Olivia Letto

Professor Kim

ICT 320

7 March 2021

Project Installment #1: Project Selection and Analysis

An informational website that I think can be analyzed thoroughly in the context of Information Architecture is the National Weather Service (<https://www.weather.gov>). The website’s purpose is to provide information about the weather in all areas of the United States. Some information/services that it provides is weather alerts, weather safety, education in relation to the weather, the ability to look up the weather for your specific region, as well as plenty of other features. This is a very useful website because it can be used by all residents of the United States and can be adjusted to a specific location so that the audience is more defined, depending on what the user specifically wants to see.

There are a few main objectives in relation to my project proposal. I think that there are many alterations that could be made to the design of the home page of the website due to a lack of information, as well as some cases where there is an overload of information. I think that by making certain alterations, the website will be easier to understand and find information for the average user. I am proposing the redesign because I think that there is an overlap of information, I think that the main map on the front of the website may be hard to understand, and I think that there is information that should be present on the home page that is not present.

The intended audience for this website is anyone in the United States who is capable of understanding the Weather. So, this is, not necessarily, all ages. This could be anyone who has an average and enough education to understand the information presented by the weather channel. For this specific website, gender and occupation do not matter. Also, there are no special requirements for specific computer experience. The geographic location associated with the use of this website, evidently, resides in the United States. Although, there are options to narrow down the information presented to the given audience by choosing the precise location within the United States.

This website has a few competitors, considering the fact that people could look at their specific weather service for their region instead of consulting the National Weather Service. These competitors include The Weather Channel and AccuWeather. Both of these websites relay information about the national weather. These would be two competitors to the National Weather service because they all provide the same purpose and the same target audience. Also, there are many pros and cons about each of these that are important to discuss.

When referring to AccuWeather, I think that one of the pros relating to the IA is the fact that the labeling system is pretty clear. It uses a certain type of syntax, which is noun-based. For instance, it reads “Radars & Maps,” “News,” “Video,” etc. Although the syntax is uniform, there are some cons about this labeling system (Figure 1). I feel that the information provided is not grouped around the same topic. For instance, I think that the incorporating “Video” in the labeling system is very broad and can lead to many different types of information relating to weather, causing an information overload. In response to this, I think it would be more beneficial to provide more specific topics on the labeling system, and then give the option to see “video” based on that topic. Another pro to this website is that upon scrolling down through the home page, the most recent news relating to the weather is posted, as well as the radar of the United States. But, on the other hand, there are some downsides to the way this information is particularly structured. It is not very organized, and it seems like information is dispersed everywhere. For instance, there are videos of recent news, and right below it there is a section for news once again. Also, to the right of this information, there is more random news placed. Along with the random dispersion of information, there are many ads dispersed in different areas as well (Figure 2). I think that the combination of different types of news scattered throughout the home page, as well as the significant number of ads, leads to information overload. Personally, I felt overloaded with information because there was no specific path for my eyes to follow. I felt like I was looking all over the place in order to find information.

**URL:** <https://www.accuweather.com>

**Figure 1:**



**Figure 2:**

**Graphical user interface, application, website

Description automatically generated**

When accessing The Weather Channel website, I think that there are plenty of pros and cons that need to be addressed. Like AccuWeather, the labeling system was very uniform in the fact that it was all noun based. It is evident that it uses words like “Today,” “Hourly,” “10-Day,” etc. (Figure 3). Although that this was a uniform labeling system, I think that more detail could have been added to the labels, causing less confusion to the audience. For instance, instead of just putting “Today,” the label could have been changed to “Today’s forecast.” Also, when referencing the structure of the website as a whole, I think that the way it is organized could be altered a bit too. I do not find it visually appealing when the ads are dispersed freely throughout the home page (Figure 4). I feel that that they should be organized and placed in one specific area of the website. I think that the way the ads are placed throughout the website can take away from the purpose and the user’s needs when finding the information that they want. Also, I think that this can cause an information overload because as you are trying to find information about the weather (the whole reason the audience is accessing this website), random ads are placed between this information. Although, I think that each section of the home page was labeled well. For instance, there was a section that read “Weather Today Across the Country,” “Latest News,” “Recommended,” “Photos” (Figure 5). This is very helpful when searching for specific information because it directly tells us what information we are going to see by looking at a certain section of the website.

**URL:** <https://weather.com/?cm_ven=PS_GGL_Branded_04012019_1&par=MK_GGL&gclid=CjwKCAiAkJKCBhAyEiwAKQBCkuknskh8CoV7S7fzvpxF7CAxxLpADeau0Z6ZVLfyHtuIJwYY1NtzuBoCSbUQAvD_BwE>

**Figure 3:**



**Figure 4:**

Graphical user interface, website

Description automatically generated

**Figure 5:**

**Graphical user interface, website

Description automatically generated**

Evidently, there are specific needs for a user when accessing this website. The user is, mainly, getting on the website to find information about weather in the United States. So, the user can find information about the United States weather as a whole, or the specific location that they are in. Also, they could use this website to educate themselves about different weather conditions, find education opportunities and resources, look at the forecast, as well as past weather conditions. There is, also, detailed information about the weather conditions that a user can find. So, in short, this website can help a user achieve finding any weather-related information in the United States.

This website holds plenty of information. This includes information about the weather forecast within different areas of the United States, past weather information, safety concerning different severe weather situations, education about weather and information relating to the national weather service, news about the weather, and information about the organization as a whole. Also, there is information about active alerts (so current weather information about different regions or the United States as a whole. Below shows the content map of the website in order to depict what information is stored and how it is connected.

Diagram

Description automatically generated  
 There is much to analyze about the overall structure of the website. First, the organization system could be improved, in my opinion. It is evident that different tabs are placed at the top of the website in order to navigate through different areas. Upon clicking on one of these tabs, sub-categories are listed so that one can narrow down their search to find more defined information. Although this website has an organization system, I do not think it is very systematic. For instance, it has a label titled, “Information.” Upon clicking this label, there are more sub-categories that consist of random information – not one specified category (Figure 6). I think that this label is very broad and is not very beneficial in finding information because it is not grouped strategically. For instance, when clicking on it, some sub-categories read “daily briefing,” “Forecast Models,” Brochures,” as well as many others. Evidently, this is not a specific grouping of information. Also, one positive part to the labeling system is that the syntax is systematic. This means that the color and font is uniform, and the labels are noun-based (Figure 7). Although, that part is systematic, I think that there is an overlap of information when referencing the labeling system and organization system. When scrolling to the bottom of the screen, the same categories are listed along with the same sub-categories under them (Figure 8). This could be a bit confusing to a user, because there are two sets of the same information on one page. This makes the navigation of the website more complex than it should be.

Another important aspect of the website is the search system. Upon clicking on the “search” tab, you are welcomed to a page with a search bar and two different options to define your search: “NWS,” or “NOAA” (Figure 9). I do not think that this search system utilizes good IA strategies at all. I think that it should consist of more options to define your search more. For instance, this could include options to provide certain key words, query builders, specific types of information, specific dates, etc. With having more options to define your search, it would provide the user with much less effort so that they could find the specific information that they need in a lot less time.

**Figure 6:**

Graphical user interface

Description automatically generated

**Figure 7:** 

**Figure 8:Table

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**

**Figure 9:**

**Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated**