- DAY 1 -
Website Design and Project Planning

Objective

This module provides an overview of the concepts of website design and a linear workflow for producing a website. Participants will outline the scope of a website project, including subject categories and content for web pages, and design a site architecture plan.

Why Create a Project Plan?

Producing a website that conveys a clear message requires thoughtful pre-planning and conscious attention to the details of the site. A project plan provides a framework for the creation of the website. It should focus on the needs of the site visitors and, if carefully planned, can be used as an outline that will keep your project from growing out of control.

1. Defining the Scope of your Site[1]

Creating a scope statement that generally defines your web site is the first step in defining your project. Defining the scope entails both outlining the general purpose of the site and defining the audience.

A. Stating the **general purpose** of the website will help start the creative process.

   i. Website Category

   ii. Website Purpose

   iii. The website theme is a brief statement intended to get you thinking in the general ballpark. Examples follow.

      a   Professional/Informational
          http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/nchomsky/home.htm
          (example: My website will support the curriculum of my program and provide students with convenient access to class materials and resources.

      b   Community-based or Educational
          http://www.idealist.org/
          (example: The theme of the Deschutes Watershed web site is to educate residents about watershed news and encourage community members to get involved in protecting water quality.)

      c   Personal
          http://www.100portfolios.com/data/Still2/hl.html
          (example: The theme of my website is to post pictures from my trip to France.)

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1 Reference: Johnson, S. 2001. Creating Good Websites. http://www.leafdigital.com/class/.

B.   Define the target audience[2]
      The design of your web site should take into account the needs,
      skills, and interests of all users who visit the site.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- **Occasional users** rely on clear structure, overviews, visual cues, and
  graphics that help them remember where they are in your site.

- **Regular visitors** want quick access to information, fast-loading text
  menus, detailed and organized navigation, and site indexes.

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   i.   Knowledge Level
         How much knowledge do you expect your audience to
         have?

   ii.   Visitation Frequency
         How often do you expect people to visit your site?

   iii. Geographic/Cultural Considerations
         Is your audience local, regional, national, or international?

         a   Language: colloquial or multi-lingual translations

         b   International dates

   iv.   Accessibility

         a   What browser, monitor size, bandwidth do the majority of your
               users have access to?

         b   Does your audience have visual impairments?

   v.   What is the personality of your audience?

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2 Reference: Johnson, S. 2001. Creating Good Websites. http://www.leafdigital.com/class/

2. **Content Outline**
When outlining the content of your website put yourself in the place of a typical visitor and ask yourself …

- what information would I want?

- what would be the most logical way to access that information?

- how might I easily get confused or frustrated and give up?

A. **Website as Tootsie Pop**
How many licks does it take to get to the center of a tootsie pop? It's hard to say, but we can determine how many clicks it will take a user to get to the core information they're looking for in your web site.

i. Pay attention to how many layers (or clicks) deep you keep important information.

ii. Think about creating shortcuts to frequently used information so that folks who like to "crunch" can get to the center from the front page.

B. Create **Content Categories** to organize the different types of information you will offer on the website into individual web pages. For example, let's say that the theme of your website is to provide support for your program's curriculum and provide students with convenient access to class materials and resources. It will also serve as an additional means of peer-to-peer communication and faculty-to-student communication.

  i. One category might be for a **class calendar**

  ii. Another category might provide the **syllabus** for the program.

  iii. Another category might be for the **reading list**.

C. The **supporting content** provides greater detail for each of the content categories.

  i. Continuing with the example from above, the supporting content for each category might be as follows.

    a For the **class calendar** you might post a listing of dates, times, and locations for classes, seminars, and field trips.

    b For the **syllabus** category the supporting content might be an outline of the quarter's lesson plans with links to lecture notes or supporting material.

    c For the **reading list** category the supporting material would be a list of the books needed for the class.

  ii. Write for the web

    a Web audiences scan, they don't read.

      (a) Organize content into small, stand-alone groupings (http://www.berkeley.edu)

      (b) Keep language simple, clear, and concise

      (c) Use bullets and numbered lists

    b Keep content relevant to the page category.

    c Consider your audience

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3. **Page Layout and Thematic Considerations**

A. Site Architecture

i. The site architecture is a hierarchical diagram depicting all the link relationships between the web pages of your web site.

ii. Hierarchical Levels - When designing the architecture it may be helpful to organize your pages into tiers or levels.

    a **Home page**

        (a) Designed to give a synopsis of the contents of the entire website and to entice visitors to delve deeper into the site.

        (b) The home page provides a convenient way to navigate the rest of the site.

        (c) The most effective home pages are compact and organized in their layout, offering regularly changing links to fresh content.

    b **Secondary pages**

        (a) Design can be different than the home page as long as it retains enough in common to be recognizable as part of the same website.

        (b) Typically focused on one subject.

        (c) Incorporates key information to help visitors easily identify the exact page location in the website. This can be as simple as a title on the top of the page, or highlighting the navigation link of the visited page.

> **Maintain consistent navigation on every page to avoid confusing your visitors.**

B. Page Layout

i. Different Types of Navigation Links

    a Graphic Links

    b HTML Links
(http://www.brown.edu/webmaster/learning_acunits.html)

ii. Navigation Bar Layout Possibilities

    a Vertical: http://www.wellesley.edu/,

    b Horizontal: http://www.whitman.edu/

    c   Drop-down or Flyout: http://www.carleton.edu/

    (a)   Used when complex and long list of links are needed.

    (b)   These are technically more challenging to construct and require careful planning to organize information in logical categories.

    d   Redundant Navigation: Many sites today use both text-based and graphics based navigation

IS YOUR SITE EASY TO USE?
Check out these links to learn more about site functionality.

- http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/

- http://www.useit.com/

- http://www.buddyproject.org/tool/design/3layout.asp

C.   Graphic Design

The best way to decide on what you want in a site design is to discover what you do and don't like in other sites. When you find a site that you like, refer to it for inspiration.

    i.   Color

    ii.   Typestyles
    Type rules are different for the web than they are for print.

    a   Serif (typically used for large titles, usually presented as a graphic)
    Times New Roman is an example of a Serif Font

    (a)   (http://www.brown.edu/

    b   San-serif (typically used for smaller headings and page text.)

    c   Using fonts as graphics

    d   Using HTML fonts (limitations)

    iii.   Technical considerations

    a   Cross Browser and Operating System Compatibility

    b   On every page include

    (a)   informative title,

    (b)   author or institution name (including contact information),

    (c)   creation or revision date,

    (d)   Include the "home page" URL or link on major menu pages (This is often a logo image)

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Exercise : SITE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

Break into small groups, and do the following.

1. Design the architecture of your site and organize the pages hierarchically.

   ✓ Sketch a site architecture "map".

   ✓ Indicate all the pages of the web site and how they are linked to one another.

   ✓ Indicate names of links and .htm page titles.

2. Design the website's look and feel
   Sketch 2 page design prototypes including navigation appearance for the home page and secondary pages of your website.

   ✓ Indicate color, images, and type styles.

   ✓ Indicate the layout of the navigation. (Horizontal and/or Vertical, text-based and/or graphical, flyouts or no flyouts, graphic-based or text-based.)

   ✓ Indicate link appearance (such as rollovers, underlined links, link color, etc.).

   ✓ Try vertical and horizontal navigation. Experiment with text placement.

   ✓ Indicate color schemes

   ✓ Describe graphics