



Lecture 1

DESIGN ISSUES

The Making of a Good Design

Content is important, but content alone will not make your site work.

Good Design is:

- Understandable
- Interesting
- Easy to use
- Uniform in look and feel
- Done from a visitor's point of view:
WYSIWYW (What You See Is What You WANT)

Good Design Maxims

“Rules” are only guidelines -- no single model fits every situation, and there is no such thing as the “right” way to create a web site.

Remember WYSIWYW

- Web users want control over the online material -- they want to seamlessly obtain the information they need.
- Don't force visitors down a specific path -- give them control.

Typical Website Evolution

Generation 1 -- replaces paper information

Generation 2 -- has flashy elements

Generation 3 -- is bleeding edge, causing content to suffer

Generation 4 -- content and technology are integrated

Ideally, try to skip the problems of Generations 1-3 by planning your web site carefully.

General Methods for Design

- “Ad-hoc” Process (“seat of the pants”)
 - Hastily put together
 - Created on the fly
 - “We need a web site TODAY”



- A methodical, well-thought process includes:
 - Planning
 - Quality-assurance testing



Pitfalls of Ad-hoc Process

- Many “under construction” banners
- Old content
- Dated design and techniques
- Errors (broken links, broken scripts)
- Convoluted logic results in a confusing site
- “Spaghetti code” in the CSS that only the original designer understands
- Difficult to update and maintain

Benefits of Ad-hoc Process

Sometimes “quick and dirty” is not only good enough, it’s the best way.

It’s useable for:

- Sites that will have a short lifespan
- Very small web sites
- Sites designed for a very specific purpose (a single survey, a single class, a specific event, etc.)

Why take the time to design and test before launching?

Although it takes a lot more time up front, a well-thought-out web site:

- Has fewer problems
- Is more effective
- Is more understandable
- Is easier to navigate

and may end up taking less time overall to create and maintain.

Pre-design Work

- Consider your organization's mission
- Define the target audience
- Set goals for the web site
 - Immediate
 - Long-term
- Gather content
 - Organize and establish hierarchy of content
 - “Chunk” content into logical information units

More Pre-design Work

- Create an outline or plan for content
- Create your web site on paper first
 - Use a flowchart to depict how visitors will go from one page to another
- Think about the actual HTML, PDF, graphic, sound, and other files you will need in the site
 - Where will they be placed?
 - How will visitors access them?
- Organize the files logically, so that the development team can understand the hierarchy of the web pages.

Influences of Technology on Design

- **Browsers**

Chrome is the dominant browser

http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers_stats.asp

<http://www.e-janco.com/browser.htm>

- **Operating systems**

Windows 7 is the most popular operating system

- **Connection speeds**

75% access the Internet using broadband (DSL/T1/T3)

25% access it using narrowband (modem)

<http://www.websiteoptimization.com/bw/0609/>

- **User screen sizes**

80% of users are using a display with 1024x768 pixels or more and a color depth of at least 65000 colors

http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers_stats.asp

Influences of Content on Design

- The content drives how the web site looks
 - Sites designed for students look different than sites designed for staff, which look different from sites designed for potential faculty
 - Sites designed to get people to purchase items look different than sites designed to provide information
- Use quality content from subject matter experts
- Have site reviewed **PERIODICALLY** by key members (CEOs, Department Heads, Supervisors, etc.) of the group the site supports
- Have non-affiliated people review content for clarity
- Have others proofread for grammar
 - Fresh eyes often see things you miss!

Usability

- Browsers don't use web sites -- people do. Don't design a site for a particular browser -- design a site for the user.
- There are no generic people. Try to envision a real person accessing your site.
 - Most users absorb data visually.
 - Most users will not expend effort to remember things about how your site works.

Visual items

Arbor Business Company, INC.

President: John Smith

VP Marketing: Susan Jones

Alice Johnson, Manager

Tim Moore, Manager

VP Sales: Rachel Parker

Michael Gross, Manager

Kim Dole, Manager

VP Production: Tom Allen

Kathy Roberts, Manager

Betsey Foster, Manager



Usability -- Making It Easy To Read

- Factors that affect readability
 - Poor eyesight of users
 - Smaller, older computer monitors as displays
 - Poor color perception of users
 - “Cocktail-party” effect -- lots of information on a single web page
- Design fixes:
 - Use high contrast between text and background
 - Use lots of white space
 - Use larger fonts
 - Put key navigation buttons in the upper left
 - Don't rely on color alone to distinguish between elements on a web page
 - Avoid busy graphics
 - Limit page noise -- ensure page elements don't compete for a visitor's attention

Usability -- User's Memory

- Don't force visitors to remember how to navigate/use the site
- Provide redundant, easily recognizable features
- Generally, have visited and unvisited links be different colors to make it easy for users to remember where they've been
- Limit the number of items in a group of choices

Usability -- Response Times

- The amount of time a user will wait is proportional to the payoff. If they know there is something they want to see, they will wait for it.
- Otherwise...
 - 1 second: no major potential for interrupt
 - 10 seconds: users become bored
 - More than 10 seconds: user may leave

Without a progress bar or other browser feedback, users generally will go about other business -- look at sites in other windows, talk on the phone, etc. Designers must provide some sort of indication as to how much longer the download will take, if the wait will be more than 10 seconds.

Using Cutting-Edge Tools

Good reasons:

- ☑ To look cool!
- ☑ To draw attention
- ☑ To maintain attention
- ☑ To enhance information
- ☑ To inform or educate

Poor reasons:

- ✗ To look cool
- ✗ To prove you can