

Web Content

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE USER

Agenda

- **Different approach**
 - How the Web differs from other forms of communication
- **The User**
 - How they read online
- **Voicing**
 - How to speak to the user, so they listen
- **Form and function**
 - Scannability
 - Technical issues
 - Content as navigation
- **Be read - Be found**
- **Wrap-up**

A Different Approach

HOW WEB CONTENT DIFFERS FROM PRINT

Online vs. Print

- **Online is a dialog**
 - The Web is communication
- **The Magic Encyclopedia**
 - Link to more information (careful!)
- **Different interaction**
 - Screens are harder to read
 - Radiated illumination affects comprehension
 - Iowa State University study underway
- **Medium can be changed**
 - Users assume timeliness

Online vs. Print

- **Credibility is in question**
 - Changeability of medium improves credibility
 - Web 2.0 decreases credibility for some
 - Students consider online gospel
 - Wikipedia trumps OED (really!)
- **Structure (design) cannot be predicted**
 - "Web Design" does not technically exist
- **Online does not yet replace print**
 - It may never do so
- **There is no fold!**

The User

NO ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT

The User

- **Single most important aspect of the Web**
- **Concentrate user's needs**
- **View from user's perspective**
 - Pay attention to site/content structure
- **Write for common denominator**
 - Consider lowest common denominator
 - Flesch-Kincaid normally 8th grade
 - Up this to 9th grade for college users

Online User Behavior

- **Users are impatient and slow**
 - Reading speeds drop by 25%
- **Users prefer small amounts of text**
- **Users question credibility**
- **Users click in patterns**
 - Hypertext, buttons, then *Back* button
 - Don't break the *Back* button!
- **Users won't necessarily use the front door!**
 - Don't assume they have seen *any* other page

Online Readership

- **Users spend on average 25 seconds per page**
 - Only pages to which they are invested
 - Deciphering navigation and structure take time
- **Readership decreases as word count goes up**
 - "At that reading speed [250 WPM], users can read 18 words in 4.4 seconds. Thus, when you add verbiage to a page, you can assume that customers will read 18% of it. "
– Jakob Neilson, 2008



- ### User Tips
- **Use about half the normal word count**
 - 30 to 1,250 is optimal
 - **Use inverted pyramid**
 - Most important info nearest the top
 - "News" style
 - Begin with conclusion
 - **Link to source**
 - Especially when quoting
 - **Avoid puns and metaphors**
 - **Use shorter words**
 - "Begin" vs. "Commence"

Voicing

TALKING AS THE USER EXPECTS

Voicing

- **The Web is an *informal* environment**
 - Pretentious language is not appreciated
 - Think business casual or first date
 - Remember your audience
- **Emotion cannot be easily conveyed**
 - Small amounts of text make this harder
- **Use active rather passive phrasing**
 - "We offer Spanish courses" vs. "Spanish courses are offered"
 - Users consider the site to be talking
- **Maintain a steady voice**
 - Should match the organization's voice

Voicing Comparison

Not great	Much better
<p>In order to secure potential issues with transcript delivery delays, an Internet-based form is available through the Student Services Department Web site. Use this form in lieu of any previous form that may have been included in your Student Packet. This will help expedite the reception of transcripts by your chosen college or university. The form is available at http://forms.pu.olfactory.edu/...</p>	<p>Please use the Transcript Request Form to order your transcripts online. We will be able to process your request much faster than hand-written requests. Transcript Request Form</p>

Form and Function

WHAT TO DO AND WHY

Form and Function Considerations

- **Scannability of content**
 - No, it isn't a real word
- **Technology issues in content**
- **Content contains navigation**
 - Users *use* the content

Scannability

- **79% of users scan, 16% read word-by-word**
 - 5% went to Amazon.com instead
- **Use heading paragraph style**
 - Negative space improves scanning
 - One heading for every 2 – 4 paragraphs
- **Bold key words**
 - Different than keywords
- **Use lists**
 - Numbers in headings imply ease of reading
- **Left-align text**

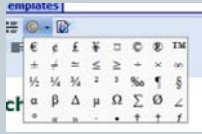
Source: ORACLE Web Facts, http://www.sun.com/980713/eshovrfing/wfw9.html

Scanning Example

No headings	With headings
<p> Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aliquam in nulla sed sem porttitor bibendum sollicitudin mattis arcu. Vestibulum ante diam, auctor tristique porta et, imperdiet euismod turpis. Sed vel mi eros, eget lacinia orci. Sed feugiat semper mattis. Aenean nisi enim, placerat eget commodo et, scelerisque in nunc. Sed sed arcu et neque, pharetra faucibus, sed ut, arcu. Praesent in neque metus. Nullam a lacus elit, vel dictum nisi. Aliquam suscipit mauris sit amet nibh fringilla sed venenatis justo ultrices. Nulla non ligula dolor, lobortis gravida dul. Sed in dolor lorem, luctus dignissim ipsum. Vestibulum sem diam, fermentum non.</p>	<p> Lorem ipsum dolor Sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aliquam in nulla sed sem porttitor bibendum sollicitudin mattis arcu.</p> <p> Vestibulum ante diam Auctor tristique porta et, imperdiet euismod turpis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sed vel mi eros • Eget lacinia orci • Sed feugiat • Semper mattis <p> Aenean nisi enim placerat eget commodo et, scelerisque in nunc. Sed sed arcu et neque pharetra faucibus sed ut arcu. Praesent in neque metus. Nullam a lacus elit, vel dictum nisi.</p> <p> Aliquam suscipit mauris sit amet nibh fringilla sed venenatis justo ultrices. Nulla non ligula dolor, lobortis gravida dul. Sed in dolor lorem, luctus dignissim ipsum. Vestibulum sem diam, fermentum non.</p>

