

UBC.ca Redesign Post-Implementation Review

Prepared by Communications and Marketing
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Executive Summary

This document presents a high level overview of the UBC.ca Redesign project carried out over the course of 2013, re-launching on April 25, 2014.

UBC.ca is the top level website for the University of British Columbia. As one of the first touch points for the university's many audiences, UBC.ca plays an integral role in how the university presents itself to the world.

Historically, UBC.ca has served an informational and functional role – providing basic information about the university and directing visitors to other UBC websites. Attempting to be everything for everyone, the previous website was criticized as being “conservative”, “overwhelming”, and “daunting”. This latest redesign aimed to improve the informational and functional foundation of the site to communicate to our audiences in a more strategic manner, while also adding an experiential element that better reflects the university's attributes as bold, open, and authentic.

Through an extensive process of background research, usability testing, stakeholder engagement, and exploratory design, UBC.ca was reimaged from the ground up. The resulting website includes a new information architecture schema with a revised thematic navigation and the addition of an audience-specific navigation, expanded interior pages, and the addition of entirely new forms of content – “Feature Personalities”, “Feature Stories” and “UBC NOW” – delivered through a completely redesigned homepage, all within the fully-responsive and mobile-friendly UBC Common-Look and Feel framework.

This redesign marked the first major department-wide project for a newly-formed and evolving Communications and Marketing team. Together with redesigning the website, this project involved an extensive redesign of internal business processes and editorial practices, along with the development of tools and technology to support the C&M digital teams in managing the on-going sustainment of the new site.

The resulting product garnered a strong response – both constructive and critical. And while not without its challenges, what has emerged is not only a new website that has delivered on its objectives of creating a bold, open, and authentic digital presence that is positioned for on-going growth to better-communicate to the university's many key audiences, but also a shift in internal business processes operating with a renewed discipline for setting goals, measuring performance, and making decisions and incremental changes that are informed by data as much as by the talents of individual members on the team.

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I. Introduction

i. About this Debrief

This document presents a high level overview of the UBC.ca Redesign project carried out over the course of 2013, re-launching on April 25, 2014.

This debrief was created with input from core project members from the C&M team, with the intended purpose to provide (i) background information on UBC.ca, (ii) a summary of the process and work involved in the redesign project, (iii) highlights of the outcomes, (iv) a summary of lessons learned, and (v) recommendations for completing similar redesign projects in the future, and for improving C&M's ability to operate UBC.ca to its maximum potential.

ii. Purpose of UBC.ca

UBC.ca is the top level website for the University of British Columbia. It is often one of the first touch points for the university's many audiences – particularly those who may be considered external or prospective to the university such as potential students, prospective faculty and staff, donors and others who are interested in, but not yet formally part of, the UBC community. As such, UBC.ca plays an integral role in how the university presents itself to the world.

In many cases, visitors who arrive at UBC.ca are seeking to complete a task such as finding information or completing a transaction that ultimately occurs in another UBC website. In this fashion, UBC.ca serves as an important gateway for directing visitors to various websites across the university.

In the absence of an internal communications system, UBC.ca has also served a minimal role in relaying information to the internal community of current staff and faculty and to a lesser extent has also served as a vehicle for communicating high-level messaging to current students.

Communications of this sort typically take the form of bulletins, announcements, or updates that affect the university community as a whole.

In the year leading up to the latest redesign (2012-2013), UBC.ca was visited 6.5M times, with 2.8M unique visitors, seeing 13.3M pageviews. The overwhelming majority of visits to UBC.ca originated from within Canada (70%), followed by the US (7%), China (3%), India (1.8%), and the UK (1.5%), with over 94% of visits through desktop browsers, 4% from mobile devices, and 2% from tablets.

UBC.ca as a Functional, Informational Gateway

Previously overseen by the university's Public Affairs Office, UBC.ca has historically served four primary purposes that could be classified under an informational or functional role:

Informational

1. Providing basic information about the university
2. Sharing newsworthy stories and timely information
3. Acting as an initial landing page during crisis and emergency communications

Functional

4. Providing quick access to other key websites across the university, e.g. through gateway pages, navigation, links, and other site utilities

iii. Redesigns & Refreshes

UBC.ca has undergone several changes over the last decade but by and large these have been limited in scope to a visual refreshing or redesign of the look and feel.

Changes to UBC.ca have often coincided with the redesign or redevelopment of the UBC Common-Look and Feel (CLF), the university's web template framework made available to all units at UBC for the purpose of establishing a consistent baseline user experience across all UBC web properties.

In 2006, a new CLF was applied to UBC.ca with modest changes to the information architecture and navigation.

In 2009, a user research project was carried out consisting of an online survey, a heuristic analysis, a card sorting exercise, interviews with key stakeholders, and a review of web analytics. This work led to the first major revision of the site's information architecture since 2002.

Additional modifications were made in response to on-going feedback from key stakeholders (e.g. central units with campus-wide purview, Faculties, representatives from various VP portfolios, and the Okanagan campus), as well direct input from the Executive.

In 2012, a mobile-friendly version of the CLF (v.7.0) was applied to UBC.ca with no change to the underlying content, navigation, and information architecture.

III. Goals & Objectives

The redesign was initiated and led by Communications and Marketing (C&M) – a newly-formed team within the Communications and Community Partnership portfolio. Working in partnership with C&M's agency-of-record, DDB, this project marked the first major redesign of UBC.ca since 2009.

i. Goals

This project set out to enhance the current use of UBC.ca as an informational gateway, while adding a richer user experience and deepening the breadth of content throughout the website, to:

1. Elevate UBC.ca as an effective, engaging, and experiential communications channel, and
2. Better-position the university to strategically engage the university's target audiences.

ii. Objectives

1. Continue to deliver core information about the university (informational),
2. Continue to provide quick and effective ways for visitors to access the information and sites they are looking for (functional),
3. Introduce a richer and more engaging experience (experiential)
4. Communicate to UBC's broad and diverse audiences in a strategic manner
5. Become a demonstrated proof point of the UBC brand positioning and brand attributes
6. Capture metrics to help inform on-going improvements of UBC.ca
7. Establish a means for measuring and monitoring the effectiveness and overall success in meeting these objectives

IV. Project overview and brief

The UBC.ca Redesign kicked off in February 2013 with C&M issuing a Terms of Agreement to engage DDB in the project. From the outset, responsibilities were initially distributed between C&M and DDB as follows:

Task	Responsibility
Requirements gathering	C&M
Heuristic analysis & Industry best practice	DDB
Usability testing	DDB
Content strategy	DDB
Information architecture	DDB
Design development	DDB
Styleguide development	DDB
Content production	C&M
Design, photography	C&M
Technical development	C&M

The C&M web team then led a series of background research activities to prepare a project brief (see **Appendix A – UBC.ca Redesign Project Brief**).

i. Project Team

The team dedicated to the UBC.ca Redesign fluctuated throughout the course of the project, with over 25 people contributing to the final outcome:

