Web 101

Planning a better website
What you told us you wanted to learn

“We need a website and I want to do it the right way.”

“My website sucks...I need to start over.”

“I’m just interested and I want to know more about this internet thing everyone keeps talking about...”
Planning a better website

1. Some background on what a website does
2. Setting goals and targeting your audience
3. Identify the scope...and stick to it
4. Content
5. Launch and post-launch
Websites are only *really* for two things

1. Communicating information
   - How to do something
   - How to find you (contact info, opening hours)
   - About your department/company/products/event
   - *Infinite examples*

In all of these cases – we want people to receive our information.
The other thing...

2. Transactions or Action Items
   0 Buy something (the main goal of an ecommerce website)
   0 Register for something
   0 Contact us about something

We want people to do something for us.
Transactions or Action Items

Can you think of transactions or action items that you might find on a McGill website?
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Setting Goals

Often people start with the design phase...

...starting with your website's design is kind of like planning your interior design before you even have a floor plan.
What is the **objective or goal** of your website?

*Hint:* Start with your departmental/business goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An example goal</th>
<th>How your website can help you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce strain on support staff</td>
<td>• Provide information on FAQs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Forms that aid transactions (be careful not to add red tape)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contact information to help route people to the correct person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Setting goals

- Think about the ROI (Return on Investment)
  - A good website requires time and money

- Is a new website really what will help you meet your goals?
Some *not so good* reasons to make a website

* Purely aesthetic reasons
* Internal organizational goals that don’t directly relate to your audience
* You're feeling left behind (the midlife crisis for websites)
Alternatives to building to a whole new website

- Small event/news item → McGill channels event
- Make sure the content doesn’t already exist.
- Does a related website exist → Add a section
- Send an email

*Remember that a website is long term commitment.*
Who is your target audience?

- Students
- Faculty and Staff
- External McGill community members
- Media
Be specific

- i.e. Undergraduate students
  - mainly age 17-23
  - 60% male/40% female

"Anyone who might be interested" is not the right answer.
What does your target audience want?

- Key information
- Register at 2AM without *needing* to interact with a human
- The ability to *find* a human if they need to
  - Open hours and location
- How do I...
- How much is...
- To be entertained. At least little. Where appropriate.
Steve Jobs on pleasing the customer:

“Some people say, ‘Give the customers what they want,’ but that’s not my approach. Our job is to figure out what they are going to want before they do.

People don’t know what they want until you show it to them...Our task is to read things that are not yet on the page.”

First, you give them what they want.

Then if there's room, you try to add on the things they don't yet know they want.
Tools for identifying target audience and “user groups”

- Google analytics (location, language)
- Surveys can help you find out more
- At McGill
  - University wide statistics
  - Learn from others
At McGill, wherever possible you should communicate in both languages.

Laws regarding academic content vs. other content

Frequency of updates?

Whatever route you choose

- make sure you can keep the content up to date
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Identifying Scope

- What features does the site need to include?
  - Relates to transactions.
- What staff will be involved? Who will do what?
- Timeline?
- Who will take care of ongoing maintenance of the website?
  - It's important to establish this from the beginning.
Things to think about while you’re still in the planning phases

What is the approval process?

- Who are the stakeholders?
- Who will have final sign off?
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Key pages and navigation

- Remember those key goals we set earlier?
  - These should inform your most visible pages.

- Generally you want maximum 5-7 "top-level" pages.
Creating a sitemap

- You don't have to capture *everything* at once.
- Remember a site will change with time.
Organizing the Information you already have

Examples:

- Mission statement
- Organization chart
- Contact information
- Opening hours
- Event information
- Ongoing news updates/timely information
- “How to” information
Activity: Do a card sorting game

1. Take an information that you have or want to include.
2. Get key stakeholders or your team members involved.
3. How does this information fit together?

This is especially helpful if you’re reorganizing a website.

Let’s try it!
## Organizing Information

A new faculty website.

For each item, where does it fit and **why does our target audience care?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homepage</th>
<th>About</th>
<th>What other categories?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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OK...now how do I get this stuff online?

Two main options at McGill

- McGill Web Management System (based on Drupal, a Content Management System)
- The “build your own” version
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>McGill WMS</th>
<th>Build Your Own</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free (in terms of hosting,</td>
<td>Price varies can get <em>expensive</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managements, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less flexibility</td>
<td>More flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is linked to main McGill website</td>
<td>Separate navigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Support available</td>
<td>Need external tech support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
McGill Web Management System

1. Contact IT
2. They will set up a "staging" site
3. Go live
Build Your Own site

0 Will you be working with an external development firm?

0 IT can set you up with a "Virtual Host Site"

   0 Yoursite.mcgill.ca

0 Who will be maintaining it going forward?

0 You generally want a Content Management System (CMS) and can work from an existing website template.
Some things to remember

0 Design is always subjective
0 Make sure your site is accurate and easy to navigate first
Some things to remember

There's no such thing as "done"

“People keep asking me what I think of it now that it's done. Hence my protest: The Web is not done!”

--Tim Berners-Lee - World Wide Web Founder
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

- “SEO” gets thrown around a lot
- What matters is that much of McGill's web traffic comes from Google searches.

What you need to know:
- Use language and keywords that others would use to find your website.
- Sometimes marketing language can get in the way. Be straightforward.
- Google search rank likes stability.
Mobile friendly website

It's a multi-screen world and we're just living in it.

What you need to know

- Test your website on multiple cell phones and screen sizes.
- McGill WMS is 'responsive' by default.
Post Launch

- Don't let the weeds get out of control!
- Try to set calendar reminders to look at the site for:
  - Broken links
  - Dead images
  - Stale/out-of-date content
- Don’t forget about your goals!
  - What metrics will you be using?
  - How often will you check in?
Things to remember

0 Think *transactionally*
   0 *What are your goals?*

0 Always keep asking – does my target audience really care about this?

0 After I post this online – what will my maintenance plan be?
More resources

0 We can help!
mcgill.ca/web-101

0 IT is available for technical assistance.
Questions?

Thank you for coming!

If you need to get in touch with me:

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