

# Developing a UAF website

## Step 1: Evaluating a UAF website

\*NOTE: You can address these questions yourself. Or, you can request a site audit from Marketing and Communications. The audit is slightly more comprehensive although based on the same set of questions.

During the evaluation process, it is highly recommended that you take the time to:

1. **Review all e-mail you have received from people commenting on your site.**  
Doing so will give you specific information on where your site has problems.
2. **Study the web statistics and comments sent about your site** if they are available. You will quickly see what the user trends are: What pages are visited most often; how your users get to your pages; what browsers the majority are using; are users having issues with certain areas; is there any confusion; do people request more information about anything; etc.

## GUIDELINES

### UAF Web guidelines

- A. Does the site use the official UAF banner?
- B. Is the name of the unit large and near the top of the page?
- C. Is the unit's contact information provided, including address, phone, fax and e-mail on every page?
- D. Is there a last modified date on every page?
- E. Is there a contact name on every page?
- F. Is there a contact e-mail on every page?
- G. Is the affirmative action/equal opportunity statement included?

### Accessibility

- A. Does the site Meet W3C Accessibility Guidelines through priority 1?  
(<http://www.w3.org/WAI/eval/conformance.html>)
- B. Does the site use ALT and/or TITLE tags, D-links, or LONGDESC for graphics?
- C. Are ALT tags used on hotspots and image maps?
- D. Is there a text equivalent for every non-text element (graphics, video, audio)?
- E. Do links make sense out of context (no "click here"s)?
- F. Do pages have TITLE tags that make sense?
- G. Do pages have META tags (keywords and/or description)?
- H. Do the pages have a DOCTYPE? (This is set automatically for web pages on Roxen, UAF's content management system.)
- I. Is there alternative access to information for pages that are inaccessible?

## **DESIGN**

### **First impression**

- A. Is it clear whose site it is?
- B. Does the home page make you want to explore the site more?
- C. Is there a consistent interface (design) throughout the site?
- D. Does the personality of the site fit the intended audience or the personality of the unit?

### **Use of graphics/sound/video**

- A. Are the graphics consistently smaller than 40Kb?
- B. Do the graphics/sound/video contribute substance to the site?
- C. Are the graphics/sound/video clearly labeled as such?
- D. Do the graphics/sound/video serve a clear purpose?
- E. Do the photos have photo credits?
- F. Are there any copyright violations?
- G. Are there any broken images?

### **Content/Information**

- A. Does the site content achieve its intended purpose?
- B. Is the content timely and accurate?
- C. Is the text easy to read?
- D. Is the site free of any spelling errors/typos?
- E. Is your site free of duplicate information found elsewhere on the UAF site? (Example: catalog, class schedule, etc.)
- F. Are there any unique content/interactive features of the site?

## **USABILITY**

### **Architecture**

- A. Is the site well organized?
- B. Is the site hierarchy/taxonomy appropriate?
- C. Is the file naming scheme appropriate?

### **Ease of navigation**

- A. Is the average time for a page to load under 5 sec. for a 56.6 bd modem?
- B. Can pages be fully viewed clicking the scrollbar less than five times?
- C. Are the user paths clearly defined?
- D. Can a visitor move around the site without getting lost?
- E. Do the pages
  - constrain to a set width (OK)
  - resize with browser (recommended)
- F. Can the site be found using UAF Google search?
- G. Can the site be found using UAF htDig search?

### **Linking**

- A. Do links
  - open new browser windows? (not recommended for most purposes)
  - open pop-up windows using javascript? (make sure an alternative method to access info is available)
  - remain in the same window? (recommended)
- B. Are all links clearly labeled?
- C. Are links helpful and appropriate?
- D. Are links to PDFs and downloadable documents labeled as such, including file sizes?
- E. Is the number of links sufficient?
- F. Is the link color consistent from page to page?
- G. Is the link behavior consistent throughout the site?
- H. Do all links work?

### **Cross-Compatibility**

- A. Mac: Safari, Firefox, Netscape, Opera, Mozilla
- B. Win: Internet Explorer, Firefox, Netscape, Opera, Mozilla
- C. Lynx
- D. Screen Reader

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Would the site entice a visitor to return?

What is the overall impression of the site?

- Great site
- Needs small changes
- Recommend a redesign
- Needs a major overhaul

Recommended changes:

## Step 2: Planning a redesign

Answer the following questions. They will help you to identify your audience, message and overall goals of your site. Identify the people who need to be involved in the redesign process and ask each to answer this set of questions. Making sure you all have similar goals and expectations will greatly reduce problems down the road. Determine a single person who will be the key decision maker and have the final say.

1. **Why do you need a redesign?** Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your current site. Try to keep the strengths, but fix the weaknesses.
2. **What are the goals of your site?** Is it recruiting (undergraduates, graduates, international students, researchers)? Promoting your involvement in the community? Providing raw information? Providing online services? Other?
3. **Who is the target audience of your site?** Students? Faculty? Staff? Alumni? Local community? Visitors? Describe typical viewers coming to your site and what they might be looking for or trying to accomplish.
4. **What “action” should the viewer take when coming to your site?** Apply for admission? Search for information? Become a member? Make a purchase? Other?
5. **Describe how viewers should perceive your new site.** (Prestigious, friendly, fun, corporate, etc.)

