**Charlotte Little**

**What is the Newshouse?**

The Newshouse is a “multimedia news site for Syracuse University to teach Newhouse School students practical digital skills needed for the media industry,” (taken from website, https://www.thenewshouse.com/)

The Newshouse is a largely student-run media outlet. The topics covered include:

- Campus News

- Off Campus

- Sports

- Life & Style

- Entertainment

Their purpose is to deliver informative or entertaining content to their readers. Most topics are related to Syracuse University or the general Syracuse community.

The organization also provides a way for students to understand the behind-the-scene work for their intended career.

Like most media outlets, they have many channels of communication.

The Newshouse uses:

- www.thenewshouse.com (official website)

- Instagram

- Facebook

- X (Twitter)

- YouTube

According to Google Analytics:

- Over the last month:

- 9.6k users

- 9.5k new users

- 1 min. 11 sec. average engagement time

- Most users are from the US, Canada, or UK

- Most users find the website through an organic search

**Interviews**

**Questions:**

What is your position? What daily responsibilities do you have?

What is your process for collecting all the info you need (ex. Putting photos together)

What is the process for uploading stories onto the NewsHouse website?

What problems have you encountered in the past?

Podcast submission current: video with picture, incorporate better?

Use of PDF: brings to website link, incorporate better?

What features do you use the most on the website?

What feature do you dislike the most about the website?

Do you have any recurring issues with the website?

What websites do you visit frequently?

What do you use most on the website?

**Process**

- Game and event coverage

- Not going to games, more assigning

- Getting credentials

- Editing their work

- Pretty busy, some sports take priority

- Try and send people to every game → harder with smaller stories, everyone wants to cover football

**Upload process**

- Fronts (homepage, section leads): once actual article is updated/posted, producer has to make sure article gets published elsewhere on website → doesn’t automatically update section homepage (for example: new sports game cover is uploaded, Jonathan has to go in and update the sports section once again)

**Features used most**

- Dashboard → gives overview

- Media library

- Story calendar

**Feature dislike**

- Double upload

**Recurring issues**

- How can you make things more accessible?

- How can you explore blocks better?

**Websites used frequently**

- Google drive

- Slack

- Syracuse.com

- NY Times

**Annie (life and style; trends, events, student population)**

**Process**

- Check-in with writers on draft process (DAILY)

- Don’t go over three drafts

- Push along to other content editors (Julia for example)

- Reach out to photo team

- Longer stories, not usually daily, breaking-news

- Have time to prepare for stories

**Upload process**

- Put everything into CMS

- Computer System Online, Word Press → template, fill in the draft;

- \*\*BIGGEST COMPLAINT

- Very frustrating to use

- Does not like to make edits

- For example: Story calendar → should be able to click on a story and make edits. However, it will make a second story or not load at all

**Features used most**

- Dashboard → gives overview

- Media library

- Story calendar

**Feature dislike**

- Fronts

**Recurring issues**

- Special projects section → features not present anywhere else

- No special projects section at the sticky header

**Websites**

- Slack

- Outlook

- The New Yorker

- Major outlets, Post, Times

- Depends on the story

**Professor John Glass**

- Professor of Practice in Magazine, News, and Digital Journalism

- Executive producer for the Newshouse since 2009: An advisory/ role, supporting the leadership and production team.

- Newshouse is a student-run organization

**Lead producer team**: That takes care of operations of what goes up on the website, preparing the content, editing the content

Producer Team: creates the content for social media, and photography. (Students of Prof. Glass’s class)

- The current design of the website has been in effect since 2017. The class is required to design the visual aspects of the website, and addition of some new features and functions that might require some development in the back end.

**Function of the website:** The purpose of the website is to deliver informative and entertaining content to the Syracuse University community. It focuses on campus news, off-campus news, sports, life and style, and entertainment news, which are the realms of interest to the students in the university.

- It also serves as an outlet where the students can learn the many facets of digital production.

**Audience: Primary demographic**: Students, faculty, staff, and people who work for the university.

**Secondary Audience:** People who have associations with SU, Alumni, prospective students, family, and people who live in the central New York area who would like to know about SU.

- Design Aspects: Would like to have a clean presentation. Any innovative and experimental design is welcomed, responsive to mobile interface, and interactive.

**Sites Preferred/ Work we can take inspiration from:**  New York Times, NVR, The Daily Times, NBC

- Finds interactive websites appealing: like story scrolling, interactive where stories unfold when clicked, and creative visualizations.

- The current design is fairly modular and simple.

- Observation: News websites try to design changes, but end up going back to the initial designs. Keep in mind the realities of producing it.

- Students in News House are allowed to play around with the design in the story level.

- Check out the Title ix project and the infodemic project. These pages are custom-designed. They have a better look and interactivity compared to other pages. Keep in mind some of the development for the design is hard to figure out, hence they end up finding easier ways to bring change.

- Would love to see innovative ways to incorporate audio files into the website. They have always depended on using third-party sites like YouTube Spotify, sound cloud to incorporate the media files. Would be cool to see if we could make a version that is unique to Newshouse.

**Design Style:** Stay closer to the guidelines, the Syracuse colors. Do not change the logo. The colors were chosen, to let the content pop. Too fancy colors can draw attention away from the content.

**SEO Analytics to focus on:** 2/3rds of the traffic of the website comes from the Google search engine, the website being very SEO optimized. Look at the top pages visited by the students, sometimes, students even look at stories that are a year or two older.

- Regular top stories are current happenings. People are mostly coming to the site through the story-level page. Focus on how we can get people to look through the website, instead of just the story page.

**Building engagement:** see pages that have more engagement times, and try to infer why they have more engagement.

**User flow tracking**: see if you find any specific patterns in the way people are scrolling through pages. See why and where some actions can be reduced.

**The general pattern of traffic:** study patterns during the academic year. The current year’s traffic can be compared to traffic on the same day previous year. Weekly basis: which days have more traffic?

**Tech menu:** how people are accessing the website. 58% access through phone. 30% laptop. What device they are using browsers, and what is the demographic of users?

**Responsive design for mobile pages:** Some text and content scale down. Reducing the headline text for phones.

- Need for the mobile-first approach, since it has more traffic

- Talk to the producers and CMS for more information.

**Kelsey (Syracuse Junior, Public Relations major)**

**Observations:**

- Liked the big, headlining picture

- Scrolled through homepage, read titles

- Clicked on campus news, then off campus

- Reads bottom stories (ones with no pic at bottom)

- Clicked on article about Italian celebration → didn’t know that was a thing

- Skimmed article, clicked out

- Clicked on article about coffee

- Used back button to get to homepage

- Clicked on Ithaca farmers market

- Scrolled through

**Interview Questions:**

*1. Do you know what the Newshouse is?*

- Yes, but only because my roommate worked for the organization

*2. Do you often look at the news? What sources do you use?*

- I do

- Uses Instagram, follows NYTimes, CNN, other news sources (@Impact, @ShitYouShouldCareAbout)

- Email → newsletters, PR newsletter, pop culture, Wall St Journal Newsletter

*3. What devices do you use when you look at the news?*

- My phone

*4. How would you describe your experience looking through the Newshouse website?*

- Enjoyable

- Simple website, not too much happening on page

- Stories were interesting

*5. How easy is it to navigate the website?*

- Very easy

*6. What were things you were confused about when navigating the website?*

- Nothing

*7. How do you normally get to the Newshouse?*

- Direct search

*8. What do you like about the current website design?*

- Simplicity

- Cleanliness

*9. What could be added to the website to make it better? Removed?*

- More pictures with the articles

- Possibly listing more stories as a recommendation afterwards

**Competitive Analysis**

**1. The New York Times**

***Daily newspaper based in New York City***

***https://www.nytimes.com/***

**Audience**

- 61% of readers are Gen Z or Millennial’s

**Strengths**

- Historically successful publication

- Trusted source of information

- Print and digital

- Offered in multiple languages

**Weaknesses**

- No local news

- If any local news, will most likely be about NYC

- Information overload

- Subscription required

**Unique features**

- Has “Today’s Paper” section

- Wide range of topics

**User ratings/Satisfaction**

- Over 2 billion subscribers (2022)

**Mission and value**

- “The New York Times is dedicated to helping people understand the world through on-the-ground, expert and deeply reported independent journalism.”

