. However, after talking to the TA, he pointed out that because I was going to have a Gallery, which contains many pictures, it would be the best for me to have multiple pages to avoid extended loading time for users since pictures take more time to load, but at the same time make other subpages one-page design. Another thing I changed after milestone 1 was that I customized all the images I need for the website to an appropriate size. Because I always had this misconception of the bigger the image, the better the visual outcome since everything would be clear for sure. The TA reminded me that it would take a much longer time for users to load the website if every image is big and the best thing to do would be change the size of the image to a reasonable size for use and cut the loading time. I did as he told me and the website looks just as visually clear and loads much faster now.

As for minor modifications made after user testing, as I have stated in the user testing report, here are the things I changed. I completed all of them.

- Add a button under the Location&Hours sections that directs users to the Directions page, and make the address linked to Google Map.

- Added gray lines on the calendar images to more accurately show the time of each event. (One hour is divided into four parts, so one line for every 15 minutes)
- Add a "Go Back to Top" button at the bottom of Info, Events, and Directions pages.
- Modify all the vendors' links so that when clicked, the browser opens another tab.
- Make the thank-you page into a php file. This way the page itself will not be redirected, but still displays the thank you message.
- Link the logo in navigation bar to Home and the title in subpages to Info.
- Make the Home page image a link to the Info page because the Info page contains what most people need to know about the Applefest and it makes sense to give it importance.

The user experience is a lot smoother now. Users can intuitively navigate around the subpages, and almost all things are clickable and direct users to somewhere reasonable.