C&P and C&M Leadership: Pascal Spothelfer, Kari Grist

C&M Web Team: Michael Kam, Lina Kang, Mike Ko, Adrian Liem (Project Manager), Aida Viziru

C&M Design Team: PK Chan, Arlene Cotter (on leave from February 2013 to June 2013), Martin Dee, Mark Pilon, Matt Warburton

C&M Brand Team: Margaret Doyle (arrived July 2013), Rick Hart (arrived October 2013), Jodie Lightfoot (arrived August 2013), Jamil Rhajiak, Charlotte Sander, Robbin Simao (departed July 2013)

C&M Marketing Intelligence: John Lo (arrived August 2013)

Contractors: David Leidl (writing and editing), Todd Smith (videography)

DDB: Kim Billan, Josh Fehr, Marty Yaskowich, DDB Designer, DDB User Experience Specialist, DDB-contracted Information Architect

In addition to the team members, a number of internal stakeholders were consulted throughout the project, in some cases to provide feedback and input, in other cases to be kept up-to-date on an FYI basis and in other cases to provide formal approval and sign-off at major milestones in the project. A complete list of internal stakeholders is included as **Appendix B – Internal Stakeholders**.

V. Process

i. Background Research

C&M, January 2013 – March 2013

Background research consisted of a series of activities designed to gather information for the purpose of informing further usability testing and drafting a project brief:

1. Two open-ended brainstorming sessions with the whole C&M team,
2. A guerrilla research test (20 sec. gut comparison test of in-and-outside category websites),
3. A compilation of web analytics,
4. A competitive analysis of approximately 70 university websites,
5. Summaries of survey data gathered in previous redesign efforts for UBC.ca.

ii. Stakeholder Consultation

C&M, April 2013 – April 2014

From the outset of the project, C&M engaged various stakeholders from across the university to discuss the UBC.ca Redesign project. Out of the initial rounds of stakeholder consultation, several stakeholders were identified as “Audience Representatives”, i.e. a subset of units with a purview of communicating to specific audience segments. Stakeholders were kept informed of project status through in-person meetings, attendance at larger group meetings and presentations, or by email and phone. A list of all stakeholders is included in **Appendix B – Internal Stakeholders**.

iii. Usability Testing

DDB and C&M, April 2013 – July 2013

DDB led two usability tests: (1) a heuristic analysis (expert review) of the existing website, and (2) a series of in-person usability tests (Think Aloud Protocol) with 16 audience members.

Findings from each of the usability tests were summarized in high-level reports, available in **Appendix C – Usability Test Results**. The findings helped set a direction for wireframe development and changes to the information architecture.

iv. User Experience Design & Information Architecture

DDB and C&M, August 2013 – September 2013

Using the materials gathered in the background research together with findings from the usability testing and the results of an online card sorting exercise, DDB created wireframes and proposed changes to the navigation and information architecture for the new UBC.ca.

Midway in this process, DDB’s UX lead left to pursue another work opportunity. DDB subcontracted an external information architect to complete the usability testing, and DDB’s original UX lead completed the wireframes and revised IA.

The new proposed information architecture was reviewed internally by the C&M team, circulated to internal stakeholders, and also tested with users. User testing consisted of reaching out to

members of the Open Minds Forum with an invitation to complete an online reverse card sort, or “Tree Test”.

v. Creative Concepts

DDB and C&M, September 2013 – November 2013

After leading initial concept exploration sessions with several team members from C&M, DDB produced three creative concepts for review with the intention of C&M selecting one for DDB to pursue further. Following several presentations and approval meetings, C&M selected one concept for DDB to develop into creative composites.

Creative composites were created by DDB for mobile, tablet and desktop viewports in Photoshop (PSD) format and handed over to C&M with a basic styleguide (see attached **Appendix D – Creative Composites and Styleguide**).

vi. Design Composites

C&M, December 2013 – April 2014

C&M converted the Photoshop composites into Illustrator (AI) templates to create design composites and mockups for production. Composites were created for the major layouts and user interface elements for the second-level pages of the new site. Composites of the new homepage design were also created to provide the specifications required for technical development.

vii. Web Development & Site Build-out

C&M, January 2014 – April 2014

Over the span of four months, the C&M team created the web templates, sourced and edited photography, completed multiple photo shoots, re-wrote content, built a staging server to provide previews of the site in development, developed a content engine to support the rolling stream of posts for UBC NOW, built out the second-level pages, iterated through design adjustments, prepared the final selection of Featured Personalities for launch, set up the analytics framework for launch, and presented updates to various groups across the university.

viii. Story Architecture, Research & Production

C&M, December 2014 – April 2014

In addition to building out the new UBC.ca, five “Feature Stories” were scheduled for production to be released as the first set of stories featured on the UBC.ca homepage. This work involved initial story ideation and concept exploration, background research and interviews, asset collection and audits, copy writing, photography, video production, audio production, graphic design and animation, interaction design, technical development, and all tasks associated with production management including communication, scheduling, writing creative and story briefs, and general coordination with over 60 individuals (local students, students abroad, staff, faculty, senior administrators, freelancers).

ix. Launch

C&M, April 2014

The new UBC.ca was successfully launched at midnight on April 25, 2014*.

*Note: The original re-launch date was originally set for October and changed multiple times (see “Opportunities and Challenges”, specifically X.i.1).

x. Take to Market

C&M, April 2014

Taking UBC.ca to market involved a wide range of tactics, some focused on internal audiences and others focused on external audiences:

1. Presentations to multiple groups on campus (Executive, Communicators Network, Brand Leadership Council, Web Advisory Council)
2. Creation of an informational landing page summarizing the redesign project
3. Posting of a Spotlight on UBC.ca, web badges on UBC.ca, Okanagan, Brand and UBC Search Results sites
4. Social media posts
5. Digital signage placement
6. Social media ad buy to promote Feature Stories
7. Sneak Peek email
8. Broadcast email
9. Monitor feedback from Communicators Network and internal audiences
10. Post-launch meetings
11. Post-launch info sessions

The complete plan is available as **Appendix E – Take to Market Plan**.

VI. Project Methodology

i. Waterfall and Agile

Major milestones and project stages were planned through a traditional waterfall approach moving from Discovery, to User Experience design, to Creative Design, Technical Implementation / Production and Launch.

