UF | UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

University Relations

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Web Services Advisory Committee
Chair's Notes
July 8, 2013

Members Attending:	Visiting:
Dan Williams, *chair*	Robyn May
Anne Allen	
Jeanna Mastrodicasa	
TJ Summerford	
John Donaldson	
Kathy Fleming	
Jeff Stevens	
Allen Wysocki	
James Ayres	
Ken Osfield	
Margaret Fields	

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Chairman Dan Williams followed the agenda as presented.

A.   Social Media Official Use Policy and WCMS/Terminal Four – Update

The IT Policy Council has blessed both the Social Media Official Use Policy and the Web Content Management System with Terminal Four. Dan is scheduled to meet with Elias Eldyire on Monday to determine the timing and next steps.

Dan mentions that the university officially has a mobile app., titled "The University of Florida."

Ann Allen said that so far in the soft launch, there are about 10,000 downloads.

Jeanna Mastrodicasa mentions that the mobile app was advertising to students in the Gator Times. The mobile app group conducted focus groups with students to determine what they are and are not using and were able to receive good direction from those meetings. Jeanna says one of the challenges is that you can link through the mobile app. to pages that are not mobile-friendly. As we move forward, she believes things will improve.

Anne states the mobile app. is available for download via iTunes and GooglePlus.

Jeanna says the app. includes a directory, RTS, Dining, Emergency Info, Libraries, Campus Map, Social, Calendar, News, IFAS, eLearning, Gator Zone, Video, Make a Payment, IT Alert, and this list can be reorganized.

Dan continues to say the Social Media Official Use Policy is already posted. We are still working on getting a master-posting place on the General Council's site where we will put all of our standards and policies in a single place which I think will give them more credibility and also make them easier to find.

Dan asks the committee if there are any questions on what has been discussed so far.

Jeanna said that Mobiquity came and did an all-day workshop with people to determine what the users really use and find useful on a mobile device. From the staff perspective, Jeanna enjoys being able to approve payroll and time on a mobile app.

B.   Subcommittee Reports

*Web Policy Subcommittee – James Ayres (**Web Policy Subcommittee**) reported on behalf of Debra Amrin. He mentioned in the last WSAC meeting, the committee discussed the Accessibility Policy. They decided the current policy was inadequate. They had also discussed enhancing the UF Accessibility page to include examples, guidance, and resources. The Subcommittee is going to meet to discuss what the policy will looks like and also review also schools' policies.

Anne Allen stated the university does not have a policy that exists to update. In the last meeting, the committee discussed the Competing Accessibility Policy that is outdated. The committee went over it and deemed it wrong and unnecessary and they want the seeds to create a new policy, so it has been removed from the website. As a reaction to that we've created a third-level domain called "accessibility.ufl.edu." The main content providers for that will be Ken Osfield and Jim Gorsky.

Dan asked Anne when she believed the site would be completed.

Anne responded that she is unsure of the completion date. She is getting everyone together in the next week or two to hold the first meeting.

Dan asked Anne about progress on MADE@UF.

Ann said her group is still negotiating for the space. Gador was at Microsoft in Washington for the better part of last month so he has just returned. Anne said however the technical training is progressing and the faculty members are working quite diligently.

Dan asked if there were any other reports from Subcommittees.

C.   UF Homepage

        Suggested process going forward:
        1. Review target audience and content data
        2. Review specific goals for the site
        3. Select 3-5 graphic themes that represent the image we are trying to convey
        4. Meet with 160over90 to discuss branding platform

5. Prepare recommendations for IT Policy Council

Dan discussed the new branding campaign for the university. He stated the projected launch for the overall branding campaign shall be January 2014. We will probably see creative sometime in October. Dan wants to invite representatives from 160over90 to come to one of the WSAC meetings and talk to the group about the strategic approach that they have in mind which we will ultimately want to adapt to at the least the graphic direction we take on the homepage. So far, the committees have been very pleased with what they have seen from the agency; they are really on top of their game and doing good creative work for us. They jumped in on the Online Institute because we have such a short deadline required by the legislation and have really turned out some nice work in a very short period of time. They are in the process of opening an office downtown and are taking over Randy Batista's space. We will actually have people from the agency locally in Gainesville.

