Let’s be honest. Who scrolls?
What we will cover today

- What SEO is and how it works
- Easy changes that you can make that will improve your search results
What we’re *not* talking about

Some elements of SEO need to be discussed with your web developer.

Some principles to keep in mind:

- Fancy sites that are visually pleasing can be bad for SEO (as well as mobile, accessibility, etc.)
- The more you split your web properties, the more you split your SEO credibility.
Click-Through Rate

Why it’s *really* important at McGill

- As much as 60-70% of our traffic comes from Google.
- That’s almost double the traffic of other sites (according to Google benchmarks)

McGill.ca traffic for the past month
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>% New Sessions</th>
<th>New Users</th>
<th>Bounce Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organic Search</td>
<td>1,653,536</td>
<td>38.00%</td>
<td>948,829</td>
<td>40.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>514,323</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral</td>
<td>225,151</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>58,839</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>30,297</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Search</td>
<td>11,333</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Other)</td>
<td>3,434</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31.92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is SEO?

Have you ever heard of something called "SEO"?

"SEO"... yeah, it's a kind of yarn for knitting, right?
What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of affecting the visibility of a website or a web page in a search engine's unpaid results - often referred to as "natural," "organic," or "earned" results.

- Make your site appear higher up in the search listings
- Tweaking the website to do this
- We’re not going to use paid ads for this
What does this mean for you?

0 Make it easy for search engines to understand your website
   0 This helps people find your content

0 Search Engine Optimization isn’t something you can “turn on” – it’s lots of little changes
How search engines work
(in 60 seconds)
From a link on another website
All about McGill

With some 300 buildings, 39,500 students and 250,000 living alumni, and a reputation for excellence that reaches around the globe, McGill has carved out a spot among the world’s greatest universities.

We invite you to explore some of the momentous achievements of McGill and McGillians. While we’re...
Black hat vs. White hat
Some tips to make your content more readable
Think like your target audience

What *are* people searching for?

Example:

- Almost no one is searching for: "I think McGill university is the best ever and I can't wait to become a wealthy alumni so that I can donate lots of money to them."

- More likely:
  - "What is McGill University's reputation?"
  - "Best universities in Canada"
  - "Universities with biggest community impact" (Still wishful thinking for alumni)
Use the language people use when they look for you

Sometimes slogans, naming and “marketing language” can get in the way of SEO

Example:
0 You name your event: “The event of the century”
0 (Your event is actually about biochemistry.)
0 No one searching for biochemistry events can find your website.
More recently updated websites rank higher

- For McGill, just keeping your website up to date is good.

- Don’t add *unnecessary* content.

- Add news items.
  - Blogs or newsletters are good *if applicable to you.*
Images

0 Use alt text

Alt Text

Description of image

Alt text attribute used in HTML image tag. Providing a description of the image here will allow users with accessibility needs to understand the content of the image.

0 Use captions (if applicable!)

Image Caption

Caption that appears below the image when image is inserted into the document.
Let’s try it

Write an alt text for this image for the University’s new zoo website.
Let’s try it

- “baby panda”
- “cute baby panda”
- “baby panda in McGill university zoo habitat”

Don’t use “keyword stuffing”:

“baby panda zoo news montreal university mating foo jobs national china tycoon widgets blather bang"
Link Love

- Link to relevant websites
- Get people to link to you
- Ask bloggers, authority websites, publications, etc. to link to you
- The more popular the website that links to you, the more “points” you get
Remember: Embed links properly

- Bad linking:
  Click here for more information on the Biology Department: www.mcgill.ca/yoursitehere/more/more

- Good linking:
  The Department of Microbiology holds regular conferences about cell anatomy. Register now!
Your page title is important

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for beginners

Event

25 Mar 2015 12:30 to 13:30

McIntyre Medical Building Room 521, 3655 promenade Sir William Osler, Montreal, QC, H3G 1Y6, CA

How many times a day do you “google” something? So much traffic comes from search engines that it’s worth thinking about how easy (or hard) it is for people to find your web content.
Page title in search results
Your URL is important

- Google likes consistency
  - Keep your website in the same place if possible

- By default, when you change the title in the McGill WMS, your page URL changes
  - Avoid this

www.mcgill.ca/web-101/this-should-be-the-same-as-your-title
Avoid duplicate content

0 This splits your search "points"

0 Also avoid old content.
   0 Old event pages, archives can out-rank your current information.
Some tools to help you on your quest

When you’re testing things in Google search:
Google will actually adjust rankings based on things you clicked on.
  0 Your location affects the search

How to depersonalize Google:
  0 Log out of Google (or open a different browser)
  0 Add: "&pws=0" to your search

SEO results aren't instant. You have to experiment with a lot of things and nudge forward.
Google Keyword Planner

Google AdWords Keyword Planner

Plan your Search Network campaigns and learn what your customers are looking for

Sign in to AdWords

Helps you see which keywords are more and less popular

....and it’s free!
Other resources

0 Moz.com – SEO resources
0 Keyword helpers:
  0 WordStream, Wordtracker, SEMRush, Search Engine Genie, SEOBook and KeywordSpy.
The good news!

Your website is already a little optimized:
- Your website is up to date
- Your content is organized in a way that makes sense
- You are adding “alt” text to images
Keep in mind

Worry about the humans first and the SEO second.
Thanks for coming!

Stay in touch!