As the C&M team entered into production, an agile methodology was adopted with weekly sprint planning, daily scrums, and sprint review meetings. Sprint planning meetings often doubled-up as editorial brainstorming sessions as well as status update meetings for the team.

ii. Review & Approval

Regular check-in meetings were scheduled to provide status updates and to serve as approval mechanisms at key milestones of the project. Various members of the C&M team were brought in to different meetings throughout the course of the project depending on the stage of the project and the items under review and needing approval.

iii. Manager Meetings

Regular manager meetings were held throughout the course of the project. Initially held once every two weeks, meetings increased in frequency to a weekly check-in to provide guidance on overall direction, as well as to assist with removing roadblocks and escalating issues as needed.

iv. Documentation

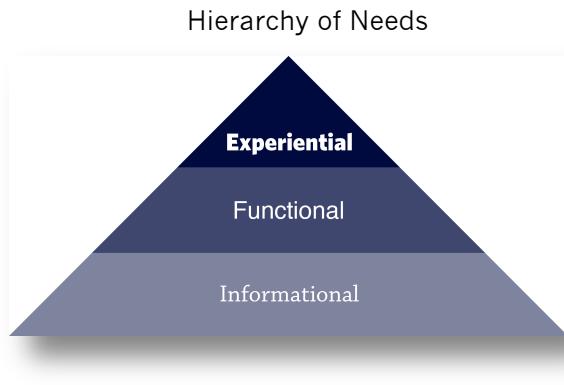
Project documentation (timelines, GANTT charts, to-do lists, discussions) was managed through a combination of C&M's project management tool (ActiveCollab), Google Spreadsheets, Excel, DropBox, and whiteboard sticky notes.

v. Guiding Principles

A set of guiding principles emerged over the course of the project that served as reference points to help inform decisions and guide tactical implementation of the redesigned site.

Principle 1

Build on the hierarchy of needs: Add an experiential dimension to UBC.ca that builds on a sound foundation of information and functionality.

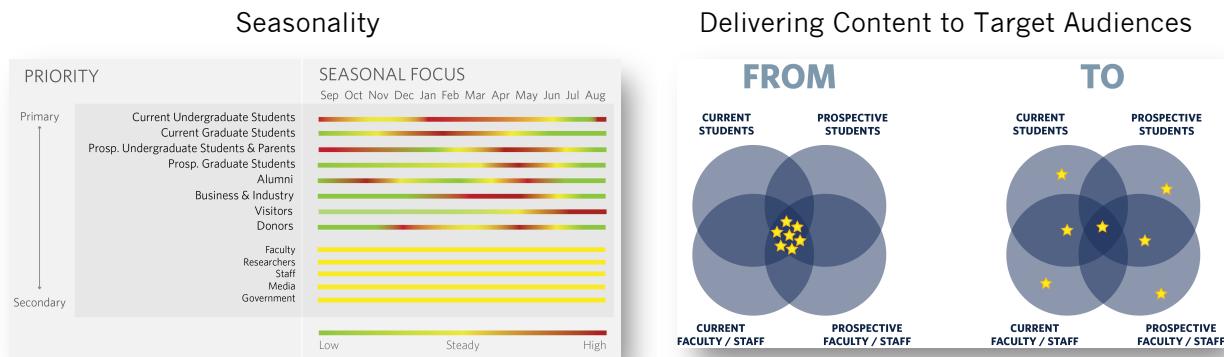


Content Types, Formats and Attributes

	Content Types + Formats	Content Attributes
Experiential	Stories Videos Photos	Engaging Entertaining Inspiring Authentic, Bold, Open
Functional	Gateway pages Navigational aids Utilities	Helpful Quick Easy to Use Accessible, Flexible
Informational	Institutional information Urgent communications Campus notifications	Informative Prioritized Easy to Scan Friendly, Personable

Principle 2

Communicate to the university's diverse audience more strategically.



VII. Scope of Work

i. UBC.ca Website Redesign & Build – Work Breakdown Structure

Task / Stage	Deliverables	Lead
1 Background research	Web analytics summary (Excel, PDF)	C&M
	Competitive analysis (Excel)	C&M
	Survey summaries (Excel)	C&M
	Project Brief (Doc)	C&M
2 Strategic consultation	Advising (in-person, via emails, conference calls)	DDB
	Regularly updated GANTT charts (PDF, Google, Excel)	DDB and C&M
3 Project management	Weekly / Bi-weekly update summaries (Doc, Txt)	C&M
	Meetings	DDB and C&M
	One-on-one meetings	C&M
4 Consultation and communication	Presentations (small groups, committees, Communicators Network, Executive)	DDB and C&M
	Slide decks (PDF)	DDB and C&M
	Briefing notes (Doc)	C&M
	Client contact reports (Doc)	C&M
	Heuristic Analysis Report (PDF)	DDB
5 Usability testing	In-Person (Think Aloud) Research Summary (PDF)	DDB and C&M
	Card sorting Similarity Matrix (online, Excel)	C&M
	Tree Test - Pie Trees (online, jpg)	C&M
	Wireframes (PDF)	DDB
6 User Experience Design	Content inventory (Excel)	DDB and C&M
7 Information architecture	Styleguide (PDF)	DDB
8 Guidelines	Copy writing & editing (Doc)	C&M
9 Content strategy, copy writing	Creative concepts (PDF)	DDB
	Creative mockups (PSD)	DDB
	Design templates (AI)	C&M
	Design composites (AI, PDF)	C&M
11 Photography	Masthead images (JPG)	C&M
	Feature Personality images (JPG)	C&M
12 Technical development	Development setup (Github repository, Amazon Web Services)	C&M
	Web templates (PHP, HTML, CSS, JS)	C&M
	Content Engine (WordPress, Twitter/Instagram Plugins, JSON API)	C&M
	Production (Live) server setup & configuration	C&M
13 Analytics	Event tracking scripts (Google Analytics)	C&M
	Automated reports (Google Analytics, Excel, PDF)	C&M
	Custom reports (Excel, PDF)	C&M
14 Web site build-out	Staging site	C&M
	Live Production site	C&M

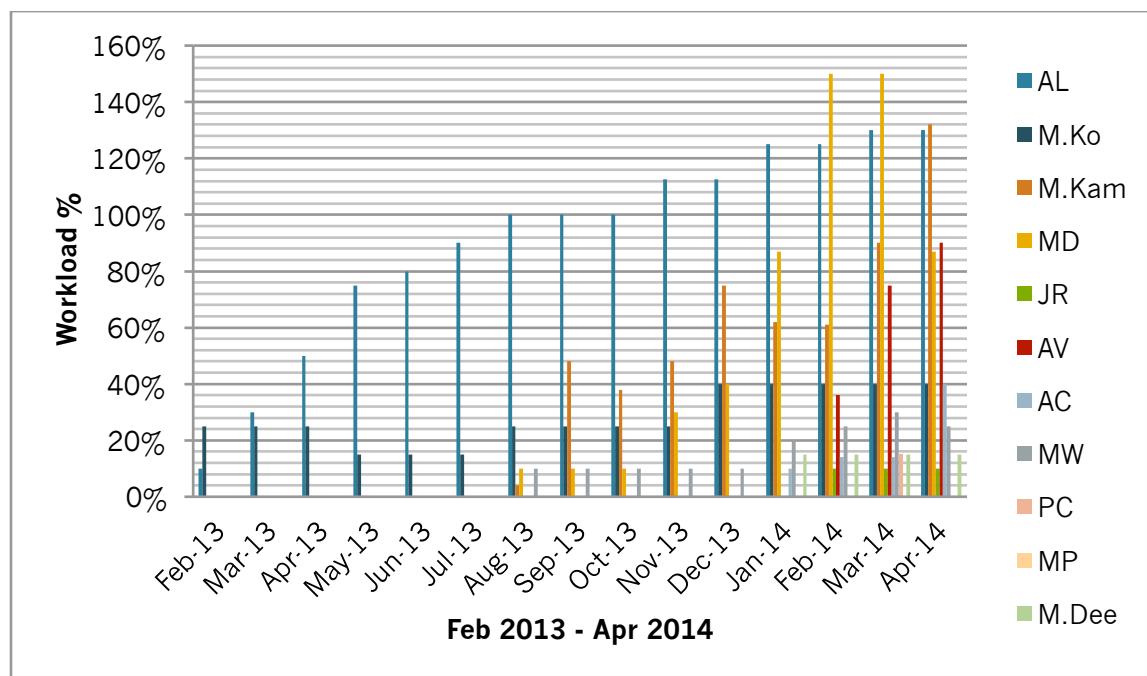
ii. Feature Stories – Work Breakdown Structure

