

# Develop Website Information Architecture

*Web Development Team*

## Session 2 – Plan Content Structure

### Dividing Content

When the relevant information in an organisation has been identified and categorised, it is then possible to structure this information into a form suitable for a website. Using documents in their "raw" state is unlikely to be a successful method of presenting information on the web, because:

- Documents such as financial reports or product catalogues may be in a form suitable for printing, but not displaying on a website.
- It may not be appropriate to include in the website, all the information provided by a document.
- The style of writing may not be appropriate to the website.

Most information on the web is organised into neat logical units or, "chunks", of information. There are several advantages to presenting information in "chunks", such as:

- Many people find reading large tracts of information on a computer screen tiring - therefore dividing the information into digestible chunks improves readability.
- Dividing information into chunks promotes the reusability of this information.
- It is easier to maintain discrete chunks of data than large tracts of information.
- Information that is divided into discrete, self-contained units, can be accessed from different sections of the website.

What constitutes a content chunk is a matter of judgement and will depend on the purpose of the information. You should consider dividing information into chunks of data that users may want to access separately. For example, a company report may include information about the company, personnel, profit information, etc. It would be feasible to divide the "raw" report in to these separate components, allowing the components to be accessed according to the information being sought.

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## **Example**

To illustrate, assume we have an annual report which contains a range of information such as:

- Background information on the company
- Contact information and business address
- Names and descriptions of the board members
- Mission and vision statements
- Profit statements

It would be appropriate to divide this information into separate chunks based on the list above, for inclusion on the website. Information such as contact information can then be easily referenced from different web pages.

## **Content Inventory**

Depending on the complexity of the website and how much content it is likely to contain, it may be beneficial to create a Content Inventory. A Content Inventory is a tool for identifying and recording content. The list below shows the fields that should be included in a Content Inventory form. It is based on an example by Rosenfeld & Morville (2002). Note that in this example a content area corresponds to a "content chunk".

- Content area name
- Unique identification for the content area
- Description of the content area
- Intended audience (e.g. clients, suppliers, internal staff)
- Original source format (e.g. Microsoft word, ASCII text)
- Expected format changes
- Update frequency (how often the content is updated)
- Information owner (who created and maintains the content)

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## Example

To illustrate, let's revisit the annual report described in the previous section. We identified a number of "chunks" of information in the report. These were:

- Background information on the company
- Contact information and business address
- Names and descriptions of the board members
- Mission and vision statements
- Profit statements

The Content Inventory form for **Background information on the company**, would look as follows:

- **Content area name:** Company background
- **Unique identification for the content area:** 0012
- **Description of the content area:** Provides general background information on the company as part of the annual report
- **Intended audience (e.g. clients, suppliers, internal staff):**  
Shareholders
- **Original source format (e.g. Microsoft word, ASCII text):** PDF
- **Expected format changes:** None
- **Update frequency (how often the content is updated):** Yearly
- **Information owner (who created and maintains the content):**  
Managing Director

It is worth noting here that it may be necessary to develop content specifically for the website, as the content required may not actually exist within the organisation.

Once the website structure has been designed, the Content Inventory can be used to map the content chunks to the website pages.

Resources:

How to Conduct a Content Audit - <https://uxmastery.com/how-to-conduct-a-content-audit/>

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## References

Lynch, P. J., & Horton, S. (2017). *Chapter 4 - Information Architecture*. Retrieved from Web Style Guide: <https://www.webstyleguide.com/4-information-architecture.html>

Morville, P., & Rosenfeld, L. (2007). *Information architecture for the World Wide Web (3rd ed.)*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly & Associates. ISBN 0-596-52734-9.

Spencer, D. (2014, October 16). *How to Conduct A Content Audit*. Retrieved from UX Mastery: <https://uxmastery.com/how-to-conduct-a-content-audit/>