6. **Look at other sites of similar nature and list their URLs.** What do you specifically like or dislike about these sites?
  
7. **Determine how much of the content in your current site you will use in the new one.** If you're reusing content, has it been reviewed? Is it current? Or, will the new site be a complete overhaul?
  
8. **Is there a commitment and strategy in place for keeping your site updated?**  
Describe your plan for doing so.
  
9. **What is your target platform and browser?** Marketing and Communications research has shown that the majority of users to the UAF site are using Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari browsers. **Do not make your site browser and platform specific.** Your pages must be viewable to as many browsers and platforms as possible. Make sure your pages load quickly, and if using Flash or Javascript, make sure an alternative method for accessing the information is available. Or, make your pages "fail gracefully."
  
10. **Will you need secure transactions or other special technical services?**
  
11. **Address budget needs.**

## Helpful resources for planning a redesign:

Web Redesign–Workflow that Works

<http://www.web-redesign.com/>

Web Redesign: Workflow that Works

By Kelly Goto & Emily Cotler

ISBN: 0-7357-1062-7

Information on usability testing

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usability\\_testing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usability_testing)

UAF web guidelines

<http://www.uaf.edu/marketing/standards/web/>

## Step 3: Designing and Building Your Site

1. **Create the site's architecture before delving into the design.** Outline the content and plan an efficient linking structure. This is where category names become important because they will eventually instruct your visitor where to go, as well as be the buttons you'll have to design around. Keep in mind the use of extensions in your naming schemes. It is recommended that you keep them the same as one another. (For example, use .html or .htm exclusively or .jpg or .jpeg) Create a flowchart and show it to the site's committee.
2. **Come up with some prototype designs, then IMMEDIATELY do some usability testing.** Use typical scenarios for your target audiences, like how to find a certain book in the library, how to register for a certain course, how to find out about on-site housing, how to find certain research, how to donate to the university, how to get visa information for international students, etc. **It is important that this usability testing be done EARLY in the process to identify problems in design.** You only need to do it with a few people at the start.

**Consider creating a quick text-only prototype.** This forces people to focus on the navigation structure and how the information is organized, instead of on how cool the design is. Focus this testing on ease of finding information and navigating the site. Once the bugs are ironed out of the skeleton, put the "flesh" on it (all the design work to make it look good), and then do usability testing again to see if the design continues to meet your site's goals.

## Resources for Developing Your Site

Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability

By Steve Krug

ISBN: 0-7897-2310-7

Information Architecture for the World Wide Web

By Louis Rosenfeld & Peter Morville

ISBN: 1-56592-282-4

Web Navigation: Designing the User Experience

By Jennifer Fleming

ISBN: 1-56592-351-0

Web Accessibility for People with Disabilities

By Michael G. Paciello

ISBN: 1-929629-08-7

## Step 4: Go Live!

Before uploading your pages to a Web server, and/or moving the site to production:

- Run spell check
- Run a link checker, using a tool such as the following:
  - Dreamweaver link check
  - VSE Link Tester (Program)
  - W3C Link Test - <http://validator.w3.org/checklink/>
  - CyberSpyder Link Test
- Clean up HTML & CSS, using a tool like the following:
  - Dreamweaver clean up HTML command
  - W3C HTML Tidy - <http://cgi.w3.org/cgi-bin/tidy>
  - CSS validation service - <http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/>
- Run an accessibility check, using a tool like the following:
  - LIFT extension for Dreamweaver
  - Watchfire WebXACT - <http://webxact.watchfire.com>
  - W3C HTML Validator - <http://validator.w3.org>
  - BBEdit Markup check site links
- Check UAF web requirements:  
<http://www.uaf.edu/marketing/standards/web/requirements.html>
- Check curly quotes and other gremlins
- Check that colors are consistent from page to page, especially for links, active links and visited links.
- Check that all images (gifs, jpegs, and pngs) appear correctly
- Check photo credits
- Check titles of documents
- Add appropriate META tag descriptions
- Check all downloadables to see if they download correctly, and once downloaded can be opened and printed (if necessary)
- Check phone numbers and e-mail contacts
- Verify information against original copy provided

If you are not using Roxen, UAF's content management system, to develop your site, upload to a temporary area and proof. Provide the URL to your site committee (and others) to proof.

Move from proof area to actual site location, or move the site from the test server to the production server by sending a request to OIT ([helpdesk@uaf.edu](mailto:helpdesk@uaf.edu)).

Announce new site

- on UAFweb-L - <https://lists.uaf.edu:8025/mailman/listinfo/uafweb-l>
- Notify Marketing and Communications web developer ([fyweb@uaf.edu](mailto:fyweb@uaf.edu)) if URLs change and have them updated on the UAF pages
- Send a notice to the Cornerstone at [fystone@uaf.edu](mailto:fystone@uaf.edu)