DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE WEBSITE:
CONTENT STRUCTURING

Presented by Jacques Walker
Assisted by Alison Kim and Pradeep Rao

Objectives

- Explore multiple design perspectives
- Evaluate different planning methods and ideal uses
- Engage in collaborative exercises to:
  - Determine users
  - Assess their needs
  - Satisfy their goals
- Explain best practices in content structuring

Design Perspectives

- User-Centered Design
  - It's all for you
    - "me casa es su casa"
  - Ex: Touchscreen
- Activity-Centered Design
  - What can you do with this?
  - Ex: Mouse
- Empathic Design
  - How do you feel about this?
  - Ex: Video Game

User-Centered Design

- Focuses on the users themselves
  - Needs
  - Wants
  - Limitations
- Your preferences are secondary
  - Ask: "Why is this here?"
- Critical analysis at each step
  - Design
  - Development
  - Distribution

UCD Elements

- Visibility
  - What can and can't I do here?
- Accessibility
  - Where's the information that I need?
  - Multiple Routes to content
    - Navigation, Search, Table of Contents, Headings, Keywords
- Legibility
  - Easy to read and digest
  - Pleasing fonts and sizes, background contrasts
- Language
  - Use their words, short sentences and simple structures

User-Centered Content

- What's the ultimate goal of a user?
  - Find what they are looking for
    - Information
    - Entertainment
    - Need satisfaction
- Secondary Goals
  - Typically designer centric
  - Engage your users
  - Reduce frustrations
  - Simplify their task

Planning Methods

- Agile Development
  - 5 – 9 person teams, collaborative
  - Use/Case Driven
    - More applicable to Activity-Centered Design
  - Constant development
    - Frequent updates
    - Bug Fixes
    - Feature pushes
  - Future proof view

Planning Methods

- User-Centered ⭐
  - Varying team sizes
  - Orbital Mentality
    - The user is the "sun"
  - "Whos" and "whats" are crucial
    - Who is the user?
    - What are their goals?
    - What do they need?
  - Managed environments
  - Features and testing driven
  - Longer development cycles

Planning Methods

- Shotgun / Cowboy
  - One Person
  - One thought pattern
  - Little to no collaboration
  - Single Goal: "Get It Done!"
  - Driven by:
    - Poor planning
    - Procrastination
    - Inadequate resources

Planning Methods

- Hybrid Development
  - Agile Development and User-Centered
    - Define users
    - Identify needs, goals, expectations
      - Interview
      - Focus group
      - Poll and survey
      - Capture as much user data as possible
    - Prototype and wireframe
    - Test, Build, Refine
    - Most resource intensive method

Planning Exercise

- Task: Define the users of the VT website.
- Affinity Voting
  - Your task:
    - Name the major visitors of the Virginia Tech homepage website
  - My task:
    - Collate and rank your responses
  - End Result:
    - Most important user
    - Top cliental

Planning Exercise

- Task: What are the needs of the users?
- Brainstorming
  - Your Task: Answer
    - What would someone visiting the site need to do/find?
  - My Task:
    - Collect responses
  - End Result:
    - Identification of user needs

Planning Exercise

- Task: Determine how to satisfy their needs.
- Nav Survivor Exercise
  - Your task:
    - Take 5 post-its
    - Write 5 different users from our collection on each post-it
    - Paste the your most important user with the most important task
  - My task:
    - Sit back and watch
  - End Result:
    - Most popular 7: Top Level Navigation
    - Second most popular 7: Secondary Navigation
    - The rest: Section titles, Headings, Keywords

Structuring your content

- Your navigation determines your folder structure
- Ideally each folder in your site houses
  - Unique pages
  - Relevant images and files
  - Relevant subfolders
- One page in every folder named index
  - Browser automatically look for an index in folders
  - Example:
    - http://www.vt.edu/tuition/
    - http://www.vt.edu/tuition/tuition_info.html

File and Folder Use

- The big three
  - Use lowercase names
  - No spaces or special characters
    - Use an underscore or dash
      - contact_info -versus- contact%20info
  - Keep it short
- Break that content up
  - Subfolders are important
  - Avoid going deeper than three
  - Avoid overloading folders

Images and Files

The Rule of Relevance	
□ Ideal for medium and extensive sites	□ Best for small sites
□ Images and files grouped with their pages	□ Easier to locate items
	□ Files names are crucial
□ Image/Files folder is optional	□ May hinder growth
□ Can be confusing	

The Follow Up

- □ Where your assumption correct?
- □ Experiments and Tests
  - ▫ Give mock users a task to complete
    - ▪ Ex. find how to sign up for x.
    - ▪ Record time spent, mouse movements, number of clicks
  - ▫ Elicit feedback on the site itself
    - ▪ Polls, surveys, etc.
- □ Grow with your audience

Let's Chit Chat

What do you want to know or share with the class

Questions?

Resources

FDI Courses for Building a Website	Online Resources

- Dreamweaver CS5 Short Course Suite:
  - Webpage creation and HTML Coding
  - An Introduction to CSS
  - Intermediate CSS, Templates and Multimedia
- Adobe Photoshop Elements 10.0: Adjusting Images for the Web
- Ensemble CMS Training Course Suite

- Web Style Guide
  - http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html
  - Information Architecture Section
- UT Web Design Process
  - http://www.utexas.edu/learn/designprocess/index.html

www.fdi.vt.edu/evals

Jacques Walker
jacquesw@vt.edu