**Unit 5: The Research Hub notes for Steeve**

**Rebecca Chen June 26, 2015**

The Research Hub is a social network platform for academics teaching and researching political science. The main design strategy for the site is: to convince graduate students and professors that a social network can be a useful and fun resource for discovering new publications, learning about conferences and associations, and meeting research collaborators.

## Step1:

· Who will visit your site?

The main audience for the site will be researchers in the political science field, comprised of university professors, graduate students, and scholars from government and policy institutions. A potential secondary audience might be students looking at an academic career and academic research publishers looking to promote their upcoming books and journals.

· Who are your competitors in similar industries?

This is a social network designed for professionals that don’t normally use platforms outside of Facebook, Linked In or Twitter to “discuss” their work. So in theory, there is no real competitor other than existing social network sites like the ones I just mentioned. In the political science field, wikis have been created for the job market, where PhDs share information about what jobs are available, which universities have the best resources, etc. But it is a sad message forum.

http://www.poliscirumors.com/

· What can make you and/or your product stand out against your competitors?

If all goes right, and the site is beautiful and simple to use, then hopefully I can help reimagine how research is conducted. I am targeting a younger audience (20 to 40 years old) whom are more accustomed to research and sharing content online. What would keep users engaged is the quality of and ease of access to content (e.g. journals, policy papers, newspaper articles, blog posts).

· How would you speak to your clientele if you were communicating in person?

How could you translate that style and tone digitally?

Since I am a former political science professor who struggled with finding a community within my field, I would start off with a sympathetic tone for how annoying and lonely research can be. We come up with an important question to ask, and then we pore through stacks of books in the library and decades of journal articles on the topic, with the hopes of saying something innovative. It’s a process that could be much more fun and collaborative by asking your community for recommendations and advice.

As for communicating this feel digitally, I want to keep my tone light and fun, to make people feel like they can ask anything! So light/bright accent colors and rounded corner content boxes – basically the opposite of corporate-looking sites liked Linked In.

· What colors represent your restaurant/business?

I like the overall combination of a neutral pastels (sea-green, olive, grey) to evoke calm, maybe with a pop of magenta or yellow to highlight an action. A mood board like this perhaps:

http://www.tanisfiberarts.com/blog/2015/3/moodboard-monday-deep-sea

· What images illustrate your message?

I have yet to figure out what images illustrate a social networking site for academics, other than people chatting in a café over coffee. Or a person in a park, working on their laptop. *Relaxing work* is what I’m trying to convey. I’ll have to take pictures soon of this!

## Step 2:

· Imagine your site has two pages, a home page and one other page of your choice (about, contact, gallery, etc.). Would the design remain constant across both pages? How so? How would the design differ?

For now, I am concentrating on two pages: the Landing Page and the Home Page. For me the Landing Page is image heavy and should convey the main purpose of why to join and what resources the site will provide (e.g. Publications, Teaching Tools, Methods, Funding, Events). It is the sign up page for potential new users. What I am calling my Home Page will be the User’s dashboard and newsfeed, much like if you to Facebook or Linked In (assuming you’ve used those sites before), you are led straight to the Home Page with all of your friends’ posts, etc. The Home Page will be more content and navigation and less imagery and colors, but I’d like the header and color schemes to remain consistent.

· Make sure to clearly describe the name, look, and purpose of each page.

***Landing page:***

*Header:* Logo and Navigation: Sign Up button / Sign In button

*Large image, slogan and Action button:*

*Slogan*: Banded Together – Find community and explore your field.

*Action* *Button*: Join for free

*Descriptive text section about how the site works:*

How it works:

1. Find your community by specifying your primary field and region.

2. Get connected to people, new publications, jobs, conferences and more.

3. Stay engaged with your field and earn points for showing your passion.

*Descriptive section about membership levels:*

How to become a member (with “select” buttons for each)

1. *Free Member: Free* Access to one primary subfield. Get started on banding together with your field.

2. *Super Member: $25/month* Access to multiple subfields and regions. Because, you want in on all things polisci.

3. *Institutional Member (for publishers, universities and policy institutes): $150/month* Share meaningful news and find talented candidates.

*Footer*: About, Terms, Privacy and links to Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

***Home page (Newsfeed):***

Most social networks have at least 2 columns to organize action and content. One menu column with the user profile/messages/events/friends, and the other for the newsfeed and a posting action on the top. It seems like most sites have adopted this architecture, which would make following this path more user-friendly. But if you have ideas about how to create

*Header*: Logo and Navigation menu: Profile; Notifications; Messages; Bookmarks*Column 1*: User Profile (name, field, picture); Friends; Resources; Events;

*Column 2*: Posting (texts, linked, images) action and Newsfeed

*Column 3*: Top Reads of the Day, Member Spotlight, Leaderboard[1]

[1] I am playing around with gamifying engagement: points for reading an article, sharing a post, liking an event, etc.