In addition to the redesign of the core informational pages to UBC.ca, C&M produced five stand-alone feature stories to coincide with the relaunch.

Task / Stage	Deliverables	Lead
1 Project management	Regularly updated GANTT charts (PDF, Google, Excel)	C&M
	Sprint status board, backlog (Whiteboard, Google)	C&M
	Meetings	C&M
2 Background research	Story synopses (Doc)	C&M
3 Interviews	Interview notes (Doc)	C&M
4 Copy writing	Copy drafts (Doc, WordPress posts)	C&M
5 Photography	Post-produced photographs (JPG)	C&M
6 Videography	Video segments (MOV, MP4)	C&M
	Animated illustration (MOV, MP4)	C&M
7 Design	UI elements & layout (PDF)	C&M
	Infographic (JPG)	C&M
8 Interaction design	Design composites (Illustrator, PDF)	C&M
9 Technical development	Image gallery slider (CSS, JS)	C&M
	Parallax (JS)	C&M
	Audio player (JS)	C&M
10 Technical build	HTML5 Animation (CSS, SVG, JS)	C&M
	Story (PHP, HTML, CSS, JS)	C&M

iii. Work Summary

Over the course of the project, different team members were brought in for different inputs and tasks. The table below summarizes an approximation of the work hours put into the relaunch of UBC.ca by the C&M team. Workload percentage is based on UBC's 35 hour work week and only reflects time put into UBC.ca project work.



For many, UBC.ca was one of several projects being worked on concurrently and nearly all team members balanced multiple projects with competing deadlines. In order to meet targets and deadlines, many team members worked significant hours of overtime or increased their working hours from part-time to full-time to over-time during the production phase (design, development, story creation, and launch).

iv. Budget

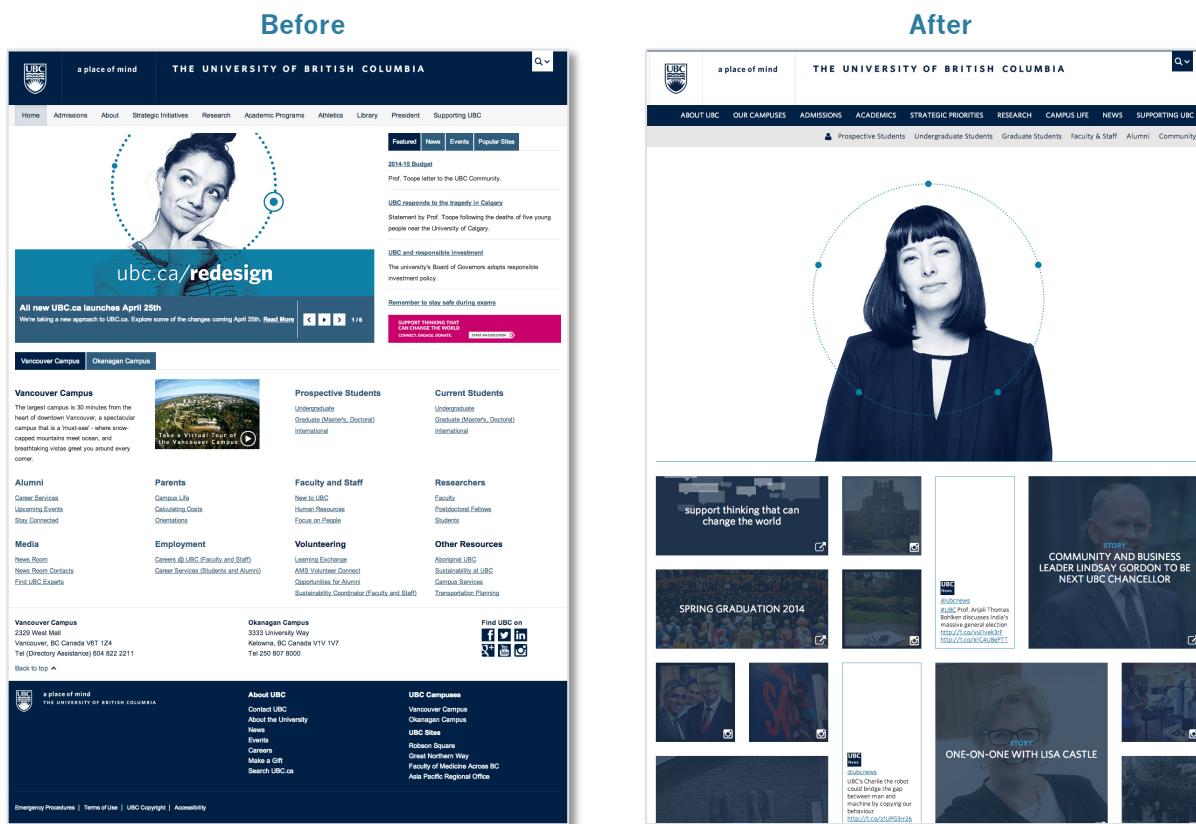
Vendor	Item	Cost
DDB	Strategy & Research	\$15,000
DDB	Design Development	\$45,000
DDB	Contingency (iterations and involvement of DDB Managing Director)	\$10,000
DDB	Media buy	\$20,000
Todd Smith	Videography	\$15,000
David Leidl	Writing, copy editing	\$2,000
Martin Dee	Photography	\$8,000
Hoefler & Co.	Whitney font	\$4,000
Amazon	Amazon Web Services (development server)	\$800
Crazy Egg	Heatmap analytics	\$260
Optimal Workshop	Online usability testing software	\$500
GitHub	Version control, team collaboration	\$250
RBC	Gift cards (usability testing incentives)	\$470
Balsamiq	Online wireframing	\$30
BrowserStack	Online cross-browser testing software	\$480
Typecast	Web typography design software	\$230
Charles Proxy	Web debugging software	\$60
Pole Vault Web	Instagrate Pro WordPress Plugin	\$280
Total		\$122,360

VIII. The New UBC.ca

UBC.ca was re-launched at precisely 12:00:00AM, April 25, 2014.

i. Paradigm Shift

The new UBC.ca reflects a fundamental shift in paradigm that aims to position the website as a channel for communicating to the university's diverse audiences in a way that is more strategic and intentional.