Dan continued to say that his big concern is that we are going to launch a really effective branding campaign, create a lot of awareness for the University of Florida and drive traffic to things like our homepage. There is a lot of concern out there for the entry points that people use to contact the university or communicate with us. There has been a lot of atrophy in most of the entry points over the last five years because of lack of budget. It has become critical for us to get something done on the homepage.

Dan mentioned that Jeanna's group completed a lot of research on audience and content as seen in the "University of Florida home page content subcommittee report" dated "September 2012". Copies of this report were distributed to the committee.

Dan directed the committee's attention to the whiteboard in the room which contained a summary of Jeanna's committee's report: context categories including key audiences, recommended roles, and recommended categories. Dan wanted to be sure that the committee was still comfortable with the categories and asked if anyone believed key roles, audiences, or categories were missing. He also mentioned he wanted to spend some time with the committee looking at other university websites that we believe may be similar to where we may want to go. (see attached?)

Jeanna said that some of the items listed are pretty high-level, for example, "Alumni and Friends". At some point, it is really easy to dilute that and come up with fifty different categories of "friends". Her committee tried to keep it pretty significant. The difference between "Current Students" and "Future Students" is one of the most important items. The messaging is very different for future students, and that is a primary audience. "Parents and Families" is an intentional audience. These people fall into other categories, but "Parents and Families" are the ones who spend a lot of time on our website.

Dan stated that as we launch the branding campaign, there will be a substantial uptick from all of these audiences and especially media. The media will want information from us, and it's not always easy to track down the people that provide that through our homepage. We have a challenge before us that is very critical to the success of the branding campaign in many ways.

Jeanna said when meeting with 160over90, they talked her into purchasing their book, "Three and a Tree". Jeanna passed the book around the room. They have a discussion on university homepages, and she thought they had a nice perspective, and they also make it humorous. Jeanna mentioned the book can also be downloaded free via iTunes. The book helped Jeanna understand more about the agency's approach to the branding concept.

Dan mentioned that he appreciates how 160over90 tends to drill things down to their very essence; this has been the key to their success with many of their campaigns, i.e. Nike, Mercedes, UCLA. They have found one or two words or a phrase that galvanizes the idea of the university or the business. The university is decentralized that it has been very difficult to find the focal point. A large part of their discovery process has been to try to understand what that might be. In the exit meeting, the agency told Dan that apparently there was a surprising amount of consistency which was not expected. Dan is looking forward to seeing what their strategic plan looks like in the next month.

Anne Allen asked if "University of Florida home page content subcommittee report" will be expanded to include opinions from all groups that we are targeting.

Jeanna recommended that the aforementioned report be complete before moving to the next level.

Anne asked if this was something 160over90 was going to do.

Dan responded saying that we would be responsible for a large part of the website.

Ann said she has asked for the metrics related to the website's current use as she would like to add it to the report.

Dan stated he believes the largest single user was students going to their email, and that is not what the homepage should be being used for. Do we want to try and redirect that traffic to some other point? Some of the homepages we have reviewed do not even offer that sort of an option; students go somewhere else for email access. We really need to determine what we are trying to say and what sort of impression we want to make when someone first arrives at the site. We need to determine the basic points of information that they need to be able to identify very quickly.

Jeanna mentioned she liked the categories listed at the top of the FIU homepage: http://fiu.edu/. She said she likes how the "Apply Now" is very prominent and said it's a little more difficult for our students to find on our homepage.

Dan said he is beginning to notice on the better websites very large images and a very visually engaging experience when you first land on the site.

James Ayres argued that the large images exist without any real context and are ineffective. TJ sited Notre Dame's last redesign as an example. The statistics indicated there was a 0.02 click-through rate (CTR) on the first image and then with the later images, the CTR dropped significantly.

