Human Computer Interaction

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# Practical Assignment 2: Study of the HHS Guidelines in a Website

## 4. Software and Hardware

Software and hardware refers to whatever device and operating system user might have while accessing our website as well as kind of browser he uses. That is very important topic to consider and it is vital to take care of this on early stage of designing website.

Nowadays people uses a huge variety of devices starting from little smartphones up to huge and powerful computers. Good website should take into consideration all sizes of the screen as well as computing power of the device itself. It is a good idea to implement adaptive resolution and design webpage to be lightweight so that it is responsive and not causing frustration.

Software is as much important as hardware. It is still a real struggle to design website to look and behave the same on all browsers. Moreover still a lot of companies require from developers that websites work flawlessly on such old browsers as Internet Explorer 8, that does not support a lot of new features. This attitude may slower the development process but on the other hand, assures us that everyone will be able to access our website.

## 5. The Homepage

They say that first impression is the most important and it is hard not to agree with it. We always visit a website with some expectations, and those expectations should be met.

Good way of designing homepage is simplicity and minimalism. From this point one should have clear indication of the content of the website and possibility to access every piece of it.

In my opinion Google is the best possible example of this. Their webpage is very lightweight and greets us with simple text field and nice logo. We simply get what we asked for. From this point after searching we are getting more possibilities such as image-only searching or customising dates of the results, so things that were not necessary before.

## 6. The Page Layout

Page layout is a very important aspect of a website, as it makes the whole experience of using it. It refers to placement of navigation panel, side information and main content

Current websites differ greatly from those even a decade ago. Introduced in 2008 HTML5 assumed very specific division of the page to 6 main parts, that is: <section>, <article>, <header>, <footer>, <aside>, <nav>. This idea works and makes a website readable, clear and easy to use. An example of such a design could be BBC News website, as it has all of the parts mentioned before in typical alliance. When we access this website we immediately know where to find what, as it similar to many other.

This approach though changed, because many people want their side to be unique, memorable and different, often with a cost of usability and clearance. For example, majority of portfolio websites relay on unusual, beautiful and breath-taking design. As there is usually not that much of a content to present, creator can go wild with animations and appearance to make experience with the website more appealing.

## 7. Navigation

Navigation is a crucial part of a modern website. It is basically a gateway to all the places on the website and requires a lot of attention form the developer to make it as intuitive as possible.

There are several way of making navigation on our website, such as: sidebar nav, top-bar nav, drop down menu etc:. It is vital to choose adequate type of navigation to type of the website we are designing. Simple websites with a little content can rely on small top-bar and sidebar navigation presenting all the possible pages. More complex ones should consider using dropdown menu as it reveal information in step-by-step manner not bombarding user with unnecessary data.

When designing a navigation to the website it is also important to think about different devices that will access it. Huge drop down menu will be difficult to use for people using smartphones and tables, but hidden slide menu might be no intuitive for computer users. That is why introducing changing(adaptive) navigation while designing a website can be a great way of assuring, that users will navigate through it easily.

## 8. Scrolling and Paging

Scrolling and paging is a necessity when it comes to huge news websites or forums. It helps divining the content into smaller chunks while keeping general order. One has to keep perfect balance between pages and amount of scrolling per page.

Of course such a compromise sometimes can be violated and still make an experience good. As and example I would like to use 9GAG, website containing funny pictures, GIFs, videos and memes form the internet, that are presented in the form of (almost) infinite scrolling list. Such design works well, as user usually spends short amount of time for each media and it limits the number of clicks user has to do every few seconds. In addition, by loading data that is only visible on the screen (not the whole huge page at once) it also seem to be fast and responsive.

On contrary most news websites prefer frequent paging, as users usually spend more time per one headline, and they would quickly lost themselves without clear indication of a new page. Such websites use also paging, that displays news from one day per one page giving even more clearance to users.

## 9. Headings, Titles and Labels

Headings, Titles and Labels are a great way to make website more readable at the first glance. Most users spend a considerable amount of time scanning rather than reading information on websites, so designing those elements well helps not only navigate through the content more easily but also quicker.

Every page on the website should have unique and well chosen title, clearly describing the content of the page. Each and every table should have headings, so that user will know what they might find in rows and columns. It also helps to provide labelling to media elements such as images and graphs, that describes them briefly.

This aspect should be very strictly obeyed especially when it comes to news website, as users visiting them expect certain information, that they need to choose form many existing out there. Once more, taking BBC News as an example, we can see that not only headings and titles are in place, but also topics of the news are divided into navigation bar. That helps users to distinguish between more and less relevant information for them. Moreover, in each individual news page BBC provides well written labels of the media content.

## 10. Links

Links are usually in form of differently styled text or image moving us to either other internal page or external one. They are very useful tool for making content of the website more clear and coherent, as they allow to hide long URL addresses in well-fitted descriptive text or graphical image.