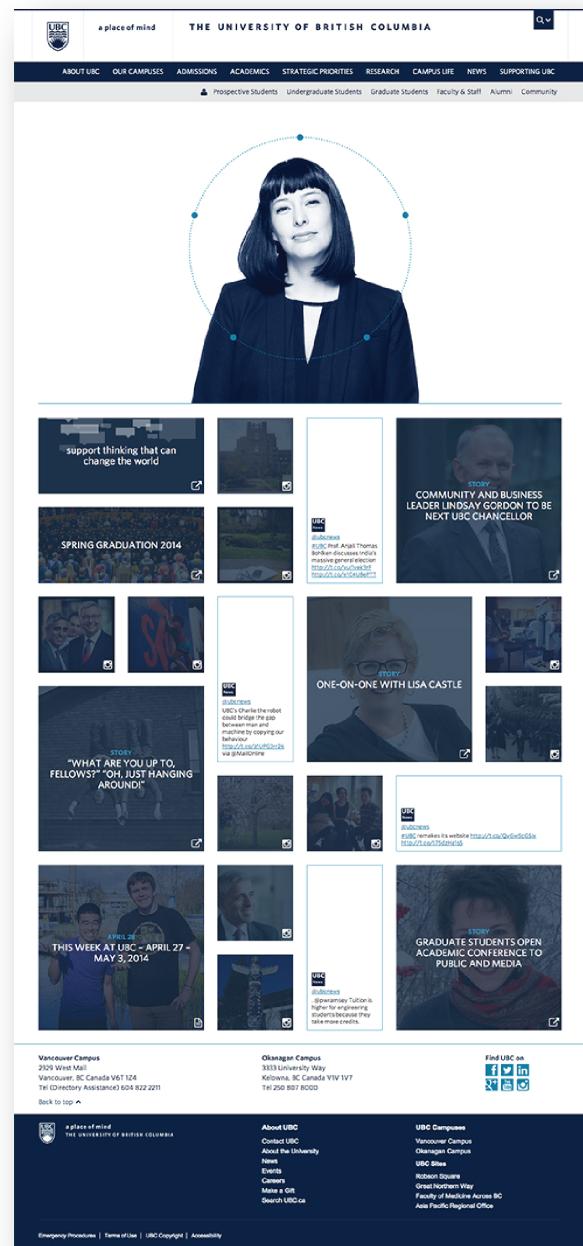
For more Before and After captures, view **Appendix F – UBC.ca Before and After**.

From	To
Corporate & institutional	Audience-centric
News & broadcast driven	Story driven
Highly informational	Informational + Functional + Experiential
Everything for everyone	Specificity
Transactional and reactive	Curated and intentional
Conservative	Bold, open, authentic
Top-heavy	Increased depth
Link clusters	Warm handshakes
Text-heavy	Visually rich

ii. Tactical Implementation

Several tactics were implemented to deliver on the original objectives:

1. Re-imagined homepage experience
 - a. Added “Feature Personalities” to the homepage
 - b. Added “Feature Stories”
 - c. Created “UBC NOW”
2. Revised the website information architecture and navigation
3. Expanded interior pages
4. Deeper collection of analytics



[1] Re-imagined Homepage Experience

(a) Homepage “Feature Personalities”

The Feature Personalities are a collection of photographs and short bios that provide an authentic glimpse into the personalities of the people at UBC. Each Feature Personality consists of a profile picture and an accompanying bio. Feature Personalities are posted to the top portion of the UBC.ca homepage and updated on a quarterly cycle.

(b) Feature Stories

Modeled after digital storytelling examples such as Snowfall by the New York Times

(<http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/>),

UBC.ca’s Feature Stories are high-impact stories released on a quarterly cycle following a thematic editorial calendar.

Feature Stories are co-created in collaboration with partnering units with C&M providing editorial oversight and a production team to help bring new stories to life, or to elevate existing stories that warrant a broader audience.

(c) UBC NOW

UBC NOW is a rolling stream of stories, events, social posts, and static promotional messages posted to the lower portion of the UBC.ca homepage on a weekly basis.

Content for UBC NOW is curated from multiple sources:

- UBCevents Calendar
- Public Affairs
- @ubcnews and @ubcaplaceofmind Twitter channels
- @ubcaplaceofmind Instagram channel
- StoryBox

To support the workflow of posting new content to UBC NOW, the C&M web team developed a WordPress site within CTLT’s WordPress CMS platform and programmed custom scripts to publish content to the UBC.ca homepage in a way that is secure and scalable for the high visitation rates to UBC.ca.

Objectives	
1	Continue to deliver core information about the university (informational)
2	Continue to provide quick and effective ways for visitors to access the information and sites they are looking for (functional)
3	Introduce a richer and more engaging experience (experiential)
4	Communicate to UBC’s broad and diverse audiences in a strategic manner
5	Become a demonstrated proof point of the UBC brand positioning and brand attributes
6	Capture metrics to help inform on-going improvements of UBC.ca
7	Establish a means for measuring and monitoring the effectiveness and overall success in meeting these objectives

[2] Revised Information Architecture and Navigation

The new navigation in the redesigned UBC.ca includes:

- A refined list of thematic navigational items in the primary navigation
- Addition of a new audience-focused navigation scheme
- Addition of new iconography to indicate Audience-specific messaging

The previous navigation scheme for UBC.ca included a mix of links that linked internally and externally from the UBC.ca website. User testing had identified this inconsistency as one of the areas leading to confusion in the user experience of navigating UBC.ca and UBC websites in general.

The new navigation has by and large retained an internal-linking structure** to address the inconsistency in the user experience and to also provide greater means for establishing metrics to assess trends in visitor patterns.

** The exceptions to this rule are “Supporting UBC” and “Alumni” which currently link directly out at the request of Development and Alumni Engagement.

