

(Although this was an Exam, you can gather some of the things I learned in New Media Production concerning web site design.)

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Exam 1

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- 1) Primary navigation are controls that allow users to get anywhere on the site. These controls are consistent throughout most pages of a site, and are presented in a sidebar, or tool bar to the left, right, or top of a page. Primary navigation controls are in a standard position on every page of the site so that users can find them easily. Secondary navigation may not be included on all pages, but is usually the main focus of specific pages rather than being placed into a sidebar. Secondary navigation usually appears in the main section of the page that users pay most attention to. Secondary navigation provides fast routes for users to get to specific information and usually contains some detail about the contents of each (sub) section so that users can choose where they want to go. Secondary navigation may also include site maps and search pages.
- 2) Usability refers to how user friendly, or the ease at which a reader can use a website. Usability is about making your website in such a way that your site users can find what they are looking for quickly and efficiently. Usability is essential to your website because if it is incorporated well, usability can increase user returns and if carried out poorly it can deter users from your website. Some keys to great usability are easy navigation, pages that download quickly (using CSS), retrievable information that benefits users who scan by incorporating headings, link text, bold text, and/or bulleted lists, and by not placing restrictions on users; the most common example being every time a link is opened in a new window the back button which about 60% of web users employ as their main source of navigation is disabled. Disabling a user from using the back button, bookmarking a page, printing, etc. can all damage the usability of a website. I actually visited the Cardiff Contemporary homepage in addition to the printed version given on the backside of the exam and the usability is rather poor on this site. On the actual site there is one side list that would be normally considered a side bar but other than hovering your mouse over the phrases there is no indication that those are links to another page. All the text looks the same in font and color other than the logo and first heading so it's hard to judge where to go for further navigation. In the first to last sentence there is an actual hyper link: "Art Cardiff website" that is not bolded or underlined and I happen to come across it by accident. This website is very limiting and they haven't even included a search bar, for those users who may be coming to the site for specific information. There is nothing present that even invites the reader to explore the website further. There is also no back button navigation, you can go forward but not back unless you click the prior subtopic on the side menu. Overall, I can imagine many users becoming easily irritated or frustrated and leaving the site.
- 3) The original eyetrack study showed how consumers read a printed newspaper page and in May 2000 the results of an online equivalent was released. The eyetrack study measured things like eye

fixation, movement/tendencies, and attraction. Eyetrack I had 90 participants and used the same content from 3 different newspapers to create a broadsheet prototype to mimic the look of the paper. Eyetrack II studied 67 readers (33 from St.Petersburg Times and 34 from the Chicago Sun-Times) online readers. All the participants said they read online news at least three times a week and were asked to bring digital bookmarks with their favorite news web sites so they could browse them. Eyetrack III studied 46 online readers in San Francisco. Each of the readers observed mock news websites and real multimedia content for 1 hour. The fourth study used the largest sample size of 582 readers, who viewed live local newspapers and web sites with timely, relevant content rather than prototypes over a five-day span. Because of the differences in methodology and participants each eyetrack study presented a different variation of findings. Major findings of Eyetrack II suggested that online readers view text first, and then turned to photos and graphics. Photos attracted more attention than graphics. Reading was shallow but wide, meaning participants viewed about 75% of most articles they selected to read. Eyetrack III found readers eyes fixated in the upper left of the page before going left to right across the remainder of the page. Navigation elements at the top attracted a lot of attention. Dominant headlines drew the eye first (larger headlines drew more attention than smaller ones. It also found text not photos were the entry point into homepages, shorter text received more attention than long, and ad placement affected views: larger ads got more attention than smaller ones and ads in the top left portion were viewed the most. Eyetrack 4 found readers read deep not wide, and more story text was read online versus print. Online readers do more scanning, while sidebars and lists boost reader-understanding. Online readers are also drawn to navigations elements and readers like documentary style photos and not staged photos. Some of the findings did turn up in more than one study and they give us as designers as rubric to go by. If we want to attract a reader we should use larger bold text in the headline, and if we decide to incorporate a picture it should be real/documentary style and not photo shopped or an edited image. Also if there is something that we want many users to view or we think is important it should be placed in the upper left hand region of the page. Designers should also use navigation efficiently and effectively because readers are attracted to it and depend on it. As designers we should use the findings as basic guidelines to structure a successful web design, although it's ultimately up to our interpretation of how we want the site to look. Although the eyetracking studies did produce a variation of results the findings are often questioned and the methods are critiqued. There are drawbacks because the findings were results of essentially different studies so there are certain biases present.

- 4) A website such as the Drudge Report can be both influential and ugly because although its design is rather simplistic, without much of a color scheme and the typewriter style font could be deemed ugly the site has been around for some time, has been successful, and is high in the amount of traffic it brings to the site. However, this does not mean that design does not matter. Although it may be ugly to some the layout of Drudge is its design works. Drudge has a purpose, which is to direct its users to other sites for particular stories. It doesn't need to be too over the top, a simple design like this allows readers to seek out information they are looking for and move on. The design actually promotes usability, and it's forever consistent. The pictures and links change daily, maybe even hourly but the layout is always the same, users know what to expect when they go there.

Drudge is also influential because a site like that is inexpensive to maintain and doesn't require a large team to run it. This is not to say that all web designs should follow Drudge's design, but a web site design should be thematic, and have your users and the purposefulness of your site in mind. Who are you targeting with your site and what do you want them to see and be able to do when they visit it? Design encompasses aesthetics and usability; it's the overall scheme of things.

- 5) The Pineland website shows consistency with its color scheme, which seem to be representative of the school colors. In terms of font color, there are several colors used, and the green font tends to be the hardest to see with the background being vegas gold. Also, the navigation tool bar is incorporated on most pages, although there are some that don't display the navigation bar, such as the athletic page. Although the tool bar is missing the back button is enabled so users can get back to the main page. The types of content are all fitting and address issues or present information pertaining to the school district, students, faculty, staff, and parents. Graphics and pictures are used accordingly and the resolution of the pictures seems to be appropriate.
- 6) Color is a tool that can be used as both an organizational tool indicating hyperlinks and tabs, or to create a personality for the website. For this website I don't believe the color choice is effective. The yellow background is very harsh on the eyes and often times a white background can be better. The highlighted text going down the middle is done in for different colors and goes through the middle of the text versus highlighting the entire text, which causes the top portion of the words to fade into the background as seen with "Lower Prices"; text visibility is not good. I would get rid of the yellow background all together. Active links would all be one color in order to show consistency. There is too much back and forth between colors which can confuse the reader if they expect all titles to be in a certain font and color and all subtitles to be in another. Maybe introducing more subtle bold colors instead of electric bright colors or maybe even incorporating the theme colors of the actual store if said store actually existed.
- 7) Design is visual communication, and a well implemented design will help to effectively communicate information to your users with great ease. Visual hierarchy is a way of categorizing information into meaningful patterns that increase communication effectiveness. A grid system can help web designers organize information and keep everything visually appealing and stimulating by means of size, color, contrast, alignment of text, videos, photos, etc., and information proximity, repetition between consecutive web pages, density, and allotted white space. A grid system aids in the visual hierarchy of organizing information in a way that is usable, accessible, and logical to your site users not just using fancy graphics or photoshop.