Technology Issues in Content

- **Only one space after sentences**
 - Web spacing is consistent
 - Repeat space require special code
- **Punctuation**
 - Avoid "Smart" punctuation
 - Must have HTML equivalent (not all do)
- **Examples:**
 - Left double-quote = “
 - Right double-quote = ”
 - Em-dash = –



Technology Issues in Content

- **Avoid indenting paragraphs**
 - Styles should be used when possible
 - Adds tag <blockquote />
- **Make sure of Section 508 compliance**
 - "alt" attribute for images
 - Synchronous captioning for video
 - Tables are for tabular data only!
- **Images should uphold content**
 - Do not use ClipArt
 - Images should be pre-sized and 72 dpi
 - ✦ Photoshop's "Save for Web and Devices"

Content as navigation

Linking guidelines

- **Links obfuscate content**
 - Place between or after sections
 - Footnotes should be links
 - Design should consider readability
- **Do not use underlines in normal text**
 - Forget what print styles say
 - They look like links

- In 1890, the [Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration](#) founded St. Rose Normal School, a school to prepare [religious sisters](#) to teach in [elementary schools](#).
- In 1890, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration founded St. Rose Normal School, a school to prepare religious sisters to teach in elementary schools.

Content as navigation

Linking guidelines

- Open links in the **same window** by default
 - Even if to another Web site
 - Less confusing for the user
 - User will return
 - Artificially increasing time on the site is pointless
- Open link in new window...
 - When it makes sense to the user
 - When the user must complete a task
 - E.g. filling out Federal Loan

Other Form/Function notes...

- Remember, ALL CAPS IS SHOUTING
 - Don't do it
- Use **bold** instead of *italics* for emphasis
 - Bold text is easier to read
- Provide a "Downloads" page
 - Links to download Adobe Acrobat, Flash, etc.
 - Link from pages with multi-media content
- Include file size with download content
 - E.g. "[New Student Checklist](#) (250 KB, PDF)"
- Do not use PDF as content
 - PDFs are not navigation

Be Read - Be Found

TECHNIQUES FOR BOTH

Being Read

- **Use <h1> at the top of each page**
 - Should reflect the page title
- **Use <h2> for other headings**
 - Avoid formatting inside headings
- **Use lots of lists**
 - More than you would in print
 - Keep it to just 2 levels
 - **Most of time**
 - It helps
 - Really
 - No kidding

Being Read

- **Include captions for...**
 - Tables (508 compliance)
 - Images
 - Video/multimedia
- **Links for readability**
 - Don't mention the links
 - E.g. avoid "Please click the links below to..."
 - "Click Here" should be outlawed
 - Use a link section heading
 - Such as "See also", or "Next Steps", or "More Information"

Being Found

- **Content is the most important aspect to good search engine rankings**
- **What you say affects search**
- **How you say it affects it more!**
- **There are no technical "tricks"**
 - Tricks get you banned

Being Found

- **<h1> and <title> should be very similar**
 - Use key phrase relevant to page
 - "Alumni at Viterbo University"
- **Keep phrasing and language consistent**
 - One or two search terms per page
- **Links to the page should be real text**
 - Great: "[Viterbo Alumni Page](#)" (after the paragraph)
 - Good: "Visit our [Alumni Page](#) for more information"
 - Bad: "Visit <http://www.viterbo.edu/alumni/default.aspx> for more information"
 - Horrible: "To visit our Alumni Page, [click here.](#)"

Being Found

Metadata guidelines

- **Keywords are unnecessary**
 - Not indexed by *any* major search engine
 - May be used by local search
 - Check with your developers
- **Description are worthwhile**
 - Not used to index page, but...
 - May be returned in results
 - Yahoo! used to do this
 - Keep description to 20 words or less

Linking Recap

- **Add links to bottom of content**
 - Improves readability and retention
- **Link real text, not the URL**
- **Write addresses without "http://" protocol**
 - Include protocol if it isn't "http://" (e.g. "https://")
- **Open new windows rarely**
 - Only if it is relevant to the user's experience

Top Points to Consider

A WRAP-UP

Top Points to Consider

- Always remember the common user
- Use consistent language
 - Across sections, sites, and channels
 - (Print, Web, broadcast, etc.)
- Be brief and plain
 - Headline/section, simpler language, lists
 - 30 – 1,250 words per page
- Remember most users just scan
- Use good linking practices

Questions?

RESOURCES ON THE NEXT SLIDE

Resources

- [*Writing for the Web*](#) - by Jakob Nielsen
 - <http://www.sun.com/980713/webwriting/>
- [*How Little Do Users Read?*](#) - by Jakob Nielsen
 - <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/percent-text-read.html>
- [**Web Content Tutorials**](#)
 - <http://websitesitips.com/webcontent/>

This document can be found at www.montet.org
