INFO/CS 1300: Final Group Project, Milestone 1

Team contract, client description and requirements, personas, initial ideas, and project planning

Assigned: Wed. October 18th.

Due: Tues. October 31st @ 17:00. **No late submissions accepted. No exceptions.**

Grade: 20 points via written feedback

Overview

For your final group project, milestone 1, you'll get to know your team, set your ground rules for working together and you'll begin working together on planning a site for an external client. Specifically, we are looking for you to identify your client and their needs and expectations for a site, start a design journey map that outlines this information, create your first sketches of what the site should look like, and plan out this project with your team members. Start now, as the first client you choose may have inappropriate requirements; if so you will need time to find a second client.

Highlights of Milestone 1:

- Team contract.
- Who is your client? What do they need and want from the site?
- Who are the personas? How will the design of the site meet their needs? How will you organize your work on the site?
- Description of information architecture and design.
- Sketches and storyboards of the overall look and feel of your site and information architecture.
- Plan on how to successfully execute the project (roles, deadlines, tasks, etc.).

Before reading this document, make sure you read the "Final Group Project Overview" document. It has important details about what you'll be doing for the final project. For example, in the final project you are allowed to use code that is not your own. That means you can use cool Javascript or CSS that you find!

Team Contract & Schedule

Before you do anything else on Milestone 1, you need to create a team contract and a Milestone 1 schedule.

Team Contract

Conflict is a normal part of working with other people. People often try to avoid conflict, however rather than avoid it, you should plan for it. For Milestone 1 you will author a team contract.

Your team contract agreement should include these elements. Feel free to add other terms, too.

1. Full name and net ID of each of your team members.

2. To what goals do we all commit?

3. What are our "ground rules"? (Don't make an exhaustive list—stick with just a few.)

4. By what means and how frequently will we meet or communicate?

5. What roles will we create? Include a description of exactly what each role is responsible for.

6. How will we hold ourselves and one another accountable? What (exactly) will we say to a team member who appears not to be contributing equally? To a team member who fails to deliver what was promised?

7. What do we do when we disagree? What approach to conflict to we all agree to uphold?

8. What are our procedures for re-visiting this contract?

9. What else do we want to include in this contract? (Consider adding a clause about how you will make this experience fun!)

Submit your team contract to CMS as a PDF.

Tip: Remember that if a team member does not contribute, then it is an academic integrity violation for you to put the delinquent team member's name on your submission. You might want to consider making that explicit in your contract.

Schedule/Plan

You will need to plan ahead for Milestone 1. You cannot wait until the day before and complete this milestone!

Come up with a schedule or plan early in Milestone 1 and follow it as best as you can. Plan out all of the activities that you need for this Milestone and when they should be done.

Submit your Milestone 1 schedule to CMS as a PDF.

Design Journey Map – Part 1: The Client

You will need to find a client to build your site for.

What kind of clients do you think could benefit from a website? What kinds of clients is your group interested in? What kind of clients do you have access to that might be interested in having you design a website for them? Some suggestions for places to look are: A Cornell Registered Organization (search at http://orgsync.rso.cornell.edu/Search), an Ithaca Non-profit Organization, a local business, a Cornell department, etc.

If those options aren't appealing, you may choose to create a personal site for another person as long as 1) it has a target audience, 2) a developed information architecture, and 3) opportunity for interactive elements. Note

that although we generally discourage personal websites, they are acceptable if they are elaborate and include all other project requirements.

You may already have a personal contact in an organization that you can approach, or you may need to email a new organization and introduce yourself and this opportunity. Any organization you are interested in is fine, with one exception: no one on your team may themselves be a member of the organization, or have a close personal relationship with anyone in the organization.

Client Restrictions:

- You can't be your own client.

- No team member may be a member of the organization for which you are making a website.

- No team member may have a close personal relationship with the client.

If you are a member of an organization that needs a website, feel free to post it to Piazza as a new note titled "Client: Name of Client" with the "available-client" tag and info about the project and client contact; another group may be happy to pick it up.

