

Rumors

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Introduction

This strategy brief outlines our recommendations for the BOMB website. It's not a design document, and does not address the site's appearance — its focus is the behavior, structure, and strategy of the website and its content. It serves as a checkpoint for both Rumors and BOMB, and clarifies our vision for the new website.

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Goals

As a result of our research, interviews, and internal discussion, we have identified three core goals for the website:

1. Facilitate lateral browsing, discovery, and research
2. Expand readership
3. Future-proof content and technology

Facilitate lateral browsing, discovery, and research

The existing site prioritizes an issue-oriented structure for the browsing of magazine content. But we want to surface old content in new ways, and to “flatten the archive” so that older articles aren’t de-emphasized in the site’s structure. BOMB’s archive runs deep, and its content is evergreen. This offers an opportunity: the magazine can double as a research tool for artists, teachers, and academics. But it will also require a new emphasis on browsing and searching, to enable the reader, and on thorough tagging to give articles meaning within the archive.

Expand readership

We’ll plan for content to be shared widely, and to hook new readers in. We see opportunities to encourage sharing and the distribution of content across all platforms, and to build a responsive mobile-first design that allows for long reads as well as quick dives. We also want to introduce the magazine to first-time visitors, regardless of how they find or enter the site, without bogging down the experience for long-time readers.

Future-proof content and technology

Ensure that BOMB is in a good position to seize emerging opportunities and ones we can’t yet foresee. We’ll leverage existing technology, rather than develop tools from the ground-up, to do so.

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Plans

After considering our goals and outlining our options, we've organized our approach for the website into the following four categories:

1. Restructure the content
2. Improve user experience
3. Support off-platform engagement
4. Lay the groundwork for economic sustainability

Restructure the content

Provide a scalable structure and navigational model that prioritizes content resources and supports content growth. Encourage lateral and associative movement and create moments of discovery by connecting formerly siloed channels, bringing attention to BOMB's tremendous archive of material.

- **Standardize taxonomies.** Address the arbitrariness of the site's current categories, sections, and tags and create a new taxonomic system to organize and surface content. Develop a standard and ubiquitous language: the granular terms to be used by everyone on the project, from the publisher to the interns, to describe the content and metadata.
 - On the back-end, we'll organize content into broad organizational buckets that reflect their content elements, like Article, Event, Issue, and Page.
 - Category types — like Medium, Format, Series, and, yes, Issue — will act in service of the content, subtly framing BOMB's articles and providing high-level context to website visitors.
 - Tags will offer insight into BOMB's unique editorial point of view. We'll streamline the existing tags and introduce a new approach organized around people and topics. Tags can be as unusual, idiosyncratic, or specific as the editors would like, giving BOMB the flexibility to incorporate legacy tags and introduce new ones, and to organize content in unusual and topical ways.
 - Other content metadata, like date and author, will provide users with entry points to BOMB's deep archive.
- **Create relationships that flatten the hierarchy.** What's most interesting to a site visitor is the content of an article, not its origin. On the redesigned site the distinction between print and web will not be dissolved so much as muted. We'll continue to promote the magazine as a physical object, but no one taxonomy will have weight over the other — all of them act in service of exposing interrelated articles. We'll build tools to surface content editorially and algorithmically.
 - Articles will include flags for Medium, Format, Series, Topic, and Person. Users will be able to browse each of these taxonomies from any article, no matter its source.
 - Highlight artists by using the People tag type to show other articles about an artist.
 - We could also suggest relevant content by series, or topic.