Pre & Post-Launch Navigation

Pre-Launch Navigation	Post-Launch Navigation	
Home Admissions About Strategic Initiatives* Research* Academic Programs Athletics* Library* President* Supporting UBC*	Thematic Navigation About UBC Our Campuses Admissions Academics Strategic Priorities Research Campus Life News Supporting UBC*	Audience Navigation Prospective Students Undergraduate Students Graduate Students Faculty & Staff Alumni* Community

* External links exiting UBC.ca on-click

Objectives
1 Continue to deliver core information about the university (informational)
2 Continue to provide quick and effective ways for visitors to access the information and sites they are looking for (functional)
3 Introduce a richer and more engaging experience (experiential)
4 Communicate to UBC's broad and diverse audiences in a strategic manner
5 Become a demonstrated proof point of the UBC brand positioning and brand attributes
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7 Establish a means for measuring and monitoring the effectiveness and overall success in meeting these objectives

[3] Expanded Interior Pages

In response to feedback gathered during usability testing that the old UBC.ca was “text-heavy”, “confusing”, “overwhelming”, and “daunting”, the interior (second-level) pages of UBC.ca grew both in breadth and depth with a build out to help deliver a richer experience through:

- New content
- Revised layouts
- Addition of large and expansive photography

Large “link clusters” were replaced with “gateway panels” that provide greater context to the link destinations.

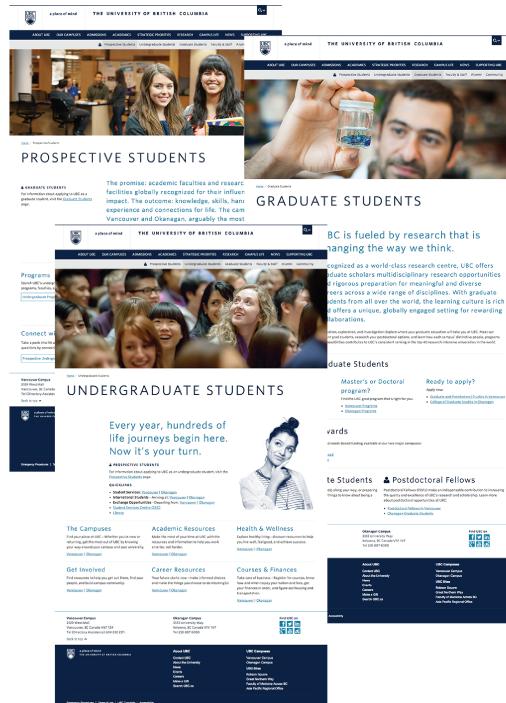
Pages that previously housed content for multiple audience groups was divided into separate sections in the new website to adopt an audience-centric approach.

Objectives	
1	Continue to deliver core information about the university (informational)
2	Continue to provide quick and effective ways for visitors to access the information and sites they are looking for (functional)
3	Introduce a richer and more engaging experience (experiential)
4	Communicate to UBC's broad and diverse audiences in a strategic manner
5	Become a demonstrated proof point of the UBC brand positioning and brand attributes
6	Capture metrics to help inform on-going improvements of UBC.ca
7	Establish a means for measuring and monitoring the effectiveness and overall success in meeting these objectives

Before



After



For more Before and After captures, view **Appendix F – UBC.ca Before and After**.

The combined approach of adding the Audience navigation and expanded interior pages aims to decrease the reliance on the homepage to communicate to everyone all the time by augmenting content in interior pages to provide content “at the source” that is contextually relevant.

[4] Deeper Collection of Analytics

In preparation for launch, an analytics framework was implemented to help monitor the performance of new design and content elements on UBC.ca, and to infer user interaction and behaviour on the site:

- **Top Pages** – to monitor total visits and changing visitation patterns to individual pages throughout the website over the course of the year
- **Event tracking** – to monitor hover-over and click-through rates on various design and content elements including Navigation, Feature Personalities, Feature Stories (dots), Preview Panes, and UBC NOW posts
- **Time on Page** – to assess the average depth of content that is consumed on informational pages, lists, and stories
- **Heat Maps and Scroll Maps** – to monitor interaction with page-specific content, e.g. what elements are clicked, what areas are brought within the viewport of the browser

Objectives	
1	Continue to deliver core information about the university (informational)
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IX. Outcomes

- i. Audience feedback
- ii. New methods for measuring site performance
- iii. Web Metrics: 6-month Results
- iv. New ability to measure trends in Audience visitation patterns
- v. New processes and tools

i. Audience feedback

i. Open-ended Feedback

In the weeks following launch, C&M received 114 notes of feedback. Of these 114 messages, 11 (9%) had a negative sentiment, with the remaining 103 (91%) messages being neutral or positive.

The Good

“This looks AMAZING!! I am so impressed with what you've done. I have never experienced a website quite like it.”

“I really like the clean, bold look of the site.”

“Wow! What a huge undertaking and nice job on getting it done for the April 24 deadline. Big improvement over the old site.”

“Thanks for your team's great work on the redesign, and for being open to hear our input.”

“Now that I've really had a chance to dig in to it, I've decided I like the new UBC.ca after all.”

The Bad

“Where is the link to the library on this new site?”

“I am struggling to find a link to the IT services, for half an hour, and still did not find it. The website has a lot of advertisement about UBC, but do not have EASY to FIND weblinks to essential services such as the IT services.”

“I find the new design of UBC website is confusing, complicated and ineffective...there are TOO MANY boxes which are largely promotional materials. Meanwhile, it is hard to find links and resources. A website should serve many functions but perhaps the most important one is to help people navigate our system...”

ii. Intercept Surveys

An intercept survey was posted to UBC.ca pre and post relaunch with data captured via the Open Minds Forum.

Overall, current and prospective students both rated the redesigned UBC.ca website more favourable compared to the old site.

In particular, prospective students felt it was easier to find what they were looking for in the new site, while current students also felt the information and content were more relevant and interesting.

Conversely, faculty rated the new UBC.ca website significantly poorer than their already poor evaluation of the old website, particularly with respect to the information and content of the new website.

For a detailed analysis, see **Appendix J – UBC.ca Website Evaluation – Pre and Post Comparison**.

ii. New methods for measuring site performance

The increased depth and breadth of content on UBC.ca, along with the addition of new features and elements across the site as a whole has enabled a deeper level of metrics measurement – in some cases by providing new metrics to measure, and in other cases by providing more meaningful data.

In addition to traditional metrics of Pageviews, Bounce Rates, Entries/Exits, New/Returning visitors, the new metrics that are used to a greater extent include:

- Event tracking – to monitor which elements of the page are clicked on
- Click-through rates – to monitor the click-paths and conversion rates of different elements on the website
- Heat maps – to monitor how different page layouts perform and estimate the depth of content consumed
- Time-on-Page – to estimate the depth of content consumed

As before, the primary source of data is the Google Analytics account. As part of the redesign project, a new dashboard system has been implemented to better-automate the aggregation and re-distribution of report data.

iii. Web Metrics: 6-Month Results

Overall improvement of web traffic: Expanded Reach & Increased Engagement

In the six months since re-launch on April 25, 2014, when compared to the same period of time in the year previous, overall visits dropped approximately 13% – a pattern that has been observed across many UBC websites in general this past year, and in the case of UBC.ca may be partly attributable to the launch of News.ubc.ca. Across other metrics, however, there has been an overall improvement in web traffic on UBC.ca.