**2. Syracuse.com or The Post-Standard**

***Daily newspaper based in Syracuse, NY***

***https://www.syracuse.com/***

**Audience**

- Middle-aged people, most likely from Syracuse or have a connection to Syracuse.

**Strengths**

- Highly accredited newspaper

- Heavily focused on local news and entertainment

- Lots of different sections in organized manner

- Print and digital

**Weaknesses**

- Not a lot of national news

- Lots of ads

- Subscription required, but can view homepage

- Can not view every single article

- Not a lot of visual content to consume

- Has to focus on print and digital news

**Unique features**

- Gives local weather graphic

**3. The Harvard Crimson**

***Daily newspaper based in Cambridge, MA***

***https://www.thecrimson.com/***

**Audience**

- 18-24 year olds, most likely Harvard students

**Strengths**

- Well known newspaper at prestigious university

- Known to have a history of integrity

- Reports on campus and national news

- Do not need subscription

**Weaknesses**

- Very specific news audience

- Lots of weird ads

- Content overload

**Client Content Inventory**

**Section front - sports**

**Problems:**

- Only 5 listed sections at top, but many different sections on section front

- Can be extremely confusing for user

- Wide margin

- Can only see first part of headline story at first click

- Don’t have more information on side articles

- Why do some of the articles have visuals?

**Solutions:**

- Could make better use of grid layout to include more articles

- Could do dynamic sizing to create visual interest

- Give byline and dek for side articles

- Make “sports” bigger

**Story level page**

**Problems:**

- Awkward spacing all around

- Huge margins with awkward white space

- Photo byline uncomfortably close to image

- Text centered but caption isn’t

- Large headline pt size

- Some photos awkwardly larger than others

**Solutions:**

- Include carasel with more images

- Change headline size

- Have a more dynamic structure with text columns (maybe side by side)

- Suggested articles at bottom

**Heuristic Evaluation**

**Consistency and standards**

Each card had the same corresponding text and image size.

**User control & freedom**

User is able to discover more about contributors if desiered.

**Help recognize, diagnose, and recover**

User is able to discover if the word they searched has any articles related to it.

Empathize: Executive Summary

The Newshouse Project

VIS 457- UI/UX

Alex Ryberg Gonzalez

Observations

The observations I did included observing the visuals/photography editor/producer for the Newshouse and observing a somewhat frequent student user/reader of the page. While these two people have completely different perspectives and experiences when it comes to interacting with the Newshouse page, a lot of the results were similar. Both people found similar frustrations with the website, including inconsistencies, confusion, and a constant going back and forth from the homepage to other pages.

Both Madeleine Oliveros and Nicole Hopwood were often confused about the “Latest” stories (right tab menu).

They were both drawn in by visuals more than headings, stories, descriptions.

They both pointed out that on the homepage there are multiple section titles for each section (ex: “Football” and “Sports”), this was annoying to them both.

They both noted that the “more” button on the “latest” tab led them to “campus news” instead of just more stories.

Interviews

For the interviews, I found a lot of similarities and some differences in the responses. Overall, I found that from the content management standpoint, the website is quite messy. There are issues with organizing formatting when it comes to images, captions, and issues when it comes to the sections. Issues in terms of the sections come from both a content management standpoint and a user standpoint. The interview also resulted in a necessity for a responsive design, particularly for mobile users, since that is the majority of users. Overall, commentary on the design of the page was negative, as the elements weren’t making it necessarily easier to navigate the page or intake information. The design of the page is outdated and needs work to be refreshed.

Interviewees pointed out that Pinterest was one of their most used sites.

User interviewee shared that the campus news section is the one she looks at most often.

The New York Times and The Washington Post pages are some to look at for inspiration.

Implementing a drop down menu came up a variety of times.

Making the page more visually striking, and including more graphics/images would help draw more people in.

Responsive design for mobile users.

Content Audit

Section Front

For the content audit, issues mentioned by the interviewees and during personal observations were found to be very clear and problematic. Primarily, the issues revolved around many repeated elements that were inconsistent or not functioning in the way a user would automatically expect. For example, the secondary story blocks on the homepage/any section page would only have the story heading as functional. Trying to click on any other elements, like the image, within this box would not send you to the story.

Story Front

There were not as many issues when it came to the story front, as that was a lot more straightforward and it served an exact, known purpose. One error here was that bolded/highlighted/underlined words would often have different results once clicked. Sometimes, the bolded words would lead the user to a different page in a new tab, other times it opened up in the same tab.

Competitive Analysis

Direct Competitors

In terms of direct competitors that The Newshouse faces, there was a very clear observation to be made. The Daily Orange, Syracuse University’s independent student-run news organization is the closest competitor to The Newshouse. One of the biggest differences found between these two organizations is the development and time of development that they’ve had over the years. Since the Daily Orange has been around for quite a while, it has been well-established as SU’s main publication, as well as a respected publication out in the community. Because of this, they also have advertisers and donors. While these are benefits of The Daily Orange, they don’t benefit from having a credited-class that a team of students work for. Since the Daily Orange is fully extracurricular, the students running it may not prioritize the work as much as they do for The Newshouse.

Indirect Competitors

As for indirect competitors, The Newshouse faces obvious competition from other local, regional, national, and international news publications as they fall into the general category of news. On the other hand, there are other campus publications that they can face a little bit of indirect competition with. Jerk Magazine, along with other more creative/news publications is a very popular source of information on campus. Jerk does a lot of stories on culture, lifestyle, and entertainment, while also printing out a physical copy of the magazine. This is quite different to the Newshouse, yet still a bit of a competitor.

Heuristic Evaluation

Match between system and the real world

Images, straightforward writing with accessible vocabulary.

Consistency and standards.

The content blocks have the same functions, buttons, are formatted the same way.

Recognition rather than recall.

The search bar is a great example.

User control and freedom

There are many opportunities to learn more about the different elements on the page, including the contributors/authors.

Consistency and standards.

The contributor profiles provide the same information, function, and are formatted the same way.

The Newshouse Website Redesign

Part 1: Empathize

Elliot Rosenberg

Observations:

From A Reader Perspective: Almost the first thing I noticed when comparing the experience of reading The Newshouse compared to other news websites such as The Washington Post or The New York Times was the monotony of its design. The layout for the home page and each article page is exactly the same, and neither the articles on the side nor the blocks at the bottom of the page changes. There are no changes in layout whatsoever. In addition, I found some design choices, specifically the hierarchy and size of the “Latest News” column distracting from my experience using the site as a reader. However, from a practical standpoint, the site does what it needs to, if it is the bare minimum of that. I did not have difficulties navigating through the site nor did I find it hard to read the articles.

