

INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTIVE OUTREACH BEST PRACTICES FOR LIBGUIDES AND ONLINE PATHFINDERS

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Nedda Ahmed, Georgia State University
Jill E. Luedke, Temple University

Nedda H. Ahmed, Arts Librarian
Georgia State University
nedda@gsu.edu
404-413-2868

Jill Luedke, Art Subject Specialist
Temple University
jluedke@temple.edu
215-204-3166

Composition = Visceral Communication

We can use layout & composition (visual logic) --> visual hierarchy to reinforce/enhance our content & make it more comprehensible to our users

"Badly arranged space is a bit like mis-timed pauses in speech; they can disrupt meaning and emphasis." (Dabner)

Hierarchy of Contrast & Viewer Attention

1. Focal areas
 - created by visual forces such as weight or the dynamics between visual elements.
2. Entry points (F-Shaped pattern):
 - Should be weightier and/or livelier
 - Can also be a focal point
 - Direct & orient the viewer: where to enter the page, where to look first
 - a. Navigation on the left.
 - b. Main content a bit further in on the left.
 - c. Most important stuff between 1/3 and 1/2 way across the page.
 - d. Secondary content goes on the right.
3. Rest areas
 - Helps user understand hierarchy of content.
 - Design with white spaces in mind.
 - Include harmonious images
4. Uniformity
 - Set up user expectations
 - Increase usability (and decrease confusion)

Color

"Using color for color's sake can be counterproductive, since sometimes using one color is more effective than using many."

- Advancing/Receding: Warm colors advance, cool colors recede
- Contrast: Perception is based on the color in relation to its background color
- Vibration: Complementary colors of equal weight produce a vibration

- Weight: Blue-greens look lighter, reds appear stronger & therefore heavier; can play w/ saturation to change the weight of a color
- Meaning: “Color should contribute by bringing an added association of meaning & feeling.”
 - a. Reds = fire, intensity, vibrant, advancing, aggressive
 - b. Green = spring, youth, environment, calm (**causes less eye strain & nerve strain than any other color!**)
 - a. Yellow = sun, light, luminosity
 - b. Blue = sky, water, brightness, clear, cool, peace, distance
- Harmony/Discord:
 - a. analogous color schemes create harmony
 - b. complementary color schemes create movement, vibrancy... discord?
- Proportion:
 - a. a small amount of a saturated color can have a big impact than using equal proportions of 2 complementary, lower saturated colors
 - b. equal amounts of complementary saturated colors create unpleasant visual discord

Color can be a way to unify guides across disciplines; wide variations in color schemes between guides can be jarring and confusing for the user & decrease usability across guides.

Writing for the Web

Concise – cut in 1/2, then cut in 1/2 again

Objective – leave out the b.s. and library jargon

Scannable – formatted for the screen

Basic Rules:

- On the average Web page, users have time to read at most 28% of the words during an average visit; 20% is more likely.
- Web users spend 80% of their time looking at information above the page fold. Although users do scroll, they allocate only 20% of their attention below the fold.
- Think in terms of sound bites, not paragraphs.
- Don't explain anything that's readily apparent to the user once they click into the resource.

Other techniques for increasing readability:

- The inverted pyramid style, starting with the conclusion
- Highlighted keywords (hypertext links serve as one form of highlighting; typeface variations and color are others)
- Meaningful sub-headings (not "clever" ones)
- One idea per paragraph (users will skip over any additional ideas if they are not caught by the first few words in the paragraph)
- Credibility can be increased by high-quality graphics, good writing, and use of outbound hypertext links

Making Text Scannable:

“If you cram every page with dense text, readers see a wall of grey & will instinctively reject the lack of visual contrast. Just making things uniformly bigger doesn't help. Even boldface fonts quickly become monotonous: if everything is bold, then nothing stands out 'boldly.’” (WSG3)