Nowadays it is hard, or even impossible, to find website that does not benefit form links. The hard part is to choose adequate labels so that user will know what to expect while visiting the link. One thing that is very important from the user perspective is security. While hiding URL on the link helps to make page look cleaner it also hides the exact information of the website we are going to visit. In order to avoid situation, where we visit malicious website, we should always preview the URL by hoovering mouse on it and avoid clicking in suspicious looking addresses.

## 11. Text Appearance

Text appearance, meaning text colour and font style, are as important as the overall website design. Poorly chosen text decoration may have huge negative impact on readability and clarity of the page.

Since few years already Google is changing its overall design for all of their websites, applications and operating system making them consistent with each other. Quite recently they refreshed logo of Android operating system and introduced new default font (same as in logo). This font, even though quite similar to old one, makes huge of a difference. It was designed with very strict design rules, such as golden proportion for example. This font is now default in all their websites making them very clean and readable.

## 12. Lists

Lists are elements that make content of the website much more readable. None on us wants to see huge wall of text while looking for specific information.

While using lists there are few important guidelines that one should follow. Lists should be ordered in some manner making elements easier to find. Each list should be given a title, so that user is introduced to the content of the list immediately. Also we should not forget, that list is part of the whole website, therefore it should match to the overall design by style and colour. Capitalizing the first letter in list elements is also a good manner.

Very good example for using variety of list is Wikipedia. Many complex articles must use lists in order to demonstrate data in the most readable way possible. It makes gathering information much quicker and more pleasant than from text only.

## 13. Screen Based Controls (Widgets)

Screen Based Controls, commonly know as widgets makes using websites and interacting with them much more intuitive and natural giving users more flexibility. Those widgets include among others: pushbuttons, radio buttons, check boxes, drop-down lists and entry fields.

It is very hard to imagine any website without those widget, but one has to use them wisely, meaning, he should follow obvious but very important rules. When it comes to filling forms (essentially, interacting with widgets) user should be noticed when fields are mandatory. Every field should have appropriate label and when two fields can have the very same data (like billing address and shipping address) there should be an option to copy this data from one place to another. It is also a good practice to use familiar widgets for adequate job, for example square box for multiple choice answer and circular dot for one-choice answer, never the other way around. Finally, whenever possible, make entering data easier for user, for example introducing calendar from where user can pick their birthday date instead filling it manually.

In my opinion this is a very important part when it comes to designing a websites and one should pay a lot of attention to this particular aspect.

## 14. Graphics, Images and Multimedia

All the multimedia content is essential part of every website right next to the text itself, because we are not able to express everything by words only. Nonetheless we should be careful using them as they might be as much of a friend as enemy.

Biggest mistake one can make while designing a website is to allow sound (or media in general) play by themselves. It really breaks this expectations user has when he visits the website (of course expect sites like YouTube or SoundCloud, where playing multimedia is exactly our expectation). The same goes with unwanted pop-up windows and alerts, that forces user to viewing the content of the website and focus on something irrelevant.

I think that multimedia content in general makes most of nowadays content on the internet, since it is much easier to digest than plan text. The key is not to disturb user with those elements and make interaction with website pleasant. Afterall, this is what internet is about, isn’t it?

## 15. Writing Web Content

Written web content is one of the most important part of a website, therefore designing and maintaining it is very important, if not the most.

In my opining the key to this aspect is to find perfect balance between variety and similarity. There are part of a website that should be consistent, because they appear in few places at the same time, like navigation elements or headers for example. On the other hand we have main content of the site. And this one should lack repetitions and monotony very much. I am not speaking about using several different mismatched fonts and their colours, but mostly about bolding or highlighting certain part of the text making them more appealing and readable.

What also can really help is providing short description of future content so that user can decide upfront if he is interested in reading main content. Similarly, one should never artificially enlarge this content. Written text should be concise, clear and thorough, not repetitive and messy.

## 16. Content Organization

As content itself, its organization is also very important. No matter how good the text might be, if its hidden on the website or looks like awful wall of text, no one will pay attention to it.

Content should be always divided into paragraphs concerning similar aspects. Data, if possible, should be placed on graphs or tables so that they are clearly readable and no unnecessary information should be ever displayed. It is also a good practise to divide content for the specific target group, for example, ISEC website has separate sections for students on bachelor degree and masters degree. Moreover, proper usage of colours may indicate more and less important information as well as help grouping similar groups of them.

## 17. Search

Last, but most certainly not the least, is search feature. Since the beginning of the internet it only has grown, and it continues to do so. New websites are constantly being added and millions of videos and images are being uploaded every minute. There is absolutely no possible way to remember every website by its name or IP address or find information just browsing through categories. That is where search feature comes to play.

It finds its appliance both in micro and macro scale. Google developed search engine that in a blink of an eye can fetch millions results form billions of websites, but many independent websites has their own search bars to help users find content directly on their site. Taking under consideration that thanks to more and more advanced technology nowadays websites grow bigger and more complex every day, and they will continue to do so, I think that idea of searching is one of the greatest and most important aspect listed here.