One thing I observed when talking to other designers about their experience trying to get interviews with site readers is that not very many Newhouse students actually read the Newshouse. Assuming the target reader of the site is students, this is a problem.

From A Content Creator/Publisher Perspective: The Newshouse uses Wordpress for its backend, which seems like both a help and a hinderance. While it seems to be more flexible to use then other site building tools like Squarespace or Drupal, the process of adding content to the website seems tedious, although not necessarily difficult. Someone inputting a new story onto the website must use a pre-selected template and fill content into it. New stories must be added to their positions in the homepage manually, they do not automatically move down when a new story is added. They are also not automatically added to their relevant sections, this process must also be done manually. Their seemed to be quite a bit of frustration on the end of student publishers with the tedium of the backend.

Interviews:

I conducted two interviews personally, both with students. I first talked to Julia Carden, executive producer at the Newshouse. I then talked to a friend of hers, Greta Stuckey, who is a Newhouse reader. Both are first year MND grad students.

Here’s a summary of their opinions on the current site:

Julia Greta

Connection to the Newshouse Executive Producer Reader, checks site about 3 times a week.

Main use of website Creating content packages for articles, adding content or new users, filling in content calendar. Reading articles written by her friends.

Opinion of current site Thinks the current layout is “okay.” Likes the “block” system. Does not like the “Latest News” section. Wishes to fill more space than the current site does. Likes that the site is easy to navigate. Doesn’t like that stories in the “latest news” section are the same as other featured articles, and remain constant.

Opinion of original version of site Likes having hero sections and a multimedia section. Likes hero section. Also has interest in bringing back a multimedia section. Dislikes old site otherwise.

Things that could be added to the site Wants to see better integration of multimedia content. Also likes the idea of having visually distinct and contrasting sections. Wants to see a live feed generating for either news or social media input. Wants to see more effective use of photos and thumbnails for articles in the “Latest News” section. Would like to see multimedia content highlighted more. Wants more diversity in the various sections.

Opinions on the logo/color palette/typography Likes current colors, but is neutral on the logo. Believes the contrast of typefaces is jarring. Has problems with the site’s hierarchy, specifically with regard to the “Latest News” section. Colors and logo are fine. Wants more typeface diversity, disliking typeface combination.

I was somewhat surprised at how similar Julia and Greta’s opinions of the site seemed to be, and I’ve noticed several changes they both seemed to want initiated:

• Better integration of multimedia content.

• More diverse layouts.

• An overhaul of the “Latest News” section, preferably with a live news feed.

• Addition of a hero section.

• Some changing of typefaces.

I talked more with Julia about the backend of the site, and she often described the process as being tedious, especially compared to using Squarespace. She disliked how many updates must be made manually. She also believed that the site could be more responsive and wanted to see more differences between mobile and desktop.

In contrast, with Greta I talked a bit more about how she uses the site. She said that she either checks the home page for top stories or checks for stories written by friends. However, she does not ever search the site for specific authors or look at the author profiles. She also admits that she uses the site less than she wants to.

I did not personally interview either Professor Gitner or Professor Glass, the two faculty members associated with the Newshouse, but from other designer’s interviews I can get their answers to the questions I asked both Julia and Greta.

Prof. Gitner Prof. Glass

Connection to the Newshouse Web developer and visual advisor Executive producer

Main use of website Develops site backend

Opinion of current site Believes that the section fronts need a refresh. Is interested in being more of a magazine design than a newspaper design. Wants the backend to require minimal coding knowledge. Finds the current design modular and simple.

Things that could be added to the site Better integration of vertical photos, new section fronts, and wants more modularity. Wants better multimedia integration and a more interactive site.

Opinions on the logo/color palette/typography Likes current system. Does not want to be part of the Syracuse University brand or use their design system. Wants to keep as much of the current guidelines as possible. Does not want a new logo.

Another thing to note from these interviews is both professors emphasizing ease of use by students editing content, and versatile design that would continue to make editing an easy task.

Competitive Analysis:

When looking at competitors, I examined the target audience, strengths, weaknesses, and key features of each site. I also looked at how each site handled multimedia content, how easy it was to navigate each site, and how effectively each site used hierarchy.

The closest thing to a direct competitor I found to the Newshouse was the Daily Orange. Both are news organizations designed for SU students, and I figured both had similar audiences. I found the Daily Orange the more enjoyable site to use, its layouts are more diverse, and it makes better use of hierarchy. It has more navigational features as well, but this makes sense as it has more content. However, like the Newshouse, multimedia content seemed rare or nonexistent.

For indirect competitors, I looked at more major news sources. I chose to look at the New York Times, CNN, and NPR as all three had come up in my interviews. I also looked at Time Magazine as Professor Gitner had mentioned wanting a more magazine feel, and the Washington Post because it’s my news source of choice.

Most of the major sources were much better at integrating multimedia content and live updates than the Newshouse, which is not surprising. Most of them had stronger hierarchy, and the ones that had the most effective hierarchy made good use of font size and color. They all had more diverse and interesting layouts than the Newshouse. These sites, however, also had significantly more content than the Newshouse.

Content Audit:

The content audit did not tell me a lot of information that I had not picked up from my observations, but it did confirm one of my most prominent observations, which is that the pages are all very similar and utilize almost the exact same elements. In fact, the only real differences between the home page and the section fronts are the text at the top of the section fronts and the difference in articles.

It did force me, however, to pay attention to the footer, something I had not noticed much in my observations. The footer seems to be missing a few sections that might be helpful, such as a FAQs page, an about us page, and a link for help.

The other major thing I noticed was in the latest news section, in which the “more” button led to the “Campus News” page. This doesn’t make sense to me, as the campus news is not necessarily the same as the latest news. I don’t know why it would lead there, and this button should be changed to direct to a new “latest” page or be eliminated entirely.

Heuristic Evaluation:

I was surprised at how many of the heuristics the site handled relatively well. However, I also encountered some problems while doing this analysis that could be addressed:

• There was no indication of how long each article takes to read. This would seem like something that would be helpful for a user to have so they know if they have time to read the article.

• The website is only available in English. Admittedly, this makes sense for a largely American audience, but not everyone reading the site is American or speaks English as their first language.

• It is hard to follow a specific author. One of the things I learned from talking to Greta is that students use the website to view articles written by their peers. However, the only way to find stories by a specific author is either to search for them or click on their link on a story page. One possible solution might be to figure out a way to have users follow a specific author or photographer.

• There is no user customization. As of right now, every user sees the site exactly the same way. There is no customization for user interests. One potential solution could be to have users create accounts, although this could also be a frustration. However, users might appreciate recommended content, and it could increase engagement.

Empathize

Phase 1 by River Taylor

Observations

READER

I watched along with a student using the NewsHouse website, and found there to be no

significant issues but a few small issues that might not even be consciously realized by

the reader but detract from the overall experience of using the site. Specific issues are

listed below:

• Scrolling. Once the student finished scanning a story page, they had to scroll quickly

up through the entire page to reach the navigation bar at the top.

• Loading time. The first article that the student clicked on, they clicked again after

about a half of a second, as if their first click missed the link or didn’t go through. It

did not dawn on the user at first that the click went through, and the lack of action

was due to loading speed. The lack of communication of the website loading mixed

with the longer loading time made navigating the site particularly difficult and

continues to be a hurdle for users.

• Interactivity. I prompted the student to view a biography page and they clicked on

text that said “Follow Drew VonScio” (the author) in an effort to follow them, only

to find out the text is not interactable. From further research I found that normally

accounts have their socials linked, but this contributor did not, which led to a user

misunderstanding.