Dan asked the committee what does a top ten university homepage look like and what are the trends? If we are going away from this kind of look, where are we headed? For "top ten", Dan said he has been using the U.S. News and World Report list. Five of the top ten universities are California system schools. If you look at the top ten universities' homepages, they are not great. However, those universities are already in the top ten. For us to be able to break into the top ten, we have to do something better than what those schools are doing. One of the things that we have to pay a lot of attention to is not what these sites look like now but what the trends are pointing to as far as what people are looking for. We have a fairly diverse audience base. There may be one audience that thinks a site with large images is impressive, while a younger audience may not be interested in seeing this kind of site anymore. We have to tailor what we do to our fairly broad audience base.

James asked Dan if 160over90 is completing user-interface (UI/UX) testing or do they have the data for that testing? He stated he is wary of the traditional university approach for websites which is the

design by committee idea. He would really like to see the data that explains what people are looking for when they visit the homepage. In the future, we could make sure these users by-pass any extra stuff on the site to get to what they are seeking.

Jeanna mentioned she has an interest in exploring what users are searching for in the search bar at the top of the homepage.

→ **ACTION:** Anne to send out updated metrics to the committee. Anne requested that any special requests for metrics be sent to her.

Dan discussed Farmers Insurance's University of Farmers campaign. When you landed on their homepage, the character actor that is the professor in their commercials was sitting behind a large executive style desk as the president of the university. The professor made a brief statement and then there were links near the video that you could click to explore the different aspects of the insurance offered. Dan appreciated the site because it pulled you in, and it was entertaining. It made you feel like you were personally being addressed by the University of Farmers. Our committee should probably be reviewing private sector sites and not just university sites, because that is where the progress is being made.

James responded saying his research has lead him to believe that if you create a bottleneck for frequent users where they can bypass the necessary components, then you avoid advertising to yourself.

Robyn May showed the committee different university websites on the projector screen:

University of Wyoming | uwyo.edu

Jeanna said she had viewed this site with her subcommittee and liked the categories listed at the top of the page: Admissions, Academics, Athletics, Research, UW Life, and UW Pride.

Dan said he generally likes when there are zero drop-down menus when hovering and/or clicking on the category at the top of the page. Wyoming's page has drop-down menus when clicking on the category.

Jeanna mentioned that when 160over90 discusses university homepages in their book, the site should not be an information clearinghouse, it should be a marketing website for prospective students.

Dan said that there are more visitors to our social sites versus our homepage, so we need to be thinking about how to integrate social media into our new homepage.

James said if you have the benefit of forced-return users, you do not need to accommodate them as much as someone that is a first-time user.

Margaret Fields asked Anne whether she was able to determine if the customers are external or internal on the metrics.

Anne responded saying she could determine this to a certain degree; she is able to find the geographic location. When the website went to the new template for the homepage, the biggest complaint was that the phonebook was not on the page. Anne made a small accommodation and added it to the site.

West Virginia University | wvu.edu

Dan liked how WVU's template was integrated across all platforms. They are focusing on some of the same categories we are discussing. "Faculty and staff" are singled out as a role on the page. There is a lot of emphasis on the "Apply Now" and "Give Now" link.

Margaret commented on the cleanliness of the site aesthetic.

James said he imagined the statistics on the links at the bottom of the image (links not in view unless the user scrolls down) probably have a zero click-through rate.

Jeanna mentioned she does not like the large drop-down menus because they do not function well.

University of Texas at Austin | utexas.edu

Jeanna discussed liking the categories listed at the top of the homepage: "About UT, Academics, Athletics, Campus Life, Community Engagement, and Research." In regards to "Community Engagement," she said she does not believe the University of Florida celebrates this aspect as much as we could.

James said that the drop-down menus are not too mobile-friendly.

Johns Hopkins University | jhu.edu

Dan said the homepage is simple, but they also have drop-down menus.

James responded saying there are a lot of bad design decisions, but the color palette is very neutral: black, white, and blue which is acceptable. The site is readable, but also your eye is not distracted a lot. TJ did not like the slight change in gradient in the links when hovering with the mouse. In addition, having the focal point be the only point of major color is actually effective for drawing movement to the news article.

Dan mentioned that people have certain expectations about the University of Florida because they have never been on campus before or to our website before. These touchpoints are probably different from what they are expecting to experience. If you start to spread that out across a lot of the contact points like the Welcome Center Experience, the expectations are much higher than what we are actually delivering. When viewing the Johns Hopkins page, he stated he has the expectation of the university that it is right at the ultimate of the medical field. It is highly regarded and looks classy and professional.

