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IS_LT 7630: Unit 2 Website Review and Peer Comments

Websites Reviewed:

http://coffeeforthebrain.com/ (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

http://www.schrockguide.net/ (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

Compare and Contrast

My final project website is meant to be a combination of a personal portfolio and resource center for other educators, or others looking for more information about me. With this in mind, I chose to review similar websites by other educators in similar roles. Each of the websites offers a variety of tools and resources for other educators and also houses spaces to contact the creators for additional information and presentation opportunities, however there are large differences in presentation. The coffeeforthebrain.com website is set up as a blog and has a desktop-first environment that does not translate well to mobile. Schrockguide.net appears to be a resource hub, which also links to the creators other portfolio/resume style website. In contrast to coffeeforthebrain.com, this one does translate to mobile screen sizes, has a cleaner layout, and is easier to navigate to find the resource you want.

Strengths and Weaknesses

schrokguide.net

Aesthetically speaking, this website has a modern, clean layout and is presented without significant clutter. The colors are clean and contrast nicely with each other, and fit the overall theme of the website. Images and DIV blocks are aligned with each other, remain consistent within pages on the site, and scale well between screens of different sizes.

The primary weakness of this website and its subpages is the volume of information being presented and a lack of coherent subdivision/organization of that information. While scrolling through the landing page, the user is presented with an unordered list of hyperlinks to a variety of resources that, while useful, is overwhelming and difficult to find what you are looking for. It would be beneficial to organize these links into categories, break them up within the page, or link to further sub-pages. There are pages within the site which are heavily dependent upon context. For example, on the main page there is an anchor tag that links to another page called "hokey pokey". Without context, it is difficult to determine the purpose of this link. On chrome mobile,

the website maintains the unordered list, but the overall structure adjusts to the different screen size and remains relatively easy to read without zooming.

coffeeforthebrain.com

Upon first viewing the purpose of this website appears to be a personal educator blog. The top of the website is clearly organized with links to different sections that state their primary purpose, such as "Newsletters" or "Contact Me". Colors on the website contrast somewhat consistently with one another, depending on its location within the page, and the size of specific segments or DIV blocks are consistent with each other on the desktop version. There are shades of similar colors on the website in some sections that could be difficult to distinguish for people with color-blindness.

The landing page for the website is extensive and requires a significant amount of scrolling to navigate, appearing to contain most or all of the blog posts by the author. There are features to navigate to previous posts on a sidebar for desktop, however on mobile that gets pushed to the bottom of the page. This organization makes it difficult to find a post that interests you, or one that had been previously visited, especially on mobile. There also appears to be inconsistency between the different blog posts with font styles and sizes. Placing all blog posts on the landing page can also increase load times.

Use Cases

Schrockguide.net

Of the two sites reviewed, this website offers information for the widest audience. This website offers a wide array of resources for viewers, from education technology tools, to presentations and speaking opportunities. I first came across this website searching for educational technology tools and resources while creating professional development sessions for teachers in my district. In addition to providing resources, the website is cross-linked with kathyschrock.net, which has similar offerings in content and is by the same author but includes a resume/portfolio section and a schedule of speaking appearances. This part of the website would be useful for someone looking for a professional speaker with a variety of experiences.

Coffeeforthebrain.com

The primary purpose of the website seems to be of personal and professional advocacy through a blog format. The most obvious use would be for someone looking for inspiration and information on what other schools are doing. The creator works for a local Area Education Agency and the website would provide a good forum for local schools to showcase their work. There are also linked resources on the page for specific educational technologies such as the

raspberry pi and arduino. Educators looking for resources on those specific tools and their use would also benefit from looking at this page, no matter their location.

Comments

Kelli Wittenborn

I feel like we had very similar responses to our websites, despite their purposes being so different! I noticed on your first website review, you discussed how it was almost too overwhelming with options and information, and in the second review it seemed more simple and straight-forward because of the "blogging" format. My website were very similar -- my first website was primarily to be used as extensive resources for teachers, so while it would be appreciated for a teacher searching for anything and everything to help in their lesson planning and instruction, it is almost too overwhelming and frustrating to use for simple intended means or resources! The second website was much more simple because it was intended to be student-friendly, and while the amount of actual information and resources available might have been less, it still was more user-friendly and easy to navigate.

I think ultimately we both learned the same thing -- you have to be very purposeful in your rational, reasoning, and intentions for your site before you start setting it up. If you are wanting it to have the most resources or info possible, you might have to accept that it is overwhelming and perhaps complex, but if your goal is to have users easily navigate and locate information, the more minimal, the better!