The website seems to be set up decently well for users that do not have any particular

information they are seeking out, where you can browse sections and find the most

relevant news within the topic. It is when you start to look for specific information that

the experience can begin to be difficult. For example, many websites have an “about us”

page. While I was conducting research it was difficult to determine that they, in fact, do

not have an “about us” page. This is a shared experience with this student, who briefly

struggled to find the most recent story when prompted, because the main story was not

the most recent but rather at the top of the “latest news” section.

CONTENT CREATOR

More backend knowledge came from observing and speaking with the editors. The

main takeaways from this observation are that WordPress is quite difficult to use,

templates are either limiting or very different from the others, and the general difficulty

of the editing process prevents the writers and contributors from being ambitious in

their work. Special story pages are excessively difficult to make and would benefit from

clearer rules for the design. Specific points are highlighted below.

• Images must be 2x3 in order to fit in their frame.

• Stories need to be published separately to each page.

• Editing content within WordPress is very difficult, particularly for students without

experience using the program

• Special story pages require a significant amount of additional effort that editors

sometimes do not feel they have time to do.

The editors’ comments generally show a desire for order in a more flexible way;

creating a style guide that is not so rigid may be seriously helpful as it would allow

editors to have variety amongst their stories without needing it to be a large project

to take on. Flexibility in image sizing as well might be helpful, certainly something to

consider. Some of the backend coding issues cannot be addressed by our class, but we

can create a system that allows for these changes to be made without significant issue,

so creating a style guide with an open and highly flexible set of guidelines will allow the

variety needed for a varied and engaging publication.

Interviews

USER—ANA BURWELL

Ana Burwell is a third-year Environmental and Interior Design major at VPA, she is

also a reader of the NewsHouse. When prompted why she reads The NewsHouse, she

stated that she started out looking at articles to support her friend that was involved

as a contributor, but found the website to be useful and browses it in addition to social

media as main sources of news related to Syracuse University. That being said, she

expressed her dissatisfaction with the appearance and design of the website and said it

does not match the quality of some of the stories she has read. I prompted her to look at

the page again to remind herself of specific issues she had, which are listed below:

• Story textual content does not feel fitted to the screen

• Too much margin

• Carousels integrated into stories feel poorly designed and out of place

• Design differences in the modules of the homepage make it difficult to discern what

difference there is in the content itself warranting a visual difference, if there is any

• The navigation bar feels too tall compared to the text

• Some pictures featured as the lead image for a story don’t feel fitting as lead images

Ana’s interview helped me conclude that the quality of writing is higher than its

presentation. While the focus of the story is the textual content, it is quite important to

accentuate that writing with good design. The design of the website right now is dated

and detrimental to the writing.

CONTENT MANAGER—CAROLINE STEVENSON

Caroline Stevenson is a fourth-year Magazine, News, and Digital Journalism major

at Newhouse, she is also the social media manager for The NewsHouse. Because of

this, much of our interview centered around managing the social media aspect of the

organization, which is not immediately relevant to the website redesign, but is still

connected. Thoughts she brought up are listed below:

• The NewsHouse is a great way for students to begin their professional experience

with a publication, keeping tech accessible and templates flexible and intuitive will

help ease that transition into a professional space and set them up for success.

• The NewsHouse is an all-digital publication; there should be more variety in the

stories themselves that take advantage of various media.

• The website needs modernizing. There is a traditional foundation, but it needs to be

altered within that scope to continue with its aesthetic but fit into the modern day.

Modernizing the website and allowing for more variety will naturally create more

interest; if a story is posted that has a unique integration of a podcast for example,

social media posts around it will likely get more traction and be boosted in their

various algorithms. It is when this happens that new people will be introduced to the

publication. The social media for The NewsHouse has a respectable following, but

proportionately very, very low interaction and impressions from users. Stirring up

interest there starts with allowing more unique integration of media to stories.

MANAGER—PROFS. GITNER AND GLASS

Using the interviews provided by two of my peers, there are quite a few ideas and

goals that the two managing professors share, as well as several things that they do

not agree on. In a broad sense, both are looking to modernize. The functionality of the

website currently allows for the bare minimum most of the time, with rare exceptions

taking a significant amount of effort and manual code to work properly. Both agree

that the design of the website should be more clearly defined for the producers and

contributors, letting them think in visual terms rather than coding or abstractly mental

terms. The professors were a bit divided on the look of the website, with one looking

more to change the colors while the other saying we should keep them. The reasoning,

though, behind changing them is to be seen as an entity separate from the university.

We can apply that thought in places aside from the colors to try and make the site

appear more independent.

Competitive Analysis

The main conclusion of the competitive analysis is that The NewsHouse has a distinct

advantage by being an in-between of officially endorsed and published news from

Syracuse University that is far more informative than it is engaging, and a more

experimental publication riddled with advertisements. Receiving funding from the

university while being largely student-run is a rare combination that can result in a

very focused and well designed news source. Advertisements are often distracting

and appear everywhere on a website, and those without them are usually lacking in

experimentation. No combination of factors allows for a more focused and unique

news experience, something we should be taking advantage of to stand out amongst

competitors for SU news.

• Competitors have a similar quality of design

• Competitors tend to have a broader audience

• Competitors usually receive funding through advertisements

Client Content Inventory

Overall conclusions from the content inventory are that the website’s user-faced

components are all very simple, but are still confusing at times. The main concern

is the layout of all the section pages (non-story pages); which seemingly have a

main story, secondary stories, tertiary stories, and the most recent stories as well.

The first three listed are all seen as a unit, as they are all modular and have similar

designs. There are differences, though, whether they use pictures, what color is in the

background, and if there is a blurb. The differences are shared between stories next

to each other, making the stories appear to be in three degrees of relevance. Users

have expressed confusion in the three degrees here, and the lack of a lead picture in

the tertiary stories makes them not even feel like a story. The most recent stories are

along the right in a centered list separated by gray lines. The lack of a picture, blurb,

or modular design makes it harder for users to see these as stories just like the ones

elsewhere on the page. This disparity is causing a lot of immediate problems with the

user flow and their understanding of the page. Aside from this, much of the design of

the components is consistent across pages, which helps users make sense of all pages’

layouts once they understand one page, but that initial process of understanding the

one page takes more effort than it could.

Heuristic Evaluation of Existing Webpage

Listing out all the issues within different categories helps us to see what the most

pressing issues are, and it would seem that those issues are related to the overall

design, lacking compared to modern industry standard conventions, and taking

unnecessarily long for different things. The user will typically have to wait a noticeable

amount of time before a page loads, enough to cause them to click multiple times

thinking their click did not register.

A full screenshot shows that after clicking a story, the only indication that it is loading is the small

text in the bottom left and the favicon changing to a loading wheel.

The user will also have to return to the main page of the website, hit the undo

button, or scroll back to the top of the article to continue navigating. While these are

options, many of them feel unoptimized. If someone wants to continue to look in the

entertainment section after reading a story, they will have to scroll back to the top of

the page or use the features integrated into the browser to undo their last action.

The bottom of a story page (shown above) does not have any navigational shortcuts.

Another large concern is about a lack of consistency within each page. From page-to-

page, the formatting is the same, but having a main, secondary, and tertiary story

module seems to be pointlessly dividing stories in a distracting and confusing way.

The difference between secondary and tertiary stories can be seen here, with the bottom two

modules lacking a blurb, photo, and using a different background color.