You might find that a client is interested in having you redesign a pre-existing site. You are allowed to do this (redesign is common, remember), but you will need to demonstrate the same amount of work as if you were creating a site from scratch. For more details, see the overall final project write-up. Specifically, if you are redesigning a preexisting site you will need to include the following in your design rationale:

1. The URL of the original site, and

2. Screenshots of major pages of the site that you plan to change.

It is important that you choose a client that will allow you to design a site that adequately demonstrates what you've learned this semester. It would not be wise, for example, to select a client that only requires a few pages of content. If your prospective client does not have a broad vision for their website, your group can inform them of the wide range of things you can do in designing or redesigning a site for them; in doing so, your client's list of requirements should grow, enabling you to put together a more developed project.

It is important to set your client's expectations so that they know what to expect from your work. First, note that although you can work off your computer for the project, you need to make sure your client understands that the web site will need to be hosted elsewhere at the end of the semester. Most Cornell servers do not support PHP, so your client will need to find a hosting service if they want to use the website you design for them. Additionally, make sure your client understands that you will have about six weeks to develop this site and that you will need to meet with them at least three times to determine their needs, gather content, and get feedback and final approval.

Understand Client Needs and Target Users

Your first tasks involve meeting with the client to understand their needs and expectations for the site and develop the Client Description in the Design Journey Map. So, look over the first part of the map and think about the kind of questions you will need to ask your client (and yourself). Some of these questions may include:

- What is the purpose of your website? Is it primarily informative? Are you trying to sell things? Are you recruiting? i.e., what kinds of goals do you as the client have?

- What is the key message you would like your site to communicate?

- Who is/are your target audiences? Note that you may need to help them understand that it's hard to design for "everybody" and that having a good picture of potential users will increase the chances of design success.

- What types of people will be visiting your site? What are they looking for? What do you expect them to want to do on the site? i.e., what kinds of goals will users have?

- What interactive elements would you like implemented? Note your client may not have any ideas, or may have ideas that are far too ambitious for this course. Be careful not to over-promise.

Now use this information to create the following parts of the Design Journey Map:

- Client description

- Target audience

- Personas: Based on conversations with people in the client's target audience(s), create and describe 2 personas who will be using this site. Keep in mind that personas, although written as composite individuals, are meant to evoke rich, real data from people you've talked to who represent groups in the target audience.

- Needs: List your client's target audience's needs and wants one by one that you need to design for.

- Design Ideas: Justify your design ideas corresponding to client and audience needs. Think of multiple design ideas that might satisfy those needs. In Milestone 2, you will decide which one of these multiple options, you will choose to implement and explain why?

- Memos: Any additional comments you have to justify your design ideas and choices or things you want TAs to know.

Design Journey Map – Part 2: The Design (Information Architecture, Navigation, and Sketches)

As a web designer, you want to ensure that people can easily find their way around your site with a minimal amount of effort. You are already aware that there might be many different types of potential users of your site;

this part of the assignment asks you to think through how your site will be organized so that these different users are easily able to find what they are looking for.

1. Gather and create content.

Your first step is to collect all the content needed for the site - all the text, images, and other types of content that will be included. You will need to meet with the client (again) to get this content. For example, if you are designing a website for a student organization at Cornell, you need to have them give you a blurb about their purpose and, depending on their needs, a member list, constitution, photographs from events and so on. You may need to collect other images for your background or navigation as well.

The most important thing is to know what content is going to be needed on the site so you can plan for it and get it in time to do the work. The content may change later, as you learn more from doing the work and from user testing, but make sure the client knows this is important and urgent.

2. Create an information architecture.

Next, you will figure out the best way to present the content you collected. Tools like card-sorting and concepts like LATCH can be helpful to organize the content of the site into categories and subcategories.

There is no single right way to organize your content, but your guide should be your personas. Would your personas find your site easier to use if content was organized in terms of what they want to do at your site: view pictures, view background information, become a member, etc.? Or would they find it easier if there was a category for each kind of persona: existing members, prospective members, new members etc.? Starting from the home page, how many pages do you want your user to click through to get to a particular page?

Your work here should reflect awareness of and follow the general rules of good information architecture. For example, people should not be confused about what a particular category means and what content it contains: they should know what to expect when a link is clicked.

During the course of your group project, many of you will have your client change their mind about a requirement they mentioned to you previously, or they might have new things that they want you to incorporate. This is a sad but true fact about working with clients and design projects in general. Will your categories be able to accommodate these changes?