Notable changes include the increase of New Sessions as well as large increase of visitors from social media channels – both of which reflect an increased reach for UBC.ca. What's more, visitors arriving from social channels are, overall, demonstrating stronger engagement with the content as evidenced by increased lengths of visits (Average Session Duration) and Pages Viewed per Session. Much of this pattern and behaviour can likely be attributed to the addition of Feature Stories and UBC NOW – content that is demonstrating strong uptake in social channels.

Table: Web Statistics 6 Month Post-Launch 2014 compared to equivalent period 2013

	Apr. 25, 2014 to Oct. 25, 2014	Apr. 25, 2013 to Oct. 25, 2013	Change
Sessions	2,723,586	3,112,199	-12.49%
% New Sessions (vs. returning)	45.36%	39.61%	+14.52%
Facebook Referrals	15,066	6,389	+135.81%
Twitter Referrals	4,545	864	+426.04%

LinkedIn Referrals	1,585	400	+296.25%
Pages Viewed per Session	2.36	2.06	+14.63%
Avg. Session Duration	2:59	2:57	1.10%
Pageviews	6,426,975	6,406,810	+0.31%
Bounce Rate	38.09%	45.25%	-16.27%

Increased distribution of traffic throughout the website

As predicted, there was a shift in visitation rates throughout the site with a decreased share of visits to the homepage (42%, a decrease from 52%), and an increased spread throughout the second-level pages.

Table: Share of visits to the Homepage vs. Rest of Site

	Apr. 25, 2014 to Oct. 25, 2014	Apr. 25, 2013 to Oct. 25, 2013	Change
Homepage Pageviews	41.62%	51.39%	-9.77%

This shift in visitation patterns presents the opportunity for content and messaging to be better-targeted to specific audience segments – e.g. rather than relying on the homepage to communicate to all audiences all the time, content can be focused to specific audience segments on the Audience Pages or on topic/thematic-specific pages that can now be further built out over time.

iv. New ability to measure trends in Audience visitation patterns

The new Audience Pages now also provide a means to infer visitation patterns of different audience segments over the course of the year. For example, at launch, the student pages, ordered by pageviews was:

1. Undergraduate Students
2. Prospective Students
3. Graduate Students

In the two months following launch (May-June), a shift was noted in the order of pageviews to these student-focused pages with the Graduate Students page rising to the top.

This is not surprising given that the majority of undergraduate students are off during the summer months and hence less engaged with the university. In the past, however, this change in visitation patterns would have merely been an anecdotal guess. With the build out of these second-level pages and the ability to monitor visits and click-through rates of the navigation, these types of hypotheses can now be better validated through data.

v. New Processes and Tools

Several new processes and tools were introduced to the team as listed below.

Editorial Dashboard

An editorial dashboard was created using a Google Sheet. In subsequent months, the dashboard has become the go-to destination for the C&M team to coordinate content messaging across multiple channels, including the weekly line-up of stories for UBC NOW as well as social media posts for each social channel over the course of the academic year.

Agile Methodologies

In the months leading to launch, the production team adopted a number of practices from agile software development including weekly scrums, daily huddles, backlogs, and burn-down charts.

Evolving framework for making on-going, incremental improvements

The introduction of agile methods into production processes along with the increased attention given to metrics has positioned C&M to run “micro-experiments” – i.e. a means to propose hypotheses for site improvements, implement small changes, and measure the impact of changes by monitoring the resulting changes in metrics.

Content Inventory & Review Process for second-level / interior pages

As an outcome of creating a new information architecture and establishing connections with internal stakeholders, UBC.ca now has a content inventory spreadsheet that serves as the reference point for engaging in a process of regular reviews of second-level / interior page content with relevant content owners and stakeholders from across the university.

WordPress Content Engine for UBC NOW story production

Stories posted to the area called UBC NOW on the UBC.ca homepage feature a stream of stories that are updated on a weekly basis. To support the content management process while also maintaining the performance and security of UBC.ca, content updates for UBC NOW are managed through a WordPress installation that serves as a “content engine” for generating a content feed which is then custom-coded and styled to display on the UBC.ca homepage. This same model has the potential to be applied to a broader, repeatable use such as publishing an aggregated feed of content into other pages within UBC.ca or even other web properties.

Front-end Form in StoryBox for UBC NOW story submissions

Story submissions for UBC NOW are managed through a new online submission form in StoryBox. Entries are stored in StoryBox and an email notification is sent to the Brand and Web teams to review on an on-going basis. This marks the first step in streamlining the content submission process for UBC.ca, as well as the first regular day-to-day (vs. project-based) use of StoryBox. A process model diagram of this workflow is attached as **Appendix H – UBC NOW Workflow**.

X. Challenges and Opportunities

As a whole, the UBC.ca Redesign project was viewed as a success. There were, however, several challenges that point to opportunities for improvements in the future.

i. Project Management & Process

1. Timelines and budget were set prior to defining the full scope of work to be completed, and the scope eventually grew into two projects: (1) Redesigning UBC.ca and (2) Creating 5 Feature Stories.

Impact: The final re-launch date was changed multiple times over the course of the project. Deadlines within the work breakdown structure were extended and a greater number of in-house staff were assigned to the project in order to meet the demands of the increased scope of work. The increased scope of work also led to several team members putting in significant overtime hours to reach target milestones.

2. The process for story production was undefined.

Impact: The website redesign project became the vehicle to define a new set of processes and tasks which increased the time demands to establish, understand, and manage expectations by all involved.

3. The amount of administrative overhead required to produce content for the feature stories (research, coordination, interviewing, visual and motion assets) was more than anticipated and planned for.

Impact: Staff resourcing for the website re-build were pulled from the core rebuild task and diverted to story production.

4. It was challenging to schedule production cycles in a way to obtain approval and sign-off while allowing production teams to continue making progress according to pre-established timelines.

Impact: Timelines shifted, production cycles and deadlines would lag and then go through bursts.

5. The amount of internal consultation and socialization increased midway through the project and some phases of the project extended beyond their initial timeframes (e.g. usability testing and wireframe development – due to staffing changes at DDB, and creative concept development – due to additional rounds of approval).

Impact: While the overall timeline also adjusted, the time remaining for production became extremely tight leaving relatively little time for design, development, and testing.

6. It was an on-going challenge to find the best way to include team members in decision-making processes.

Impact: Multiple meetings had to be scheduled, often with overlapping purposes and redundancies. In the end, several team members also felt left out of key decisions leading to decreased levels of buy-in with the final outcome.

ii. Team Structure, Roles, and Resourcing

1. It was the first time for many in this project to be working together and with this particular arrangement with the agency-of-record. Team members also changed throughout the course of the project with some departures, some additions, and some changes in roles and responsibilities.

Impact: New and changing team members along with the division of responsibilities between C&M and DDB led to ambiguity around roles, responsibilities, and reporting structures within the team. Establishing new norms and managing expectations throughout the entire project became an on-going and very time-consuming task. Some deliverables created by both DDB and C&M required several rounds of revisions before being approved and, once approved, also required further work to prepare for production needs. The original timelines and budget did not account for this level of iterations and, as a result, the scope of work and demands placed on C&M staff increased, particularly in the later stages of the project.