Sanjana Sharma:

INSIGHTS FROM THE USER INTERVIEW:

Shared articles and specific story coverages is how the user was introduced to the NEWSHOUSE website and visits it every now and then to keep in touch with news about the Syracuse city and events that are to come.

The user accesses the NEWS HOUSE website through a google search, once every week or every two weeks.

The user expressed they got bored very quickly, even before they reached the bottom half of the homepage. They said this is because the homepage seemed too text driven in some sections, which prompted them to completely ignore those sections.

The user majorly focuses on finding political news or news related to culture. They wished for the NEWSHOUSE website to cover more contemporary topics and present them on the homepage in a manner that is easy to locate.

They also mentioned that they would like to see horizontal elements on the website/ carousels, which can be quickly scrolled through to get the updates they need.

Addition of keywords that describe the article, time needed to read the entire article, time of updates made to the article to all the cards is something the user would like to see in terms of content improvement.

When it comes to colors and typography, they suggested having a wider spectrum of values in addition to the current color pallet to emphasize certain articles. In regard to typography, they felt the sans serif section headers were not doing any justice as it was getting lost in the midst of the ocean of content on the web page.

Navigation was another aspect the user said they found confusing. They felt that the web page was not flexible enough to jump to different pages when the user intends to. For instance, when they tried to open an article after clicking on the section header on one of the sub pages, the article did not seem to respond. They waited a little while, thinking it was still in the process of loading, but ultimately closed the tab as they got annoyed.

Overall, the user expressed that they didn’t find the website interesting enough to revisit, and would only consider revisiting if it covers a topic that they find interesting.

Page they spent most time on: Story page. Least time: Section page ( Thought it was the home page again as they had similar content and layout.

INSIGHTS FROM THE CONTENT CREATORINTERVIEW:

The NEWSHOUSE team has meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays for one and half an hour.

The team meeting discussion includes clarifying the content for the given week, The stories and visuals needed to cover the stories.

After the group meeting, the team branches out to do their assigned tasks. Some talk to writers, some continue their editing work, publishing the story on the website.

Before the content is published, it goes through a long process of cross checking. The content is reviewed by the lead producer, the executive producer. If any errors are found, it is discussed with the editor.

Projects usually end up taking long because sometimes they run into bugs on CMS and can’t seem to figure out how to resolve it or sometimes, some pieces take long to be approved due to changes and tone of the piece.

The content creator have a hands on approach to writing about an event. They attend the event, make sure to take pictures at different points in time and take notes on field so that they remember specific points to include.

Although the design is simple and straightforward, Valentina feels that the page if flooded with titles of stories.

She suggests that the content on the page can occupy a wider space and a reduced amount of text accompanied by visuals would make the web page look more interesting.

She feels that there is a need to use the optimally use the white space.

In addition to this, she suggests that a more interesting color pallet and bigger image sizes could help liven up the page.

Furthermore, Valentina pointed out that there is a lack of sense of Hierarchy in the website, which could be fixed by choosing appropriate font weights, text case, and font sizes.

INSIGHTS FROM THE MANAGER INTERVIEW:

NEWSHOUSE is primarily a student-run organization, which has minimal interference from anyone that is not a student.

The current design of the website has been in effect since 2017. Hence they are looking for a fresh approach on the visual aspects of the website, and addition of some new features and functions that can help gain traction for the website.

The purpose of the website is to deliver informative and entertaining content to the Syracuse University community. It focuses on campus news, off-campus news, sports, life and style, and entertainment news, which are the realms of interest to the students in the university. It also serves as an outlet where the students can learn the many facets of digital production.

Primary demographic: Students, faculty, staff, and people who work for the university. Secondary Demographic: People who have associations with SU, Alumni, prospective students, family, and people who live in the central New York area who would like to know about SU.

The NEWSHOUSE consists of two teams that work hand in hand for the smooth functioning: Lead producer team: That takes care of operations of what goes up on the website, preparing the content, editing the content Producer Team: creates the content for social media, and photography. (Students of Prof. Glass’s class)

The NEWSHOUSE website receives 2/3rd of the traffic from the Google search engine, the website being very SEO optimized.

Only certain pages in the website break the template and are specially designed. For instance, refer to the Title ix project and the infodemic project. These pages are custom-designed. They have a better look and interactivity compared to other pages. Keep in mind some of the development for the design is hard to figure out, hence they end up finding easier ways to bring change.Important SEO Analytics/ information: There has been a constant trend of users visiting stories on the page that are a year or two older.

People are mostly coming to the site through the story-level page. There needs to be a focus on how we can get people to look through the website, instead of just the story page.

Building engagement: see pages that have more engagement times, and infer why they have more engagement.

The general pattern of traffic: study patterns during the academic year. The current year's traffic can be compared to traffic on the same day previous year. On a Weekly basis: which days have more traffic?

Tech menu: Need for understanding how people are accessing the website. It is observed that 58% access through phone and 30% through their laptops. It is also important to note what device users are using and what browsers.

Responsive design for mobile pages: Some text and content scale down. The headline is adapted by reducing the text for phones.

Empathise Phase 1 by Alex Levy

# Interviews

From the interviews and observations I did, I learned that the process to upload a story is complex and involves a lot of factors. Some of this is due to the design of wordpress, but some could be improved by making the backend more in-line with the frontend. Also, editors would like to be able to use more interesting layouts and styles that go with specific stories. On the users end, there are some confusing parts of the website, such as how the recency of articles can be confusing, especially with the large featured article.

## Student journalist: Julia (executive producer)

### Process:

1. Ideal is to have assets taken and articles written before uploading
   1. A lot of times they are waiting for photos
   2. Can’t upload photos from harddrive, needs to be from media library in wordpress
2. Add story into the story calendar first
   1. Usually schedule stories a week in advance, unless it is a big planned event
   2. Slug and category first when added in story calendar, and then when the story is actually being uploaded they fill in other information
3. Upload story
   1. Use NH design elements and patterns
      1. Example of patterns: Normal size and Jumbo photos
         1. Photos need to be 3:2 (3000 px by 2000px)
         2. Photos need to be cropped to fit that
         3. If vertical images, multiple are lined up, but they try to avoid taking vertical photos
         4. Sometimes cropping photos can be a pain, and some photos can’t be used
      2. Sometimes they will have a really good headline, but it will be too long so they have to shorten it for mobile
         1. Mobile headlines should always be different
         2. Two different fields (one for mobile, one for desktop)
         3. Sometimes constricted with mobile headlines b/c they are so short
         4. She doesn’t think the mobile headline should take up the whole screen and be so big
         5. The headline is so big that you don’t see the photo and byline
4. Before publishing, need to complete checklist
   1. Checklist is really useful because it prevents you from forgetting anything in the article
   2. Need to go through and add hyperlinks
   3. Need to hide slug
   4. Ensure right categories are selected and add tags
      1. Have 5 tags minimum
      2. Don’t usually use tags like “Syracuse University”
      3. Tags should be SEO friendly
   5. Usually the excerpt is the dek
   6. SEO checks
      1. It tells them how SEO friendly the content is
      2. Things entered in the SEO checker is separate from what the user sees (only for backend)
5. Didn’t know how to fix bug that was happening, so she said she would have to ask professor glass before the article can be published
   1. This happens once a week and can sometimes affect posting schedule
   2. Most people are contributors, but Julia is a producer so she should have permission. If she wanted to add a user, she would need to message Professor Glass or Gitner, which can delay posting
6. Hit publish and a secondary menu appear
   1. Can preview what the page will look like, which is especially helpful for images
   2. Would like there to be other social media integration blocks
   3. The settings of wordpress can be overwhelming
   4. There is a way to embed embeds other than tik tok or youtube, but it is complicated and she has to go to professor glass
      1. For a lot of life and style links, like to use social links
      2. Or instagram posts for fashion of clothing being worn
      3. Don’t use them a ton because it is complicated to work with

