

Assignment: Consider Navigation

What's good, what's bad?

Navigation: This means how a person moves through a web site. How easily can you find the thing you are trying to find?

Visually appealing design, Good aesthetics is different from good usability and user-friendly **navigation**. As designers and visually gifted people, we often put beauty (things which are visually appealing, and interesting, and just plain cool) before other practical concerns. That approach sometimes makes a bad website, because it doesn't function well. Viewers get frustrated and impatient and leave.

Please read this article which examines several web sites and **analyzes the navigation**. Some of the sites have been changed and updated as a result of the article, but you can still see them, and notice the changes. While you are reading, just click on the subheads to open the sites.

<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2012/03/26/an-analysis-navigation-portfolio-websites/>

While you read, please make lists from this article ...

- List seven things that are bad for usability in navigation, and
- List seven things that are good for usability in navigation.

ASSIGNMENT: Website Critique

Find a website that takes a traditional print design paradigm and turns it on its head, ignores it, or otherwise changes it. In other words, **a website that's more than just visually pleasing**. This is an intentionally wide net, and could include things like:

- A website that uses the scroll bar or scrolling in an interesting way
- A website that uses search (which is impossible in print) in an interesting way
- A website that contains animation in some useful or brand-promoting way
- A particular part or detail of a website that has an interesting way of interacting

Write a brief critique of the website or the specific part of the website and type to turn it in, and you will also present this site, demonstrate what it does, and talk about it to the class next week.

Your critique should be in the following format:

1. Critique: [Website name]
2. Address: [Website URL]
3. Website's purpose: [Write a one-sentence description of the website's reason for being.
Example: "This is the portfolio site for a New York web designer."]

4. How it breaks a print paradigm: [Write a short description of what the site does that's innovative or interesting. Example: "The site is just one long scrolling page, instead of many different pages."]
5. One thing it does well: [Something that helps extend the brand or message, or helps the user achieve a goal. Example: "It's really easy to see her portfolio work, because it's all right there without having to click."]
6. One thing it could do better: [Something that's hard to use, visually unappealing, or detracts from the brand or message. Example: "The navigation text is too small and hard to read. It looks great but it's not legible."]

(This assignment is from Jim Webb at Acquent Gymnasium)

Additional references, you are welcome to read:

Teenagers, a statistical Study on what they like, how they use web sites:

<http://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-of-websites-for-teenagers/>

<http://designinginterfaces.com/2011/06/01/designers-that-code-a-response-to-jared-spool/>

EXCERPT FROM: Why Should You Learn to Code?

By Ben Gremillion

Literacy in any computer language, from simple HTML to complex C++, requires dedication not only to the technology, but to changes in the technology. There's a reason HTML5 ends in a number. When enough browsers support HTML6, developers will have new things to learn.

Possible reasons to put yourself through the learning process include:

- The thrill of it: some people just like to learn new skills.
- To understand what's possible: a developer says "it can't be done." Do they mean it's impossible? Or that it's more trouble than it's worth? A designer says "I want it to do this." Did he or she just give someone a week's worth of headaches? Can technology be used in a more appropriate way?
- To gain confidence: People think that if they master a language then computers will intimidate them less. That is usually the case, but remember, it requires dedicated practice.
- Necessity: There isn't always someone else to call when technical problems arise, and they will arise. When problems must get solved, there's a time to pass the buck and a time to buckle down, & solve it.

HTML is not CSS. CSS is not PHP. PHP is not WordPress. WordPress is not server administration. Server administration is not fixing people's clogged Outlook inboxes. Yet I've been asked to do all of that. Me, armed with my expired Photoshop certificate and the phrase "I don't know, but maybe I can help...."

Those without code experience often don't differentiate between one (fog-of)-squiggles+and+acronyms; or <another/>. Not that we can blame them. Remember what it was like before you threw yourself into learning web design.

Best way to learn:

- finding a topic that interests you;
- getting incremental rewards
- learning without getting overwhelmed.

Knowledge of code is empowering. Reputation as a coder is enslaving. At least both pay the bills.