Usability Report
A Heuristic Evaluation of <u>WRSPC.ca</u>

May, 2021

Waterloo Region
Suicide Prevention Council
www.wrspc.ca

Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council (WRSPC)
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Waterloo Region
Suicide Prevention Council

Background and Summary

This evaluation is being conducted by Julia Purza, a UX design placement student at *WRSPC*, under the supervision of Amanda Demmer, the program coordinator at *WRSPC*.

The *Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council* (*WRSPC*) has identified a need for their website to be assessed and redesigned so that it is more user-friendly, accessible, and visually appealing. Two primary concerns have been identified: (1) The website and navigation menu have an abundance of information, and (2) Users are not spending enough time on the website to learn about the resources available to them.

This Heuristic Evaluation should aid in confirming existing issues and identifying new ones. The goal is to obtain a deeper understanding of the website's interface so we can make proper changes to its design.

The results of the evaluation puts the website at a 42 out of 50. This result is better than expected. The evaluation did allow us to uncover some issues that we had not seen beforehand, more so in the areas of user control and freedom, feedback, consistency, efficiency, as well as aesthetics and overall design. Recommendations include adding in "Back" and "Home" buttons on website pages for better user control and navigation, as well as a few other changes built around website feedback.

Next steps include further research, both primary and secondary. Primary research consists of user testing through unmoderated remote usability testing (URUT), contextual inquiry, and possibly card sorting sessions. Secondary research consists of this evaluation and reviewing website user statistics through Google Analytics to gain a better understanding of the users. From this research, we hope to gain the information we need to begin redesigning the *WRSPC* website.
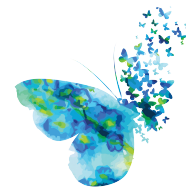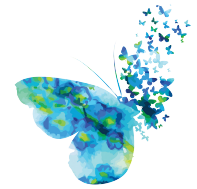
Heuristic Evaluation

The Heuristics

The [10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design](), developed by Jakob Neilsen in 1994, have been employed in this evaluation. These principles, or heuristics, are broad rules of thumb rather than specific rules or guidelines.

Table 1: **10 Usability Heuristics**

Heuristic	Description
1. **Visibility of system status**	The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.
2. **Match between system and the real world**	The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.
3. **User control and freedom**	Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.
4. **Consistency and standards**	Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing.
5. **Error prevention**	Even better than good error messages are a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.
6. **Recognition rather than recall**	Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.
7. **Flexibility and efficiency of use**	Accelerators—unseen by the novice user—may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.
8. **Aesthetic and minimalist design**	Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.
9. **Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors**	Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.
10. **Help and documentation**	Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

Heuristic Evaluation

Table 2: **The Evaluation**

Below you will see a Heuristic Evaluation of the *WRSPC* website.

Ratings: | 5 | Excellent | 4 | Good | 3 | Acceptable | 2 | Poor | 1 | Bad

Heuristics	Rating	Description	Notes
1. Visibility of system status	4	The system should keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback in reasonable time.	Feedback is good. Hovering over links creates a color change which is ideal. **Suggestions:** Create a color change or animation when hovering over buttons. When a user clicks on a sub menu item and is within that page, the sub menu item needs to be more emphasized. Rather than blue, which is similar to grey, change the color (e.g. light blue).
2. Match between system and the real world	5	The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.	No obvious issues found.
3. User control and freedom	3	Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. **Support undo and redo**.	**Suggestions:** Include "Back" buttons so users know how to get back to the previous page they were on. Include a "Home" button so users knows how to get back to the home page (some users may not realize they need to click on logo). Users may overlook parent menu items because their eyes are drawn to the sub menu items. Take the option to click on the parent menu items away OR include information that is not too relevant within them OR make them more interactive.

| Heuristics	Rating	Description	Notes
4. Consistency and standards	4	Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing.	**Suggestion:** Establish a *WRSPC* font and alternative font. Establish a color scheme. Keep everything consistent.
5. Error prevention	5	Even better than good error messages are a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.	No obvious issues found.
6. Recognition rather than recall	5	Minimize user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of system should be visible or easily retrievable.	No obvious issues found.
7. Flexibility and efficiency of use	4	Accelerators—unseen by the novice user—may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.	**Suggestions:** Need shortcuts such as "Back" and "Home" buttons for users to easily go back to a previous page without needing the menu again, or quickly go back to the homepage.
8. Aesthetic and minimalist design	2	Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.	The website is highly cluttered, including information that may not be necessary and repetition of information. The motto on the main page includes a run-on sentence. There is poor contrast of text against some photos. Text can possibly be changed to black rather then grey, for higher contrast and better visibility.
9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors	5	Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.	No obvious issues found.

Heuristics	Rating	Description	Notes
10. Help and documentation	5	Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.	WRSPC provides reactive help, such as in the donation form. If the user does not properly fill out a section, the system lets them know that section is required. The website is fine from this perspective because the user is meant to explore the website on their own, without needing too much assistance. If they need help, they have resources provided to them and they can contact *WRSPC*.
Overall Score	42 / 50		

Ratings: 5 Excellent   4 Good   3 Acceptable   2 Poor   1 Bad

Results

Based on the Heuristic Evaluation above, the *WRSPC* website is excelling in match between system and real world, error prevention, recognition rather than recall, and help. This is valuable because we now know the main problems are not around those areas, but rather around user control and freedom, feedback, consistency, efficiency, as well as aesthetics and overall design.

An overall high score does not mean the website is perfectly designed; a heuristic evaluation lets us know whether the website is functional and passes basic standards. However, it does give us a better idea of where the website needs improvement as well as how we will structure user testing tasks and questions.
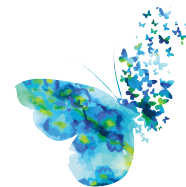
Recommendations

Table 3: Recommendations for next steps, and their level of impact.

Three levels of impact:
- **High –** this change will improve the website interface greatly
- **Moderate –** this change will improve the website interface
- **Low –** fixing a minor issue, this change may help improve the website interface

#	Recommendation	Level of Impact
1.	Create a color change or animation when user hovers over buttons - good feedback, lets users know they can click	**Moderate**
2.	When a user clicks on a sub menu item and goes within that page, that sub menu item needs to be more emphasized to let the user know where they are - higher contrast	**Moderate**
3.	Include "Back" buttons so users know how to get back to the previous page they were on - more effective navigation within website	**High**
4.	Include "Home" button within the menu so the user knows how to get back to the home page - more effective navigation (some users may not know to click on the logo)	**Moderate**
5.	Establish a universal *WRSPC* font and alternative font	**High**
6.	Establish a universal *WRSPC* color scheme	**High**
7.	Create higher contrast of text against background photos	**Moderate**
8.	Fix run-on sentences and take away unnecessary information within the main page	**High**
9.	Text should be switched to black or darker grey rather than grey, allowing for better contrast	**Moderate**
10	COVID-19 banners need to be redesigned to be more visually appealing, plus any other aesthetic issues within the website	**Low to Moderate**

Conclusion

The Heuristic Evaluation allowed us to obtain a better understanding of what we need to focus on changing within the *WRSPC* website. The recommendations above were constructed based on the evaluation findings. With further research and user testing, we hope to confirm these issues and possibly uncover more, so we can begin redesigning the website.