### Interview:

1. Are there any projects or types of stories that you would like to be able to do (or would like to do more of), but, because of the limitations of the Newshouse website, are currently difficult, time-consuming, or not feasible to do?
   1. A separate tab or page for multi-media content, or even a separate page for podcasts
   2. Wished they dabbled in commentary or op-eds
      1. Think a lot of students would be more intrigued about writing an op-ed
      2. Don’t have an op-ed section, so they are just tagged as commentaries
2. What do you want the people reading your stories to learn, understand, and/or feel?
   1. Want users to feel like the newshouse is a platform that cares about students and covers issues students care about
   2. Makes it feel like the things students are doing is important
   3. Assumes students don’t read the decks
3. How does the type of story or content you are writing about affect how you layout your story
   1. Photo essays are where a lot of bigger images would be used
      1. More visual heavy
   2. The longer the content, the more headings
      1. Easier to read and more SEO friendly
   3. Listicles have headings
   4. Feels like multimedia could be used more
4. What kinds of content do you feel should be emphasized on the newshouse?
   1. Currently really sports heavy, so people may think they are a sports publication
      1. A lot of people want to write sports
   2. The off campus section feels like it is less important
      1. Feels like the off campus page front could be different
         1. Different organization of the section
            1. Maybe style and entertainment section in the off campus section
5. How do you feel about the information architecture:
   1. Thinks the categories make sense
   2. Some people don’t realize there is other stuff on the website
6. Do you feel that content on pages besides the main home page gets ignored?
   1. Probably
   2. Depending on the size of the recent story headlines, there might not be many displayed
   3. Doesn’t like the empty space
      1. Doesn’t see a lot of news sites with these wide of margins
7. What do you feel is most important to highlight on a story card?
   1. Whatever has been published latest, but balanced with the importance/significance of a piece
   2. Lead editors don’t often update fronts
   3. New articles need to be published, but editors are still hung up on little edits
   4. Need to manually update fronts
   5. Maybe the main byline could be a little bigger, but not bigger than the date or the excerpt
8. Anything else
   1. Don’t like the recent stories column
      1. Definitely need recent stories section, but doesn’t like that it is just headlines
   2. Could be more user friendly and designed more clearly
   3. Most used categories are the ones in the nav, but movies and music, and fashion are used a lot
   4. Savannah Bananas baseball team article is a good one for us to reference as we are redesigning
      1. Having some of the media so big might be a problem

## Interview: (PROFESSOR GLASS):

1. Who are the different users who come to the newshouse website and what are their goals?
   1. SU students, faculty and staff and then anyone who has a less daily connection to SU (alum, prospective students, parents and local CNY residents).
   2. Their goal would be to be informed, entertained or engaged with what is happening in the SU community.
2. Who are the various stakeholders?
   1. In the highest level, the Newhouse School wants a platform that students can learn from and utilize when it comes to digital storytelling.
   2. Prof. Gitner and I are the primary faculty while we work with other faculty to use the platform as a learning tool from digital production to storytelling to analytics to experimenting with interactivity.
   3. At the student level, the Lead Producers and the Assistant Executive Producer (Julia Carden this year) manage the site's day-to-day operations while students in my MND 505 and Editing courses handle aspects of the production.
3. What kinds of content do you wish the newshouse had more of?
   1. I’m always encouraging students to test the waters with original reporting or creative storytelling to see what we’re capable of producing. Sometimes it works well and other times it’s an experiment we learn from.
   2. I really appreciate when students bring fresh ideas whether it be audio stories, video packages or interactivity at The NewsHouse gives them an opportunity to showcase it.
4. What separates (or what should separate) the newshouse from the daily orange?
   1. The Daily Orange is the official student-run publication of record for SU much like The New York Times. The NewsHouse is a news magazine for the SU community more along the lines of what Time and Newsweek once were.
   2. Because we don’t have the advertising or financial demands that The DO must consider, we have more flexibility with how and what we produce.
5. What do you want users to feel when they come to the newshouse website?
   1. A sense of what Syracuse University is like, what’s happening here during the school year and what matters to students.
6. The average views per session over the past year is under 2 pages, leading me to believe that people are only reading 1 article. Would you rather have people view more articles per visit?
   1. Most traffic is referral or social media, so viewers find that the newshouse has written an article about a specific topic, so they read it, and then leave
   2. They have had a “similar articles” section for special projects, but never something sitewide

## User: Jack (Junior BDJ major)

### Observations

1. Clicked on first main article
2. Skim past the intro of an article
   1. Skimmed through entire article fast
   2. Look through the subheadings
   3. Since the event has passed, less inclined to read the article
3. After reading one article:
   1. Saw same kind of articles in life and style that were on the homepage
   2. Didn’t read many articles because they had already past
   3. Left website when he saw no more new content
   4. Interested in special projects
   5. Didn’t see the other articles in special projects

### Interview

1. How often do you read from student news outlets? Why or why not?
   1. As a bdj student, has to look for news stories for class
   2. A few days a week
   3. Looking for something to report on
   4. Relies on social media for news
   5. Get most of cultural/student life updates from social media
2. Was it easy to find an article you were interested in?
   1. Difficult to find article interested in
   2. Looking for headline, big takeaways first, then read if interested
   3. Skims top to bottom
   4. Looking for big bullet points
   5. Will read more in depth if the topic is more interesting and unique or new to him
3. What might make you more inclined to read more on the NewsHouse?
   1. If they had more output (daily articles)
4. What parts of your experience using the NewsHouse website did you not like?
   1. The UI was a little sterile and not engaging
   2. DIdn’t like the black and grays
   3. Not distinct from other news sites
   4. Saw same format in life and style as the homepage
   5. Not a lot of variety across tabs
5. How would you describe the visual aesthetics of the site? Did it affect your experience?
   1. The articles themselves are fine.
   2. Subheadings grab attention
6. Any other comments?
   1. If it was more timely, he would want to read it more
   2. First thing he looks at (outside of title), he looks at the date published. If it is more than a few days old, he is less likely to read.
   3. Junior

# COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

## The Newshouse

### Audience

* Students
* Parents
* University faculty and staff
* Syracuse community
* Prospective employers

### Strengths

* Student journalists guided by experienced professors
* Connection to the Newhouse school
* Only digital, allowing them to specialize
  + Most students don’t read print newspapers that often
* Free of advertisements and no subscription

### Weaknesses

* Little professional guidance
  + Limited by the knowledge of students
* No interactive content
* Lack of independence from Syracuse University
* Not as well known as the Daily Orange
* Doesn’t release as many stories as other news organizations

### Unique features

* Student journalists with expert guidance
  + Best of both worlds between The Daily Orange and The New York Times

### Mission and value

“The purpose of the website is to deliver informative and entertaining content to the Syracuse University community. It focuses on campus news, off-campus news, sports, life and style, and entertainment news, which are the realms of interest to the students in the university. It also serves as an outlet where the students can learn the many facets of digital production.” - source: Jon Glass, Executive Producer of the NewsHouse

## The Daily Orange

### Audience

* Students
* Parents
* University faculty and staff
* Syracuse community

### Strengths

* Student-run
  + Creates connection to student readers
* Independent from Syracuse University
* Trusted
* Print and digital
* Variety of media content
  + Print, digital, photo, video, social media, podcasts, news, editorial
* Well-known on and off campus

