I evaluated two websites: Dr. Suzanna Long's faculty profile page from MS&T (http://web.mst.edu/~longsuz/longsuz.html) and Dr. Bryan Bryson's profile page from MIT (https://be.mit.edu/directory/bryan-bryson) using a MacBook Pro with a built-in 15-inch widescreen, LDC display. The computer was running macOS Mojave 10.14.2 with a 2.3 GHz Intel Core i7 processor, 8 GB RAM on a solid-state drive (SSD). Understanding that websites don't always look the same on all browsers, I viewed these sites using both Google Chrome version 71.0.3578.98 (64-bit) and also Firefox Quantum 65.0 (64-bit). I was connected using wireless internet to Fidelity Communications and a speed test through speedtest.net just before evaluating reported 56.27 Mbps download speed.

Compare and Contrast

I chose these two sites because they are both professors of engineering fields. I thought they would be similar in the type of content and information presented, but vary aesthetically because they belong to different institutions.

Both sites have photos of the professors as well as contact information, a brief biography and information on their research interests.

Structurally, Dr. Bryson's site is essentially a single page with links embedded in the text to more information on his research interests. The linked pages are not specific to his work, but include a broader view of that topic's research being performed with the MIT campus. Another text link under his photo takes the user to his personal lab site, with additional information being done there with his students and staff. The site appears to be embedded in a content management system with the headers, footers, and top-level navigation controlled by the Biological Engineering department and/or MIT as a whole. The only stand-out links in the body go to directory pages for additional Faculty and Instructors and Staff; these stand out because they are in a box surrounded by a contrasting color.

Dr. Long's site has more navigation available in the form of 11 immediately visible buttons along the left-hand margin of the site. All but one of these buttons links to another page, apparently using the same template as the original. The header for this page is not controlled by the University, and is a single image linking back to the campus website. Her email address underneath her photo looks like a link (it is underlined) but does not function as one. In fact, the text on each page is not actually text at all, but images of text, possibly in an effort to avoid rendering errors for viewers?

Strengths and Weaknesses

Dr. Bryson's page is short and to the point. There isn't a lot of detail available there without moving on to his lab's site, which has a completely different design and structure. The user has to leave this site completely to gain more information. His page loads quickly and consistently and re-sizes easily to fit the window size. Aesthetically, it feels clean and up-to-date.

Dr. Long's site is slightly slower to load, which makes sense when you realize that everything is made up of images. As a result of that design choice, the page does not resize to accommodate smaller screens or windows, and in fact, Dr. Long's own photo is distorted and forced into an abnormal pixel ratio so that the presented photo is narrower than it should be. The lack of real text makes this site mobile-UNfriendly and presumably more difficult for the professor to update should she wish to add or change anything. I find the design choice perplexing, as it

seems to work against the ideas of increased accessibility. Users with vision issues would not be able to change text color or size using their own browser or screen settings and cannot even copy the text to a screen reader if they wanted/needed to. I would venture to guess that this site would be more difficult, if not impossible, for a search engine to ingest, which would also limit accessibility by way of obscuring its existence. Aesthetically, the site feels somewhat dated, mostly because of the font and color choices, as well as the rounded rectangle buttons in the navigation.

Use Cases

Both sites are designed for students or prospective students to learn more about the faculty. The users would be looking for information on the professors as people, rather than just as instructors of a certain course. They might be current students needing contact information for their instructor, or prospective researchers wanting more information about how to work more closely with the professors.

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The first site, https://be.mit.edu/directory/bryan-bryson, has a photo of the noted professor on the directory page. The second site, http://web.mst.edu/~longsuz/longsuz.html, also has a photo of the noted professor. However, the photo on the second site is so distorted and the photo background so distracting, the information on the page recedes in importance. The first site's photo and contact information placement directly below the photo is much more professional and user friendly.. The second site professor contact information includes an email address under the photo, but more complete contact information is found after scrolling to the bottom of the page. Normally, I prefer the aesthetic of left-justified navigation bars, but combined with the small size and technical look of the font, the page looks crowded and heavy. Whereas, the first site, with the navigation bar across the top and different color lines denoting the different pages, has a brighter, organized look. It also appears more easily accessible for both prospective students and prospective employers. I agree the second site would be more difficult to navigate for people with accessibility issues in both the look and lack of multiple platform availability.