Yale University | yale.edu

Dan thought the Yale homepage seemed very dated, most likely because of the vertical navigation bar aligned to the left. However, the page is simple and clean.

James mentioned that it is helpful that the mega menu stays open for a significant number of seconds after moving the cursor off the link, so that the user has time to correct the issue of moving off the link and having to click right away.

UCLA | ucla.edu

Dan mentioned that the UCLA site was probably influenced by 160over90.

James liked how the weather was posted at the top portion of the page.

Dan said one thing that UCLA does a lot with is their high-profile graduates. There are many people you have probably heard of that have graduated from there.

James said he liked the trinity of actions: "Visit, Apply, and Give" highlighted at the top right corner of the page.

Dan mentioned this is one of the most marketing-oriented college websites that he has seen.

University of Minnesota | umn.edu

Dan said he believes the site is an example of a poorly-designed college website.

University of Notre Dame | nd.edu

Jeanna mentioned Notre Dame is also a client of 160over90.

The committee noticed the homepage has a top navigation that leads the user to different parts of one page, i.e. About, Academics, Admissions, and Faith & Service pages.

Bates | bates.edu

Dan indicated that Bates is a small school, and that it may be easier for a smaller school to simplify their content.

Jeanna stated she liked the simplicity of the homepage.

James mentioned he did not believe the homepage is effective. In terms of image, he believes the site is effective because the images scroll through pretty quickly. He said it is simple and clean, but as a result of this, items may prove difficult to find for users.

The Ohio State University | osu.edu

Jeanna remarked that she likes the "Popular: Current Students" section on the homepage where the most popular search terms can be found in a word cloud with larger words being more popular and smaller words being less popular. The word cloud is generated based on what students are searching for during that time of the school year.

Dan said OSU is much more promotional and marketing-oriented versus UF. OSU's University Relations operation is about 5-times larger than UF's.

Jeanna asked James which web sites he cites as examples when teaching web classes.

James responded saying when he taught a web design at a magnet school, he taught his students that the perfect website is google.com. The site has every bit of information in the world, it is a

simple box, and it is easy to see. This is the perfect website, but it is not perfect for UF's homepage. James recommends looking at what our current users have been using and placing weight on what percentage of users – current students, future students, etc. – visit the homepage. James would then weigh how important those users are. He would make sure the items being emphasized on the page are the items that we want people to see the most.

Dan responded that we need to be careful in using current user metrics because the university has a different set of goals that we had a few years ago. We are trying to create a different image for the university, and we are trying to promote more to different audiences. "Peer universities" isn't an audience we would identify officially but it is an important one. Perspective students and their influence spheres i.e. guidance counselors and parents, etc. are an important audience. He stated he believes there is a difference between providing functionality and having an experience. There needs to be more of an experience for the external audiences.

Dan continued to say he believes the private sector is successful in engaging their audiences and making them feel important to the company. Ultimately, a brand has two functions: to stimulate trial and loyalty. We need to start building a relationship with our customers beginning with our website.

Jeanna stated that we have to do a better job of differentiating between brick and mortar and distance students especially in email communication.

University of Florida | ufl.edu

Jeanna mentioned there is a good content on the Facts and Rankings page, ufl.edu/facts, but you have to work pretty hard to find it.

Anne said one of the biggest issues with the Facts page is assigning people who will be responsible for updating and taking ownership of the content.

Dan stated that the News Bureau comes across rankings and numbers on a regular basis as part of their work, and they try to pass along this information to the site.

Dan said that he has heard from the Office of Research that the university does not receive current student facts until a year later.

Jeanna responded saying she believes the admitted class profile is accurate. Marie awaits the final certification from the Board of Governors and that takes up to a year.

   1. Context

The committee reviewed the "Context" information written on the board separated into key audiences, recommended roles, and recommended categories and tried to determine level of importance within categories. Please refer to the "Context" document for this information.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15p.m.

Next meeting: September 12th, 2013 at 3 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robyn May, Senior Secretary