### Weaknesses

* Ads
  + The site is littered with ads, which can sometimes be a little intrusive
* Little professional guidance
  + Limited by the knowledge of students
* Need to produce print and digital content
  + Instead of focusing their efforts on print or digital, they have to divide it between both

### Unique features

* Has the benefit of being a part of the SU campus community, without being constrained by the bureaucracy and limitations of being an actual student organization
* Large alumni network to guide current student journalists
  + Also a source of funding

### Reviews

* Has many top rankings by student journalism organizations
* Has operated for over 100 years, so students must like them

### Mission and value

* “The Daily Orange exists to serve our readers by gathering and sharing factual, relevant information with diligence and care. Through independent student journalism, we strive to share truthful, accurate and fair stories from the Syracuse and Syracuse University community, with a focus on amplifying the voices of community members. As an entirely student-run newsroom, The D.O. also aims to be a place where students can learn and gain experience in reporting, editing and telling stories across textual, visual and audio platforms.” - source: <https://dailyorange.com/about/>

## The New York Times

### Audience

* 61% of audience is gen z or millennials (source: <https://advertising.nytimes.com/audience-and-insights/>)
* There might be an abnormally high readership at Syracuse University due to its reputation for being a media and journalism school

### Strengths

* Large, well established, and trusted
* Print and digital
* On the cutting edge in terms of innovation and technology
* Global news coverage
* Many journalists who specialize in different areas
* Can produce many different articles per day
* Can deliver breaking news to audience as it is happening
* Subscription model allows it to have fewer advertisements (and less intrusive ones) than free news sites

### Weaknesses

* Requires subscription
  + Syracuse university students can get a free subscription, but some students might not know this
* Disconnected from local communities
  + It doesn’t cover the Syracuse University community very often unless there is a national news story

### Unique features

* Wide reach of coverage
* Many types of content
* Exploring new interactive content

### Reviews

* Received over 100 pulitzers
* Widely trusted

### Mission and value

* “The New York Times is dedicated to helping people understand the world through on-the-ground, expert and deeply reported independent journalism.” - source: <https://www.nytco.com/company/>

# Heuristic Analysis

## Life and Style section front

### Summary:

The section fronts have various usability and design issues that prevent the user from finding articles they want to read. For example, the information architecture of the navigation bar only includes the five main section fronts, even though there are additional article categories that are often used. Additionally, the desktop layout has a lot of empty space in the margins that other news sites typically make use of. As a result, the only article card that is visible without scrolling down is the featured article, and even that is not fully visible.

### Key problems and solutions:

* There are only five navigation links, but there are even more tags. This makes it confusing as to which articles correspond to certain categories. Could subcategories be shown when hovering over a navigation link?
* The HTML heading hierarchy isn’t being used correctly. The H1 tag should be for the main page title (such as “Life & Style"), while the article titles themselves should be H2’s.
* When a user arrives at a section front, they can only see the featured article card because it is so big it pushes the other article cards down. Additionally, the entire featured article card isn’t even fully visible unless the user scrolls. If the user is not interested in the featured article, they might just leave the site.
  + Other news sites have multiple articles visible when the user first loads the page. The NewsHouse could make use of a grid layout to display multiple articles while still having a larger featured article
* The “Latest” and “Special projects” sidebar only has article titles. Adding images, bylines, dates, and/or article descriptions could improve clickthrough rate.
* There are very wide margins on the page, which limit the space available for articles. Other news sites make better use of the available space. If a grid layout was used to display articles, this space could be filled while still leaving ample whitespace so it is not too overwhelming.
* The bylines are really de-emphasized due to their size and styling, even though one of the main purposes of the NewsHouse is to give student journalists exposure. The bylines could be given a little more visual weight while not overpowering the other content.

## Story page

### Summary

The individual story pages have the same very wide margins that the section fronts do. This forces most content into a one column layout, which can get repetitive, especially in longer stories. Additionally, the layout of the elements that make up the image components is misaligned, making image-heavy stories more difficult for a reader to parse. Also, there is no funnel to help the reader view more articles after finishing a story, making it more likely that they just leave the site after finishing an article.

### Key problems and solutions

* The article title is the same size on mobile and desktop, meaning that it is huge on mobile and pushes other content down. This means that, currently, the editor has to shorten the headline on mobile.
  + A better (and easier) solution could be to just reduce the size of the title on mobile.
* Links are not styled differently than normal text unless hovered over. This is an accessibility issue and a design issue. While links are bolded in body text, someone could misinterpret that as emphasizing that text instead of making it a link.
  + Just add a permanent underline to all links, as that is the traditional way of communicating to the user that an element is a link.
* Heading elements are center-aligned, which makes it a little harder to read and scan.
* The elements that make up the image block (which contains an image, photographer credit, and caption) are misaligned with each other, making it more difficult to easily interpret that information. That is an even bigger problem in an image-heavy article.
  + Adjusting the layout and styling of this component could go a long way in making stories look cleaner, more professional, and easier to read and scan.
* The layout of story pages is fairly formulaic, leaving little room to surprise or delight the reader through intentional layout changes that support the story.
  + There is a lot of empty space in the margins where the layout could shift to be more than one column on desktop. This could also reduce scrolling distance for the reader, as they wouldn’t have to scroll past a very large image that takes up the entire viewport by itself.
* There is no funnel at the end of the story page to take the reader to a new article, meaning that the user is more likely to just leave the site. And since the navbar is not sticky, the user would either 1. scroll all the way up to click on a navigation link or the newshouse logo; 2. click the newshouse logo in the footer; or 3. hit the back button on their browser to read another article.
  + A “related stories” section at the bottom of the page could allow the reader to view more articles of interest. There are already tags in the backend, so this feature could be feasible to implement.

# Content Audit

From the content audit, I found that there are a lot of repeat elements that are not consistent,

such as differently styled story cards, bylines, and other components. I also noticed that many

pages can be split into smaller components that could be utilized in various patterns.

**User Interview**

**What is your name, year, and major?**

Katelyn Hughes, senior in creative advertising.

**What campus organizations are you involved in?**

Honestly, this year I’m so busy with classes that I’ve fallen off my organizations. I used to do photography for Zipped and Jerk. I’m still part of WIC and I did TNH for the past few years.

**What made you want to join these organizations?**

It was hard for me to take any VPA classes because I’m in Newhouse and the two don’t work together. I had to look outside of my classes to still be able to do creative photography because it wasn’t possible for me to minor in it.

**What did you like about these organizations?**

TNH was my favorite because it was actually organized. Zipped and Jerk I stopped doing because the magazines themselves weren’t horribly organized, but those groups were much less structured when it came to the photo team. It was something they really couldn’t figure out how to manage and it was frustrating. TNH had different authority figures managing each department and each team so it was easy to have a free flow of communication.

**How do you stay updated with what’s going on around campus?**

I definitely read my emails whenever I get an update on something happening on campus from the dean or chancellor. I definitely skim that at least. Other than that, I’d say word of mouth, or, as much as I hate to admit it, I get a lot of information from Barstool Cuse, like the Syracuse Instagrams and social media accounts.

**How do you get news content in general/outside of campus?**

Because I play the NYT games everyday, I’m already on the website, so I see a lot of articles there. And I have the news app notifications on my phone, so I’ll see things there.

