

The Hidden Literacy Behind Website Development

Websites are one of the most effective ways to share information in modern times. We often see them as simple and intuitive. Though, websites are carefully crafted to be simple and intuitive and requires much more than knowing how to code. In fact, there is a whole community of web developers that debate the best practices when it comes to websites. A user of has certain expectations of a website which must be considered by a developer in order to ensure the satisfaction of the user and a successful exchange of information. In essence, a website must have characteristics of simplicity, intuitive design, and accessibility.

Simplicity

The best way to present information is to have clear paths to understanding that message. If you were to have a plethora of information packed into one page, you would quickly overwhelm a user and fail to share the information as intended. The preferred approach is to break down the information into simple pieces that can give the user information based on their needs. In the same way this paper uses headings to define structure, a website has several pages and sections that break down the information. The more information that can be simplified, the more enjoyable and productive the experience is for the end user.

Intuitive Design

When you visit a website like google.com, you come with a set of expectations of how the website should work. For example when you want to search something, you expect to be able to click on the magnifying glass to search your input. This may seem obvious but there has to be a distinction between elements you can press and elements that you cannot. The way a website communicates this to you may be subtle but dramatically increases the usability of the website.

An example of the google.com communicates the purpose of the search bar is by focusing it with a shadow whenever the user positions their mouse over the search field. This communicates that the search bar is important and can be clicked. When creating a website, all the intuitions of the user should be correct or else it fails at giving the user a enjoyable experience.

Accessibility

A well designed website can be perfect in simplicity and intuitive design, but will still be incomplete if nobody can use it. What I mean is if a user is colorblind and a website decides to put text that is hardly visible to that user, the website exclude that user from using the website properly. This is why accommodating for your audience as much as possible is so important for a website. If you ignore an entire group of users because of disabilities, then you lose the power that a website can have to share information.

Multiliteracies

The traditional definition of literacy as it pertains to written text is not sufficient to explain the multiple literacies required for making a website. Tony Mirabelli offers a more useful definition for literacy, where “Literacy extends beyond individual experiences of reading and writing to include the various modes of communication and situations of any socially meaningful group” (Mirabelli 302). The idea that literacy is not only being able to read and write text, but rather extends to a more figurative idea of literacy, is useful in appreciating the literary significance of web development. Multiliteracies pertains to the array of literacies needed to perform an activity. The main literacies used in web development are computational literacy, social literacy, design literacy.

Web development has complex literacy requirements that need to be further studied and fleshed out. How are multiple literacies used in making a website that is engaging for the user and communicates information in a neat and efficient manner? As apart of this community myself, I feel as though it is important to use the knowledge of multiple literacies to improve the overall quality of websites and user experience. I intend to find the answer by observation and non-intrusive interviews.

Method

I intend to use a website I create to collect data on how the user interacts with the website. I would like to collect data such as click locations, time on website, and pages visited. This data could be used to gain insight into how web design is socially aware of different behaviors that a user can exhibit. In addition to data collected on the website itself, I will also be asking some users about their experience through a non-intrusive interview where I casually ask the user about their experience in order to get raw answers that accurately reflect the experience of the user.

My analysis of this research would involve the writings of The New London Group and their ideas on metalanguages to describe and interpret the design element of different modes of meaning. I plan to elaborate on the connection between my research and the four factors of pedagogy (the method and practice of teaching): situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. These factors provide great insight into the many literacies involved in web development.

Works Cited

Mirabelli, Tony. "Learning to Serve: The Language and Literacy of Food Workers." *Writing about Writing: a College Reader*, by Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017, pp. 298–317.