Exercise 6A: Analyzing Websites with CRAP

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# Overview

So, you've been web surfing for quite some time now, and you've undoubtedly found some pages that you like and others that you don't like. Sometimes, it's not so easy to really explain why. You now have a new vocabulary with which to describe your thoughts on the matter.

# Part 1: Group Evaluations

1. Follow this link using the browser of your choice.

**http://www.rochesterfirst.com/**

1. Examine this site… at least the first page and a couple of links to sub-pages (pages that are part of the same site).
2. Summarize your opinions and why you came to them here:
   1. Alignment:
      * Images for articles have varying aspect ratios, throwing related articles out of alignment.
      * The side column is not properly aligned; take for example the, “Rochester,” and, “Events,” headings. They are part of the side bar but receive different amounts of indentation.
      * Advertisement containers in some places are sized differently from side bar elements.
      * The website’s navigation elements are aligned, when shown – the supermenu is effective at presenting options to the user.
   2. Proximity:
      * Focus of the webpage is drawn to an unlabeled section that speaks of recent articles, surrounded by various graphics and elements.
      * It’s hard to tell whether the highlighted article is an advertisement (with a caption) or a related article with more to read. There is no call to action near the element, asking users to visit the page, and it’s very close to sponsorship logos and banner adverts.
   3. Repetition:
      * Element styling is not always repeated: the links to related articles, links in the navigation area, and the links in the, “Stay Connected,” section are all styled differently, braking the principle of repetitive design.
      * The, “Read More,” button has a downward chevron while the, “Load More,” button does not, despite having very similar functionality.
      * The TV schedule isn’t styled the same as the rest of the website.
      * Some banner advertisements have a 1px solid black border, while others have no border.
   4. Contrast:
      * The choice of color, a light blue, dark blue, red, silver, and white, doesn’t work well in the implementation chosen. The navigation bar is hard to read in some sections of light blue.
      * There is a putrid green color on the TV schedule page that doesn’t fit with the rest of the website; the white text is still hard to read.
      * When hovering over the search bar’s button that says, “Search,” the button’s color blends with the navigation’s dark blue, making it difficult to read.
   5. Use of color
      * I felt that the light blue and white works well for this website, since it has a large weather information presence. The blue mimics clear skies, and the white is supposed to be akin to the color of clouds.
      * It works well when they have the weather widgets showcasing weather forecasts.
      * Color choice fails when dealing with elements incorporating embedded content, like adverts and the TV schedule embed.
   6. Use of typography
      * The website, officially, uses a single sans-serif font for all of its in-house content. This makes it a little bit difficult to differentiate between titles/headings and article/paragraph content on the webpage.
      * The many adverts with varying font types makes the page visually overwhelming.
      * The use of capitalization isn’t consistent across the website. Some links on the page are in all caps while others are in title-case.
3. Now go into myCourses, into the **Design Principles** discussion, and tell the class your opinions on the design of **http:// rochesterhomepage.net/**.(HINT: You just wrote them in step 3). Each of you should post your thoughts individually – not as a group.
4. After you post your review, read the other student comments about this site. Choose one other student review and summarize below:
   1. Author of message you’re summarizing: **Sam Sorensen**
   2. Alignment:
      * *The sidebar is uncomfortably large and messy; its contents are not aligned and its content is not distinguished from the advertising.*
   3. Proximity:
      * *The elements are placed in what seems to be an arbitrary fashion; some articles look like ads, and vice versa. Elements need to be spaced out more.*
   4. Repetition:
      * *Depending on where you are on the website, the repetition and styling of elements degrades in quality. The format of how articles are displayed changes and it makes it hard for the user to tell elements apart from each other on the page.*
   5. Contrast:
      * *The contrast on the website isn’t terrible, but, it isn’t earthshattering either. The advertising sticks out from the website’s elements, blurring the actual placed content into the background.*
   6. Use of color:
      * *Everything blurs into a form of blue-grey mush. The navigation bar stands out with its bright blue; everything else is an odd mix of grey bits and white bits for articles, news, and more.*
   7. Typography:
      * *The articles and menus all use the same boring sans-serif font, making for a bit of a dry read and can exhaust the reader, although it is clearly legible. The logo itself is a different font, but, it works with the website and is not a distraction.*
5. Do you agree or disagree with this person about the design elements of the page in question (Why?)
   * + Although Sam’s thread on myCourses is indeed lacking in depth, what is highlighted are all valid concerns with regards to the design elements of the page in question. Rochester First’s website is not the best in terms of being user-friendly. It bombards the senses and creates a sense of loss inside the mish-mash of blue-grey design elements; something that Sam noted about the use of color. In terms of meeting its C.R.A.P. principles, I think Rochester First’s website failed, and I believe that if Sam’s post is of any indication, others would certainly agree with that conclusion. One thing to note is that the website is, at least, usable on mobile devices!
6. Reply to their post (politely) to discuss your agreements and disagreements.
   * + *Replied to the post.*

# Part 2: Design Critiques

Pick a web site ***you don’t like*** (in terms of design), and a web site you ***do***, and describe/critique each using the forms attached to this handout. If you are having trouble finding a bad site, try using a random link generator such as:

http://www.uroulette.com/ or   
http://www.randomwebsite.com/

# Part 3: Individual Critiques

Pick a color scheme for your own class page and describe it below. (Describe your color scheme in terms of what color(s) you will use for each element.) Feel free to make these determinations as a team.

Now, use the space below to sketch an improved layout for your page. Again, work with your neighbors to come up with something really great! A simple wireframe drawn up in the app of your choice, or a hand sketch either scanned or photographed with a phone would be fine.

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| --- |
| **bad site:** |
| **Alignment:** How many different styles of alignment can you see on this page? Describe them:    Where is the strongest alignment line on this page? Why? |
| **Proximity:** Identify two elements of this site that, due to their proximity, appear to have a relationship.  Identify information at this site that "hangs" alone. |
| **Repetition:** Does the repetition on this page draw attention to anything particular? What?  Describe the repetitive element(s) used to the best advantage on this site. |
| **Contrast:**  Identify the strongest area of contrast at this site.  Are there areas of this site that seem "muddy" or run together because of a   lack of contrast? What are they? |
| **Color & Type:**  Does the use of color and type on this page enhance or detract from   the content? How? |

**Additional Notes:**

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| **good site:** |
| **Alignment:** How many different styles of alignment can you see on this page? Describe them:    Where is the strongest alignment line on this page? Why? |
| **Proximity:** Identify two elements of this site that, due to their proximity, appear to have a relationship.  Identify information at this site that "hangs" alone. |
| **Repetition:** Does the repetition on this page draw attention to anything particular? What?  Describe the repetitive element(s) used to the best advantage on this site. |
| **Contrast:**  Identify the strongest area of contrast at this site.  Are there areas of this site that seem "muddy" or run together because of a   lack of contrast? What are they? |
| **Color & Type:**  Does the use of color and type on this page enhance or detract from   the content? |

**Additional Notes:**

When you're all done, post this completed file, renamed **Exercise-CRAP-YOURNAME.docx**, to the appropriate dropbox before next class.