

Maintaining & promoting websites

Web Content Design
for Writers and Editors
Fall 2004



Tonight's class

- Publishing
- Maintaining content
- Search engine optimization
- Email newsletters
- Legal issues

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Review

What's the basic rule?

- No surprises! People should know where they're going *before* they click

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Link guidelines



- Be clear, not cute.
- Underline the most 3-4 important words.
- Indicate links to large files and non-Web file types.
- Mention requirements or restrictions.
- In “Related link” lists, identify

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Exercise



Find the problems with the links on this page:

<http://www.webcontentdesign.com/wcd/resources/linklist.asp>

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Proofing




Proof pages on all supported browsers and platforms

See <http://www.edit-work.com/webstyleguide/copyedit.html#2>

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Web development process



Planning

- Define site: audience, goals, content

Design


- Organize information: create content categories, select page types, design navigation
- Define functionality and layout

Building

- Create content: research and write, create illustrations, make text web-ready, create style guide
- Publish and maintain content: proof, archive

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Publishing methods



- Author in HTML directly
- Use software packages (like FrontPage)
- Use a content management system
- Use templates provided by hosting service

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Authoring tools



Software packages

- Macromedia Dreamweaver
- Microsoft FrontPage
- Adobe GoLive

HTML tools

- Macromedia HomeSite
- Notepad

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Publishing tools



Content management systems

- In-house systems
- Free open source systems:
 - <http://www.opensourcecms.com/>
 - Advantages: free/low cost, modular, frequent updates
 - Disadvantages: unreliable support, little documentation
 - Example: www.stthomasmedina.org

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Template solutions



Hosts provide pre-built templates and functionality (newsletters, forms, shopping carts)

Examples

- www.1and1hosting.com
- www.register.com


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After site is launched



- Creating new content > ongoing publishing
- Dealing with old content > archiving
- Encouraging people to visit the site > marketing
- Figuring out what content works, what doesn't > evaluating
- Redesign, but only if necessary

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Ongoing publishing

= Regular creation and posting of new content


- Define team & step-by-step process *before* site is launched
- Determine:
 - How often you need/are able to create content
 - How often users are willing to visit
 - How you'll tell visitors what's new
- Regularly read customer feedback to see if content meets their needs

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Also called “ongoing publishing process.” Editors are usually much more involved in Update process than in initial DESIGN. Tech folks may refer to this as “Operations.”

Should figure all this out BEFORE site is initially published. Software designers have trouble with this idea, since they're used to “shipping” a product and then essentially forgetting about it. They go directly to designing version 2.0


May have different teams for design and ongoing publishing



Need a “stream” of content

- In-house writers/editors & SMEs (e.g. marketing, tech support)
- Vendors or freelancers
- Repackaged content
- Free content
 - Government (www.ushda.org)
 - Open source (<http://creativecommons.org/>)
- Syndicated content
 - Content “feeds” (<http://www.webgrammar.com/syndicated.html>)

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When content gets old

- Date everything
- Maintain file list
- Delete or maintain (archive)?
 - Delete = broken links, lost information
 - Maintain = need to fix links, revise text
 - Look at stats, Search strings to evaluate usage

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Having inaccurate and/or old content >> damages site's credibility

- File list should include:
 - File name and path
 - Page title
 - Date published
 - Author and/or owner
 - Brief description
 - How often to review (e.g. every month, 3 months, 6 months). May also be expressed as “stability”
 - Importance

Archiving strategies



- Add disclaimer to each old page
 - http://msdn.microsoft.com/archive/en-us/dnaractdir/html/Namespace_Design.asp?
- Create official “archive”
- Bury the content
 - No links on top-level organization pages
 - Remove from Search, indexes

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Promoting and evaluating content



- Search engine listings
- Newsletter email
- Using statistics and feedback to understand content preferences

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Search Engine Optimization (SEO)



It's all about WORDS.

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Steps in SEO



1. Identify key terms
2. Add terms to site
3. Submit site to Search engines
4. Get other sites to link to yours

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1. Identify key terms



What are the 4-5 key terms for my business/org?

- Take customers' point of view
- Look at Search logs for site
- Competitor sites
- Check terms in www.overture.com (free) or www.wordtracker.com (paid)

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2. Add key terms to site




Where to include key terms:

- In text on page itself especially in headings, lists and links
- Page TITLE tag
- Page DESCRIPTION tag
- Keyword META tag
- ALT description of graphics
- File and folder names
- Also helps if URL includes 1+ key term

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TITLE & META tags




<TITLE>Trade Printery—Full-service, custom commercial printing in Seattle, Washington </TITLE>


<META name = "description" content = "Trade Printery is a full-service, custom commercial printing company in Seattle, Washington. Our services include printing signs, posters, brochures, business cards, letterhead, and political pieces as well as binding and finish work.">

<META name = "keywords" content = "printing; Trade Printery; commercial printing; trade printing; trade printery; Seattle;">

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Page TITLE appears at the top of the browser window...

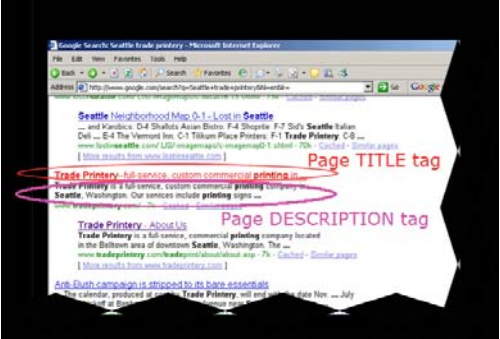




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Page TITLE & DESCRIPTION appear in Search results...