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- Also allow editors to directly relate individual articles in a way that implies a relationship, regardless of site taxonomies. Perhaps this kind of tool also offers a way to contextualize the relationship with a short comment — almost like an annotation to the archive.
- **Promote editorial features.** We'll provide editors with a way to highlight and promote content when and how they'd like, bringing attention to articles from BOMB's deep archive when they're relevant.
 - Older articles in BOMB's archive get lost in the current site's temporal structure. We'll create a flexible home page template with a set of modular tools so that editors can promote content using standard taxonomies, or by hand-selecting pieces to feature. Content can be relevant regardless of its publication date.
- **Make it chunky.** Transform lengthy content "blobs" into chunks of text, imagery, multimedia, and metadata appropriate to the content. Chunking site content makes it easy to reuse in multiple places, like search results listings, series landing pages, the home page — or an RSS feed.
- **Plan for growth and change.** We'll lay the groundwork for post-launch sustainability by developing a forward-looking governance plan that suits the evolving nature of a 35-year old magazine.

Improve the user experience

The site will show users what BOMB is and why it's important, helping visitors understand its projects and history without a lot of labor.

- **Focus on the reader.** We will design articles to support the reading experience, and provide more immersive interactions with images and multimedia.
 - Support web-native practices like skimming, and offer a bird's-eye view of content with subheads, summaries, article section headers, and navigable tables of contents for long articles. Offer the reader multiple hooks and entry points. Use visual cues to communicate the varying depth, length, and intensity of pieces from the archive. Specialized visual approaches for series, like Oral Histories, will help communicate power of these pieces.
 - An art magazine must be responsible to its imagery. We'll create page layouts that treat artwork and captions respectfully and allow for multiple ways of showing and browsing works, including multimedia, within an article.
- **Enhance search.** Relying on new taxonomies we'll create a more targeted search experience. Our aim is to direct readers to the information they're looking for through intelligent structures, rather than have them wade through numerous page results. In other words, an advanced search happens at the level of search results, using smart filters.
 - Along with a comprehensive site search, we'll create standard ways for users to filter searches and include these search tools where users need them — not only on a search results page, but also, possibly, on landing pages for a category type.
- **Provide context.** New site visitors arrive through search or social share, and may not be familiar with BOMB's work. We'll provide clear context to help new users comprehend BOMB's legacy and scope.
 - We imagine a kind of site-wide footer colophon, with friendly rotating snippets of BOMB's "elevator pitch" to welcome new visitors. Links from these getting-to-know-you callouts can lead to restructured about-us content that sheds light on

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BOMB's history, the distinctive interview format, and how the magazine is used as a research tool.

- **Provide a modern content management system.** The new website will provide a superior experience to both front-end users as well as back-end users. The new CMS will be accessible to non-technical users, and we'll provide documentation to quickly bring future employees up to speed with the site's operation.

Support off-platform engagement

We want to help BOMB meet its readers where they're at, whether that's the website itself or another platform entirely.

- **Multi-platform and device accessibility.** The new website will work seamlessly on a range of devices and browsers. We aim to provide a tailored, appropriate experience whether a site visitor is using a phone, tablet, or assistive device.
- **Off-platform publishing.** Facebook Instant and Google AMP are some of the newest frontiers of web-based publishing. We'll help you understand how to use these services and implement the tools and APIs you need to publish there.
- **Meaningful metadata.** We'll make social sharing much easier and more rewarding with clear, appropriate page metadata and easy social sharing tools. Good metadata means good SEO.
- **RSS.** The new website will provide RSS feeds for possible future syndication and for user utilities like Pocket and Instapaper.

Lay the groundwork for economic sustainability

To support BOMB's continued existence and future growth, the site must be friendly to advertising, earned income, and sponsorship.

- **Implement ad server.** Implement an industry standard ad server, like Nectar, for placing IAB standard ad units and tracking performance.
- **Ad-supported content.** The new page designs must allow for flexible placement of high-profile, attractive ad units, while they continue to focus on a comfortable reading experience. We'll explore ways of leveraging BOMB's archive to support ad sales, for instance, a page layout that accommodates sponsorship of an entire series or content type.
- **Subscriptions.** Identify and publicize the quarterly as a sellable object and make it easy for users to subscribe. Traditionally magazines sell online subscriptions with interstitial ads or popovers, but these techniques are now being penalized by Google. We'll consider how to encourage subscriptions without negatively impacting SEO and the mobile experience.

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