1. Prioritize
first 2 paragraphs must state the most important info; inverted pyramid style

2. List
use bulleted/numbered lists whenever possible instead of sentences/paragraphs
3. Distill
ONE idea per paragraph
4. Link
linking increases credibility
5. Illustrate
a picture is worth 1000 words; appropriate illustrations/images also increase credibility... NO Animation!
6. Emphasize key words
highlight keywords & create meaningful sub-headings; start headings with information-carrying words to put users “on the scent”
7. Design!
“A page dominated by poorly designed or overly bold graphics or typography will also distract or repel users seeking substantive content. You will need to strike an appropriate balance between attracting the eye with visual contrast and providing a clear sense of organization.” (WSG3)

Designing Text:

Italics

1. Use italics for book or magazine titles—or within text for stressed or foreign words and phrases.
2. Avoid setting large blocks of text in italics because the readability of italicized text, particularly at screen resolutions, is much lower than in comparably sized roman (“plain”) text.

Bold

1. Gives emphasis because it contrasts in weight from the body text.
2. Section subheads work well set in bold.
3. Boldface text is readable on-screen, though large blocks of text set in bold lack contrast and therefore lose effectiveness.

Underlining

Underlined text will be confused with a hypertext link.

Color

1. Readers will assume that colored text (within a text block) is a hypertext link.
2. Works well as a subtle means to distinguish section heads
3. Choose dark shades of color that contrast with the page background
4. Avoid using colors close to the default web link colors of blue and violet.
5. Watch out for color-blindness: to emphasize text use bold formatting as well as color.
6. Be sure that there is sufficient contrast between the background and text on your page.

Capitals

Words set in all capitals should generally be avoided—except perhaps for short headings—because they are hard to scan.

Fonts

1. Be consistent. Pick one font for body text & one font for headers/emphasis if you want some variety.
2. Fonts have individual personalities. Don't use Comic Sans.

3. Sans serif fonts (tahoma, verdana, arial) are easier to read on-screen than serif fonts (times new roman, georgia).
4. Size matters.

Width

1. Optimum number of characters to a line is somewhere between 60 and 72. (Dabner: 84-5)
2. LibGuides default box widths are very helpful in preventing lines of text from getting too long.

Image Resources

Free Web Images

- CompFight - <http://www.compfight.com>
- World Images - <http://worldimages.sjsu.edu>
- Own institution's image collections

Free for Scholarly Publication (check their Terms and Conditions)

- Victoria and Albert Museum - <http://collections.vam.ac.uk>
- British Museum - http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_this_site/about_this_site.aspx
- ARTstor - <http://www.artstor.org/what-is-artstor/w-html/services-publishing.shtml>

Screencasting Software (just a few)

- *Jing* - <http://www.jingproject.com>
- *Snagit* - <http://www.telestream.net/screen-flow/overview.htm>
- *Camtasia Studio* - <http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp>
- *Camtasia for Mac* - <http://www.techsmith.com/camtasiamac>
- *ScreenFlow* - <http://www.telestream.net/screen-flow/overview.htm>
- *Captivate* - <http://www.adobe.com/products/captivate/>
- *ScreenCorder* - <http://www.matchware.com/en/products/screencorder/default.htm>
- *ViewletBuilder* - <http://www.qarbon.com/>

About Screencasting

- ANimated Tutorial Sharing Project (ANTS) - <http://ants.wetpaint.com/>
- Screencast Central - <http://screencasting101.com/>
- software comparisons - <http://lifehacker.com/5410229>
- "Online Tutorials" (Wikipedia) - <http://tinyurl.com/2dpnf99>
- "Screencast" (Wikipedia) - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screencast>
- Screencast.com - <http://screencast.com/>

Screencasts – Why Use Them?

- Provide 24/7 access to instruction.
- Allow users to learn at their own pace.
- Simplify How-do-I's.
- Provide consistent/standardized instruction.
- Prevent overload of textual/visual information.