**What campus publications do you read, if any?**

I read Moody Magazine last night because I used to be a part of it. I still read Zipped sometimes because I used to be a big fan of them. I guess that’s it. Sometimes I read the headlines on the print edition of the Daily Orange when it’s sitting in the doorways of Newhouse.

**Can you think of any websites that you enjoy using?**

NYT. I love their games. Wikipedia because you can look up something you’re curious about, and you keep clicking and it never really ends. I also really like the Genius lyrics website, I click through it a lot. Youtube has great recommendations.

**What do you know about the Newshouse?**

Honestly, I had never heard of it until Nicole talked about it this year. And even then I didn’t really look into it – all my info is from just looking at it right now. I knew it was articles about campus, but I really didn’t know about it until this year.

**Can you tell me about your experience using the website?**

I think for a student-run website I can’t say anything too bad. It’s clear how to find the main pages and click through different articles, but there were some features like the scroll arrows that weren’t working well. And when you get to the end of an article you have to go all the way back to the top to find another one.

**What did you first notice about the website?**

I guess the first thing that came up was different articles, but the first thing I really noticed was the logo. Especially since I accidentally typed “The Newhouse” like ten times before I was actually able to get to the website.

**Were there any features you enjoyed about the website?**

Nothing jumped out at me, let’s say that.

**What did you dislike about the website?**

The overall design of the website is a little boring, I guess. I also scrolled through all the articles on the home page without even noticing there was an option to see the different categories of articles. I probably would’ve clicked on the life and style section if I had known there was that option.

**How easy was it to find content you were interested in?**

Pretty easy, I mean there’s not a ton on there so I was able to scroll to see the first few things that jumped out at me.

**What did you find difficult while navigating the website?**

There was one picture I zoomed in on and I wasn’t able to zoom out. I had to refresh the page and it brought me back to the top of the page and I had to scroll back down.

**How would you describe the visual aesthetic of the website?**

Like I said, if I had to design a website this is what it would look like because I don’t know how to design a website. Personally, I have a portfolio website that I made in 20 minutes because my professor held me at gunpoint to make one and it’s basically the same as this.

**What would make you want to keep reading the Newshouse?**

If you finished the article and it recommended another for you, I would stay on it for longer than going back on the homepage the whole time. And maybe if there was something where you could put your email down and they’d email you when there were new articles you’d be interested in. And if there were more promotions around campus – I would need something to get me back to the website.

**Content Manager Interview**

**What’s your name and what do you do for the Newshouse?**

Nicole Hopwood. I am the visual lead, one of the two photo editors.

**How would you describe your experience working for the NEwshouse?**

I’m enjoying getting the experience because I’m considering going into photo editing in the future. It’s a bit more of a workload than I was anticipating, but it’s good preparation for what a real newsroom would look like.

**How long have you been a part of the organization?**

This semester. So almost three months.

**What would you change about your position/duties?**

One idea I have for a different way of structuring it is that there are two photo leads, so it might be beneficial to split up who attends to each section – news, life + style, entertainment, and sports. If there were one person assigned to each section it would benefit the workflow and make things run smoother. It’s about 12-16 stories a week for one photo editor which makes things go a little slower.

**What makes the Newshouse different from other campus publications?**

The one we’re most similar to might be the Daily Orange. We’re pretty closely affiliated with the school and we have a professor that helps us deal with all the tasks. Other magazines have specializations like food, campus life, etc, but we encompass everything in a general, traditional news source type of way.

**What do you think the Newshouse could do to differentiate itself a bit more?**

The level of work here is great. I think if we showcased the visuals more on the homepage it would make it a stronger interface to interact with. When you open it, it feels like a portal to interact with other things, instead of with the home page where everything lives. I think we could stand to put a bit more attention and care into the visuals we are producing. We do a great job with journalism and could stand to round out our strengths as far as visuals go.

**How do you collaborate/communicate with other members of your team?**

We have a class meeting time where we do most of our planning. And then we have a Slack, and those hours are pretty much 24/7.

**What are your typical tasks?**

I’ll look at the schedule and look at every event coming up for the semester. I’ll handpick photographers or reach out to everyone to see who wants to do it. Then Prof Glass or one of the editors would acquire the credentials for that person to attend the event. I’m in between, I help them get where they need to be, know what they need to do, help with any questions… and once the images come through, I upload them to my computer, edit them, fix the captions, put them into the media library CMS, and then upload them into the story.

**How long would you say the process typically takes from receiving the photos to getting them uploaded?**

If I only have to do one task at a time then I can process images within 15 minutes if the captions are already written perfectly. Which isn’t very common, especially for the ones who are doing photojournalism for the first time. If the captions aren’t written correctly it can take me up to an hour.

**What are common obstacles that would hinder you from completing this process efficiently?**

There’s sometimes issues in communication. The team is very good at collaborating and picking up slack when others need help. Sometimes I will spend time putting in images later in the night because I hadn’t been told someone already did it, and that’s like an hour and a half of my time. It’s not their fault, but there needs to be clearer communication. I think sometimes the editors forget I’m one person, and there’s a bunch of different sections, but they of course all want to prioritize their sections.

**What devices are used in the process?**

Photos are uploaded to a jot form and autopopulate to google drive. I will download them and edit them in lightroom, touching up lighting and changing the caption in metadata. And then I upload them to the CMS. And I use excel to keep track of the schedule. I use my computer for all editing and then I use my computer and my phone to keep in contact with everyone and schedule photographers.

**Can you tell me about your experience using Wordpress?**

I haven’t found too many issues in the sense of how it flows. It definitely has times where it doesn’t load for a good while but it might be because it’s an old system. As far as manual errors, one thing that is an issue is that the side by side image block, when you put in two images side by side, they don’t automatically fit to a snapped sizing to stay the same size. If the captions aren’t the same length one image will change and be bigger than the other. The slider only works in the story body, if you take it out to make it full size, it becomes jumbo instead of just large. Also, on each individual image in the byline to put in “Photo by” “Video by” etc, when you start typing the name it starts immediately after the “Y.” You have to manually put a space in. But I’ve found Wordpress pretty easy to navigate, especially the media library when it’s organized.

**How long did it take you to get comfortable in Wordpress?**

Only like a week because I’d had experience with CMS before. What I had to get used to was the frequency of uploading.

**When something goes wrong during your workflow, what do you do?**

If it’s a pressing issue I can’t think of a possible fix for, I’ll either shoot him a DM on Slack or start a group chat with him and the head editor. But if it’s something easier I’ll go to our head editor.

**How often do you go on the Newshouse website outside of when you’re uploading to it?**

I will go on the website to check what things look like about once a day. But it’s more of a recent habit. I don’t really go on there to consume the media.

**What do you like about the Newshouse website?**

I like that there are feature images for the first five stories. However, I wish they were shown in every story on the homepage.

**What don’t you like?**

The sections down at the bottom aren’t correct. Sports, entertainment, life + style, and *basketball.* What’s missing is news. And I think those categories should be accessible at the top, which they are, but they’re under different names. Especially if you don’t have practice on the website. And the other list, on the right, the other list of stories needs a lot of work. The lines are pointless and the giant bolded headlines are ridiculous. The more button and special projects are a whole thing of their own and make no sense. From my experience speaking with people. When I see a bunch of bolded words down a column, it desn’t make me want to interact with any of those button.

**How would you describe the NEwshouse website?**

It feels dated. It feels like a database you might’ve visited in 2007. But since Newhouse is one of the best communications school, and the Newshouse is the most closely affiliated publication, I think it should be more reflective of that. And the grayscale, and the darker gray behind the header, makes me sad.