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3. Submit your site



- Google, Yahoo—most important
- MSN, AskJeeves, AltaVista
- If you pay, you get faster & guaranteed inclusion
- Make sure you follow instructions exactly
- To find out if you're already listed:
 - Install Google toolbar or go to www.Google.com and type cache:http://yourdomain.com/
 - Other sites: search for exact URL

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Exercise



What 2-3 key terms would you use for:

- Bellevue Mind*Body Fitness Center
- Real estate agent specializing in view properties on the Eastside
- Video store in Fremont specializing in hard-to-find, foreign films

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Email newsletter



- Purpose
 - Alert readers to new content
 - Encourage repeat visits to site
 - Promote special offers
 - Build relationship with customers, increase loyalty

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<http://www.webcontentdesign.com/wcd/Newsletters/Newsletters.asp#samples>



Email guidelines

- People should **choose** to sign up.
- Make the text very **concise and scannable**. Avoid puns or mysterious teasers.
- Include both **time-sensitive** information and **reference** information.
- Take extra care with the **Subject:** line, and make it eye-catching and informative.
- If the mail is long, list headlines at the very top of the mail.

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Look at samples on class site as guidelines are discussed:

MSNBC:

Pros—Headlines informative, descriptions concise, subheadings helpful, clear unsubscribe info, ad clearly marked, shows what email address newsletter was sent to

Cons—Subject line not compelling, ad at top, From line enigmatic, doesn't have a specific name associated w/it

Contentious.com

Pros—Labels different kinds of content (announcement, feature), provides useful content (top 5 qualities of online content pro), identifies specific person, unsubscribe instructions, uses basic formatting (upper/lower case, asterisks) to make text readable

Cons—Subject line not compelling,

Motley Fool

HTML version

Pros—Catchy main headline, but doesn't follow through, summaries are informative

Cons—Headlines are teasers and don't tell you which is actual article vs. ad for report, also, style interferes with substance ("Breakfast with the Fool: Apple Juiced"). Need to be familiar with website categories ("Fool on the Hill") to understand what categories refer to. Doesn't provide URLs (probably because it's in HTML), not clear how to unsubscribe

Email guidelines (cont.)



- Use **plain text**.
- **Spell out URLs** for subscribers who like to print out the newsletter.
- Include easy-to-follow, easy-to find instructions on **how to subscribe and unsubscribe**.
- Clearly **label ads** and visually separate them from editorial content.
- Use a real name on the **From:** line .
- Include the **recipient's actual email address** in the body of the newsletter.

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Web statistics



Depending on your Web server, you can find out:

- # of page "requests" or "hits"
- # of unique individuals
- Length of time on site
- What page or site user has come from
- Keywords
- User browser & OS
- # of repeat visits
- # of recommendations
- # of printer-friendly versions


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Statistics example



General Statistics	
Date & Time This Report was Generated	Sunday April 29, 2001 - 13:36:25
Timeframe	04/23/01 00:00:00 - 04/29/01 23:59:59
Number of Hits for Home Page	N/A
Number of Successful Hits for Entire Site	1749
Number of Page Views (Impressions)	429
Number of User Sessions	101
User Sessions from United States	0%
International User Sessions	0%
User Sessions of Unknown Origin	100%
Average Number of Hits per Day	249
Average Number of Page Views Per Day	61
Average Number of User Sessions per Day	14
Average User Session Length	00:09:19

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Customer feedback

- Customer comments
- Surveys
- Search entries -- indicate missing or mislabeled content
- “Rate this page” and reader bulletin board
 - <http://msdn.microsoft.com/workshop/design/color/hess10092000.asp>
- Implicit evaluation
 - # of times page is sent to a friend
 - # of times page is printed out
 - www.cnn.com > top story > “Most Popular” link

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Customer comments can provide content ideas, and point to problems. Remember that comments are usually negative.

Surveys can be sent in email, posted on site, or even folded into “feedback” page.

Search entries can tell you what people are looking for, as well as the terms they use to look for them.



Copyrights

- Can't borrow or adapt content
- Copyright covers expression of ideas, not ideas themselves
- Not the same as plagiarism
- Can quote others under “fair use”

From Farkas appendix

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Web makes it **very easy** to copy text, graphics, other content

Example: Copied photo for turtle article, screen shots

Even if material doesn't say "Copyright," still not ok to copy.

Can copy material in public domain (published in US after 1923), but should still attribute

"Deep linking"



=Linking to a page in another site deeper than the home page

- Read linking guidelines for site
 - Ex: http://www.3com.com/corpinfo/en_US/legal/linking.html
- Include description of site with link
- Don't use other site's logo (unless required)

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"Deep linking" (cont.)



- Be especially careful about linking to competitor site
- For commercial sites, consider making explicit agreement.
- Don't use frames to mislead

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Getting website experience



- Create your own site
- Volunteer to help with nonprofit sites
- Offer feedback to sites that might need help
- Submit articles to special-interest sites

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Finally



- Thanks for a fun class!
- Don't forget to fill out evaluations.
- Expect feedback in 3-4 weeks.

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