Screencasting Best Practices - Content

- Standardize/Uniform/Consistent
- Provide outline or TOC at the beginning
- Start basic and work towards advanced

Screencasting Best Practices – Delivery

- Smooth mouse movements.
- Pause cursor before clicking on next link.
- Conversational language.
- Keep it short (under 3 minutes).
- Break up long casts into shorter ones.
- Clear clutter from Desktop and Toolbars.

Other Cool Stuff

Concept Mapping:

- <http://www.mindmeister.com/>

Other Guide Creation Apps:

- SubjectPlus: <http://www.subjectsplus.com/> (free!)
- Library á la Carte: <http://alacarte.library.oregonstate.edu/>

Chat/IM:

- Meebo: <http://www.meebo.com>
- Pidgin: <http://www.pidgin.im/>
- Plugoo: <http://www.plugoo.com/>

Pet Peeves/Other Basic Rules of Thumb:

- DO personalize
2 user exp. Studies found that without personalization, guides were less likely to be used (J. J. Little article)
- DO make URLs user-friendly
- DO add tags & keywords (to increase access)
- DO update regularly
- DO include a chat/IM widget
- DON'T use library jargon
- DO borrow, but DON'T steal (i.e., ask!)

Why is Design Important?

Don Norman: *Emotional Design*: “Attractive things work better”

- Attractive things → Being happy → broader/more creative thought process
- Anxiety/stress causes thought processes to narrow & focus—frustration!

3 Components of Product Design:

- Usability
- Aesthetics
- Practicality

3 Levels of Design:

- Visceral
 - APPEARANCE: look, feel, sound
 - Automatic, prewired, sensory, rapid

- Behavioral
 - Pleasure & effectiveness of use
- Reflective
 - Self-image, self-satisfaction, memories
 - Beauty

If everything works right, you get Seduction (think of "The Starck Juicer": how a design maintains effectiveness over time)

- Enticement: initial attraction through an emotional promise
- Relationship: continually fulfill the promise
- Fulfillment: end the experience memorably

Additional Readings

- Donald A. Norman: *Emotional Design*
Basic Books: New York, NY / 2004.
- David Dabner: *Graphic Design School: A Foundation Course in the Principles & Practices of Graphic Design* (3rd Ed.)
John Wiley & Sons Inc.: Hoboken, NJ / 2005.
- Patrick J. Lynch and Sarah Horton: *Web Style Guide* (3rd Ed.)
<http://www.webstyleguide.com/wsg3/index.html>
- Linda Stone
<http://www.lindastone.net/>
- Useit.com: Jakob Nielsen's Website
<http://www.useit.com/>
- Daniel Terdiman: "What Websites Do to Turn On Teens"
Wired magazine / February 8, 2005.
<http://www.wired.com/culture/lifestyle/news/2005/02/66514>
- Jennifer J. Little: "Cognitive Load Theory and Library Research Guides."
Internet Reference Services Quarterly, 15:53-63, 2010.
- Sara E. Morris & Darcy Del Bosque: "Forgotten Resources: Subject Guides in the Era of Web 2.0."
Technical Services Quarterly, 27:178-193, 2010.
- Maribeth Slebonik and Catherine Fraser Riehle: "Creating Online Tutorials at Your Libraries: Software Choices and Practical Applications." *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 33-37,51.
- Paul Betty. "Creation, Management, and Assessment of Library Screencasts: The Regis Libraries Animated Tutorials Project." *Journal of Library Administration* 48, no. 3/4 (2008): 295-314.
- Educause Learning Initiative – "7 Things You Should Know About Screencasting."
www.educause.edu/eli.

- Sharon Yang. "Information Literacy Online Tutorials: An Introduction to Rationale and Technological Tools in Tutorial Creation." *The Electronic Library* 27, no. 4 (2009): 684-693.
- Ethan Ehrenberg and Nadaleen Tempelman-Kluit. "Library Instruction and Online Tutorials: Developing Best Practices for Streaming Desktop Video Capture." *Feliciter* 49, no. 2 (2003): 89-90.