Web Technology & Programming

Designing an Effective Web Site

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Scope

- What are the first steps in web page design?
- What are the elements of a web page?
- What are the guidelines for the design elements of a web page?
- What are some tips in web page creation and design?
- What are the guidelines for creating library websites?
- How to evaluate web sites?

Site Planning

- Determine site goals
- Analyze your audience
- Analyze the "competition"
- Know your own abilities and resources
- Map the current site
- Design your new site

Site Goals and Guidelines

- Why are you creating this site?
- What does the site owner hope to achieve with this site?
- What action does the site owner want the audience to take as a result of visiting?
- What restrictions or guidelines must be followed when designing the site?
- Accessibility guidelines
- Style guidelines (for a sub-site)

Audience Analysis

Who are you trying to reach?

- Age
- Language and Culture
- Level of education
- Access to the Web (High-speed? Dial-in?)
- Familiarity with the Web
- Barriers to access?

What are they looking for at your site?

- Information
- Services
- Community
- Are there multiple audiences?

How do I find out about the audience?

Ask the site owners

- Look at current site's logs and stats
- Talk to people who "fit the bill"
  - Students who are in the program (but were once prospective students)
  - People in the same demographic groups
- Review published research
- Build feedback capability into your site
- Know how audiences deal with the web in general

Analyze the "Competition"

- Look for sites with similar contents, purpose
  - At other universities
  - At other organizations
  - In the private sector
- What are the trends and precedents?
- Where do they excel or fall short?
- Does your site need to "match" a parent site?

Know Resources & Abilities

- What technical knowledge do you have?
- What tools, resources, and time do you have
- access to (now AND later)?
- Software
  - Web authoring tools
  - Image editing and tools
  - Animation tools
- Hardware
  - Camera (video and/or still)
  - Scanner (flatbed or slide)
  - Other people

Site Map

- All the pages, all the links of the current site
- Boxes for pages, lines for links
- Shows how "deep" your site is

Design (or redesign) the site

- Review audience needs/wants with site owner
- Determine the site structure (site map)
- Gather content (visuals, information)
- Mock up a visual design
- Build the site in a "test" mode
- Perform (user) testing and make changes
- Put the site into production
- Maintain and update the site

Visual Design

- What looks good? Why?
- **Consistency is a** good goal for any design.
- **Elements of Visual Design**
- Composition
  - Grids
  - Balance
  - White space
- Color
- Fonts
- Motion
- Examples

Graphics

- Appropriate, essential, and relevant to the content of the page
- Functional - serve a purpose and/or provide information
- Of size, quality and file format appropriate for the page content
- Used to add value to the overall design

Page layout and structure

- Follow the overall look guidelines
- Take the technical elements into consideration
  - descriptive file name
  - descriptive document title
  - complete contact information
  - effective use of tables and frames
  - browser compatibility

Do's in web page design

- Plan the web site structure and navigation
- Keep the layout simple and intuitive
- Use the same general style throughout
- Add standard navigation tools to each page
- Include copyright and contact information on each page
- Use original or free graphics
- Use images wisely and keep file size small for fast download
- Always state the source of all materials used
- Spell check and proofread each page

Don'ts in web page design

- Don't crowd your pages – balance text, graphics and space
- Don't overuse graphics, animations and other bleeding edge technology – use them to support and enhance but not to overpower your work
- Don't use background that distracts the user or makes text unreadable
- Don't use blinking or glowing text for emphasis
- Don't use long paragraphs of text – divide them into readable chunks
- Don't create dead end pages, which have no links to any other local page in the site
- Don't design for a specific browser

How to evaluate web sites?

- Accuracy – free from error and alteration
- Authority – credibility of author / publishing body
- Objectivity – creator's point of view / bias
- Currency – timeliness of information
- Content – scope and depth of material
- Design – style, structure, and functionality
- Accessibility – availability of the resources

How to evaluate web sites?

Accuracy

- How reliable is the information?

- Is it the original document?

- Are there any errors or alterations on the page?

- Is there a way to verify authenticity of the content?

Authority

- Who is the author?

- Is the author credible?

- Who is the publisher of the page?

- Is it a reputable publishing body?

How to evaluate web sites?

Objectivity

- From which point of view is the information presented?

- Does it show a minimum of bias?

- Is it trying to sway opinion?

- Is it in line with the aims or purpose of the web site?

Currency

- Is the information dated?

- Is it timely?

- Is it up-to-date?

- Are the links current and still available?

How to evaluate web sites?

Accessibility

- Can it be viewed using different browsers?
- Does it require a special program to read the content?
- Is the information readily available on the web site?

Design

- Does it follow the design principles?
- Is the site easy to read and navigate?
- Is there a balance between style and functionality?