

Chas Cassey

31220166

EDN 205

Website Considerations

TUTOR: Jenni Parker

Introduction

This report presents the importance of preparation, research, implementation and website considerations when creating a website for teaching purposes. It considers the research of reputable academics in the field of web technology. It is important for everyone considering building a website to start with the question, 'who are my audience and what are they specifically looking for? In other words, 'Don't design something for yourself; design it for people who will use it.' (Bluejay, 2012)

(Jonassen, 2008) suggests that technologies can support meaningful learning when students learn with the technology, not from it. Technology cannot teach students, rather, learners teach the technologies (p. 10). With this mandate in mind, I have considered the key elements which are important in the research, design and implementation of my educational website.

Web design and implementation Issues

Before I began engaging in building my website, I researched different website articles, including Ben Hunts, 'Top ten best designed websites in the world 2010' (Hunt, 2006-2012) This author points to web pages being clean, with content standing out, and with good use of imagery. He suggests headings should engage immediately and allow for quick scanning. An important statement I noticed was Ben Hunt's point of making sure your links stand out. I made sure my links were very easy to find, clean and clear to access. For my website banner, I selected a graphic that was representative of a combined year five / six class engaged in music, having fun! Hunt suggests that immersing your visitors in the experience of colourful and interesting images helps to keep them connected to your website. (2006-2012)

Bluejay (2001) emphasizes the importance of ensuring each page in your website has something valuable to offer. He suggests that the prime reason people go to a website is discover something useful or interesting.

A potential implementation issue was considering the computer 'literacy' of my target audience. I created my website pages with simplicity in mind, ensuring that each visitor to the website felt comfortable, informed and engaged. I limited the font types

to three basic styles and did the same with my colour choice. I also reduced the size of some of my graphics and multimedia, as some people may not have access to high bandwidth and therefore slower connection speeds. (MarketingFind, 2005)

An educational website should aim to reach its intended audience with its functionality, by incorporating features that showcase the site as a tool for cognitive learning, rather than passive information acquisition. (Jonassen, 1994) Therefore its designed purpose should always be in focus.

Website Considerations

I began searching for free web providers and listed the following for implementing my website; Yola, Weebly, WikiSpaces, PbWorks and Wix. With a short list of free website providers before me, I started exploring Wix. The first thing that impressed me with this web provider was the huge range of web designs, graphics and imagery, plus the clean layouts. I started to experiment with this web resource but quickly found I wasn't happy with the pictures and graphics that I was able to find for free online. My collection of graphics did not look as great as the graphics in use with Wix WebPages. I also found navigating around in the edit mode a little difficult. My second selection was PbWorks. I was impressed with the ease of navigation and the collaboration possibilities with students editing and blogging, (cooperative learning possibilities) but I didn't like the layouts and presentation. Next I employed WikiSpaces and discovered it was similar to PbWorks in that it wasn't visually exciting to look at, although I found WikiSpaces easy to use and work with. Having used WikiSpaces, I see wonderful possibilities with students and teachers working together on learning projects. I moved onto Weebly and was immediately impressed with the free web layouts and the sub menus tabs. At this stage, I had made the decision to go with Weebly. Finally I began using Yola and found I really liked the simplicity of use and navigation. Although it didn't have some of the features that Wix and Weebly had, (that I really liked) Yola was for me the easiest website to work in.

Some of the design layout issues I had to overcome in Yola were 'white spaces' on my web pages. To overcome this I used the two column widgets. I also utilized Yola's

custom panels to separate each article. This really made a difference to the ease of reading and the design function.

When constructing my home page, I employed some suggestions by Jakob Nielsen on home page usability. (Nielsen, 2002) This author argues that, “a websites homepage tagline must explain what a company does and what makes it unique...” (2002). I made the decision to edit my original homepage welcome statement, “Welcome to the Music That Matters Webpage” and replace it with, “Using technology in the music classroom to explore, create and engage students in learning”. This reviewed statement will let my viewers know what my website is all about in a single statement! I also reviewed my headlines and subject lines, reducing the amount of text to be read.

Conclusion:

Recommendation for teachers

It is important for everyone considering building a website to start with the question, ‘who are my audience and what are they specifically looking for? In other words, ‘Don’t design something for yourself; design it for people who will use it’ (Bluejay, 2012). Careful considerations of web design and implementations using best practice valuable research will reduce the problems building and maintaining websites. Once the purpose of an educational website is determined, the decision to choose a free website provider will be made easier. It is essential that your WebPages have something valuable to offer. Keep each page clean and simple, no distractions like animations and sounds. Always keep your visitors interests in mind, try to create and design pages that will engage them and not you!

An educational website should aim to reach its intended audience with its functionality, by incorporating features that showcase the site as a tool for cognitive learning, rather than passive information acquisition. (Jonassen, 1994)

Reference:

Bluejay, M. (2012). Website Design Tips, from <http://websitehelpers.com>

Hunt, B. (2006-2012). Top 10 Best Designed Websites In The World (2010), from www.webdesignfromscratch.com/web-design

Jonassen, D., Howland, J., Marra, R., Crismond, D. (2008). *Meaningful Learning With Technology*. New Jersey: Pearson.

MarketingFind. (2005). Web Site Design and Implemetaion, from www.marketingfind.com

Nielsen, J. (2002). Top Ten Guidelines For Homepage Usability, from www.useit.com/alertbox/20020512.html