2. Engagement with internal stakeholders was not fully developed nor documented into a formal stakeholder engagement plan.

Impact: Some misunderstandings arose with internal stakeholders around roles and responsibilities of stakeholders with regards to level of involvement and decisions around the project and end-product.

3. The project saw multiple members involved from different teams without any single point person overseeing all resource demands placed on team members across projects.

Impact: It was difficult to account for people's time and as a result difficult to provide accurate estimates for timelines.

4. C&M responsibilities for UBC.ca expanded to include on-going creation of a new type of content that previously did not exist.

Impact: C&M's new editorial and production processes has led to an increased demand on planning, coordination, and production time across all teams within C&M, and has also presented a heightened need to review the interplay between the multiple tools and channels at play (UBC.ca Feature Stories, UBC NOW, aplaceofmind aggregator, StoryBox, UBEvents, @aplaceofmind social channels).

XI. Recommendations

i. Recommendations for Future Website Redesign Projects

Project Scoping

1. Complete the project discovery and a scope definition document, ideally with a high-level GANTT or PERT chart, as a business case to help set the final budget and deadlines
2. Build in extra time into project timelines, particularly at major milestones requiring approval, as a contingency for unexpected delays

Roles, Responsibilities & Expectations

1. For every major deliverable and key tasks, create a “RACI” matrix that clearly identifies those involved as well as their specific roles for the given task or deliverable:
 - [R]esponsible: does the work
 - [A]ccountable/[A]pproval: is the decision maker (max one per task/deliverable)
 - [C]onsulted: must be consulted prior to execution of work and gives input
 - [I]nformed: must be notified of outcomes

Stakeholders

1. Identify all stakeholders from the outset and, in consultation with the stakeholders, clearly define and articulate in writing our expectations of their roles and levels of involvement in the project in a Stakeholder Engagement Plan with accountabilities documented as per the “RACI” matrix described above
2. Follow up with all stakeholders and maintain an on-going dialogue to resolve any remaining issues and work to resolution with this understanding of roles, responsibilities, and expectations

Approval Process

1. Establish the approval process for all key milestones and build contingencies into timelines to allow for iterations when deliverables are not approved at first pass

Communication

1. Allocate time following every review/approval meeting for the sole task of posting updates to the project management tool for the entire team to review
2. For high-profile projects, create an internal-facing blog to communicate project status and updates to team members and the department as a whole

Meetings

1. When sending meeting invitations, clearly outline the meeting “type” (e.g. Discussion, Brainstorming, Decision-making, Time-planning, Updates) along with expectations around outcomes and deliverables from the meeting
2. Schedule larger team meetings to begin at quarter-hour marks to give attendees with back-to-back meetings sufficient time to prepare
3. Establish ground rules for meetings including an expectation for all participants to have read briefing materials prior to the meeting

4. End meetings on-time
5. Complete contact reports at key meetings (e.g. sign-off/approval, meetings with key decisions)

ii. Recommendations for UBC.ca

1. Manage the on-going maintenance (sustainment) of UBC.ca (including UBC NOW and second-level page content) as separate from the Feature Stories production
2. Distribute editorial and project management responsibility for the website by functional areas as per the “RACI” model (see **Appendix I – UBC.ca RACI Table**)
3. Build out mechanisms to gather on-going feedback on UBC.ca:
 - a. Schedule usability tests on the new website, particularly to assess the new elements as well as performance of the new Navigation (inclusion/exclusion of items, internal/external linking strategy), and homepage design
 - b. Run surveys through the Open Minds Forum to measure qualitative impressions of the new UBC.ca
 - c. Elevate the visibility of the website contact / feedback form to make it easier for visitors to send in their feedback
 - d. Automate or streamline the production of web analytics reports
4. Review the performance of UBC.ca on a monthly basis, and schedule time within work cycles to complete updates and iterations
5. Keep an inventory of content requests and pitches (including UBC NOW and content on second level pages), and review the inventory on a quarterly basis to assess emerging needs
6. Report on the performance of UBC.ca on a quarterly basis, circulate reports internally to C&M and more broadly to key stakeholders
7. Review the C&M digital content “ecosystem”, specifically the inter-relationship of UBC.ca, aplaceofmind aggregator, StoryBox, UBCevents, and @aplaceofmind social channels
8. Resolve outstanding secondary page/content issues (Development and Alumni, Aboriginal Engagement, Athletics, Community)

iii. Recommendations for Feature Story Production

1. Designate each production run of Feature Stories as a separate project (distinct from each other, separate from UBC.ca sustainment, and in line with C&M’s “Halo” projects)
2. Distribute greater responsibility by functional area (see **Appendix I – UBC.ca RACI Table**)
3. Schedule quarterly meetings with Managing Director and Brand Director to review performance of past stories, current landscape and climate of communications priorities, and strategic directions for the UBC Brand
4. Build out the editorial calendar and map out the editorial process for Feature Story production to ensure all production team members understand roles and expectations prior to production beginning; ensure the editorial process provides early opportunities for all members of the production team to provide input, with final decision-making responsibility placed with designated leads from each team
5. Identify stakeholders from the outset and, in consultation with the stakeholders, clearly define and articulate in writing our expectations of their roles and levels of involvement in the project (as per the “RACI” model)
6. Improve internal communications for all team members, all stakeholders, the production team, and managers

7. Have the C&M managers meet on a weekly basis to specifically discuss priorities for staff resourcing
8. Diversify content, design and technical approach to producing stories, e.g. build a portion of each Feature Story run with some sort of re-usable framework (e.g. WordPress/Aesop)

iv. Recommendations for Software and Tools

1. Explore options with central IT for creating a development web hosting environment that meets C&M's development, testing, and prototype/previewing needs, to replace usage of Amazon Web Services
2. Several tools proved to be very beneficial in streamlining the project work and should continue to be used:
 - a. GitHub for version control and team collaboration
 - b. ActiveCollab for project management
 - c. Google Analytics and CrazyEgg for analytics
 - d. Google Sheets for content inventories, editorial calendars
3. Two gaps in workflow (time tracking, and content management) could be supported through the use of specialized software such as:
 - a. Toggl (time tracking and reporting)
 - b. GatherContent.com to manage content production and revisions

XII. Attachments

Appendix A – UBC.ca Redesign Project Brief

Appendix B – Internal Stakeholders

Appendix C – Usability Test Results

Appendix D – Creative Composites and Styleguide

Appendix E – Take to Market Plan

Appendix F – UBC.ca Before and After

Appendix G – Sample UBC.ca Metrics Report

Appendix H – UBC NOW Workflow

Appendix I – UBC.ca RACI Table

Appendix J – UBC.ca Website Evaluation – Pre and Post Comparison