3. Design site information architecture (IA) & navigation.

Next, you will map the categories that you laid out in the previous section onto individual pages and decide how your users will be able to move from one part of your site to another via links. What kind of navigational aids will you have? Will there be a menu bar? A drop-down menu? Tabs? What goes in the main navigation menu and what might go in the footer? Will you have this available across all your pages?

It is a good idea to show where the user is and where they can go from there. How will you implement this? If the user is lost, can they get back to a good starting point? Can you minimize the loss of work that the user has done navigating this far? As usual, your design and discussion should show you understand the course material.

For IA/navigation, you need to submit the following documentation in your Design Journey Map:

- Information architecture: for each category you develop, write a few sentences or a bulleted list describing the content of the category (including the subcategories that will go under it) and justifying why you decided to assign the content to that particular category. Your justification can explain why the content in a particular category fits together. It should refer to the personas you created and explain why the persona would expect his/her desired information to be organized that way, and use IA principles from the course.

- Navigation: Sketches/storyboards of the complete website are your drawings of ideas that show the content, navigation, and look and feel of the planned site.

Start to think about the functions, user interface, information architectures, color scheme, alignment, fonts, etc. while sketching. It is better to start early to think about these things. Note that our description in this section focuses on the information and content because this needs to get moving early (so you can get needed content from your client), but you should be thinking hard about look, feel, and metaphor as well, even this early.

Paper is an awfully nice medium for this; you can sketch your pages with major navigation and content elements on paper to communicate with clients and teammates, and rapidly change them. You're also welcome to do some of the work in tools like GIMP, Inkscape, Balsamiq, etc., that can help you explore look, feel, and structure at higher fidelity but without the without having to grunge around with the HTML and CSS at the same time as you're trying to design. But please don't only use these tools, paper is really great for design!

Tips: the sketches/storyboards should gradually increase in fidelity over time, to facilitate your final implementation of the site.

As with Project 2, don't design and build the site at the same time in HTML+CSS then make up sketches at the end. Wrong order. Sketches help you think about the design and explore alternatives before you start committing serious work to implementing them. Paper sketches take much less time to create than coding HTML and CSS.

You will also create detailed plans and storyboards of the PHP/Interactivity based elements of your website - such that we can discern what is going to happen with user interaction. These will not be required until Milestone 2, but if you have tentative plans for Milestone 1, we can help you better. Also, please describe how the interactivity connects with the needs of the clients, target audience, and/or personas.

Milestone 1 Deliverable

This is your first version of the Final Group Project Design Journey Map. Updates to this document will be submitted throughout the project.

Consider the following general guidelines for writing the Design Journey Map:

- It should tell us what you did, and why? The process is important and it should really seem like a journey where you began with nothing, then over time collected data, analyzed it and created the first design ideas, and justified why they made sense with the associated data.

- You do not have a website for now. Your sketches would help you document what your initial design was. So, describe your choices effectively and thoroughly, and give a vivid description of the site because you would need to revisit this and read the details/justification here before you decide to make any changes in the upcoming milestones. This would help us understand the site too.

- It should make coherent arguments for major design (e.g., the site architecture, the choice of interactive elements) choices based on the goals of the site.

- Successful design journey maps take themselves seriously, and are vigorous in their opinions and analysis.

Grading

20 points. Late submissions will receive a 0.

Your grade will be based on whether you did the assignment. We will provide written feedback to help you with your future milestones. If it looks like you tried, even though there are some mistakes, you will be fine. If you have lots of issues or it's pretty obviously incomplete, you won't get full credit.

Submission

We have enabled group submission in CMS for the final project.

1. Submit your team contract as a **PDF** to CMS.

2. Submit your Milestone 1 plan as a **PDF** to CMS.

3. Submit your design journey map as a **PDF** to CMS.

No late submission accepted. No exceptions.

Concluding Remarks

Note that you are not expected to – and are discouraged from – having any HTML, CSS, Javascript, or PHP at this point, and we will not look at them. This milestone is about doing a strong job on the front end of the design process, around understanding needs and requirements of your client and generating ideas.

I'm really excited to see what you all create and I know you will do a good job. Good luck and have fun!