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AMIC-DEUTSCHE-WELLE

WORKSHOP

on

“RADIO and the INTERNET”

at

River View Hotel

on

3rd - 8th of July, 2000

HANDOUTS

by

Klaus Meier
1. Planning and designing web sites

Orientation problems spoil the fun of reading web magazines. Effective antidotes are clear site structures and navigation aids to guide the reader on his way through the jungle of screen pages.

2. Online story-telling

The web presents information in non-linear form: the information is divided into small chunks of text. Author and user can take different paths through the site.

3. Language and words for computer-screen text

When writing for the screen it is important to keep in mind how people read from the screen: Users scan the content of a screen before they decide to give it their full attention.

4. Radio and Internet I: additional value for the user

In the web nothing is broadcast at a specific time only, it is placed there and remains accessible. In-depth specials and topic sites allow themes and projects to be linked, radio archive material to be combined with up-to-the-minute items.

5. Radio and Internet II: multimedia story-telling

Multimedia web packages combine the advantages of the individual media. Text does not dominate, but utilises the strength of the other elements, according to the "judo principle".

6. Radio and Internet III: appetite for communication

The Internet encourages people to take a new pleasure in communication. In order to take advantage of this it is advisable to let the readers get involved in the web magazine themselves and to write for it. Dialogue binds the users, makes them come back.
Orientation problems in web sites

The user does not know

• the size of the whole site, what information it contains;

• which is the best starting point and what the ideal route through the site is;

• how to reach a certain piece of information he believes to be present;

• his precise position within the site or how to get back to a certain point;

• whether or not he has really found all the relevant information given in the site.

Three strategies of user guidance:

→ logical site structure

→ navigation aids

→ a functional home page
Site Structures

1. Hierarchy

2. Sequence
   (e.g. with side excursions)

3. Network structure
The Storyboard

• Assistance in the planning

→ for a modular web-package

→ for the web site as a whole
Navigation Aids

1. Navigation Bar / Navigation System
Navigation Aids

2. Sitemap
The Homepage (Front Page)

the “flagship of the site” should be designed for

→ first-time-users (“Where I am? What does this site do?”)

→ search-dominant users (“Where can I find specific information?”)

→ users looking for current news and events (“What’s up?”)

(users always have the question in mind:
“What can this site do for me?”)

Therefore four features should be offered:

• the name of the station and the types of programs offered (briefly)

• navigation system (at least to the main content areas / top-level entry aids)

• a search feature (search engine)

• the most important news in summaries (with direct links to the respective page)
Online story-telling

--> navigation points (hot words oder hot spots)
    should be self-explanatory and produce tension

--> three types of links

--> two forms of modular presentation
Modular presentation

• on one page ...

• or on several individual pages ...

Example Story

lead

current events
persons involved
statements
parallel cases

persons involved

current events

current events

persons involved

parallel cases

statements
Modular presentation based on a focus of information

- **News and reports**
  - chronological levels
  - persons involved
  - topical/wider context

- **Documentary reports/feature article**
  - perspective-based levels
  - action-based levels

- **Advisory services**
  - service levels (e.g. encyclopaedia, tips, “how-to-do”-rules)
  - experts

Despite any breaking-down of the story, one unit, one story must be recognisable:

→ writing a core sentence

→ The text creator should think “graphically” and bear in mind the processing – the information design – already at the time of carrying out research and writing the text.

→ dividing up information by topic: The individual text parts should not fall apart like a jigsaw puzzle.
The “Philadelphia Inquirer” presents the subject “medical mistakes” by means of several texts which are difficult to read on screen because of their extreme length.

http://health.philly.com/specials/mistakes/

How to tell a story much more appropriately to online multimedia is shown in the same package: In a special area a large amount of text is broken down into brief units guided through links and a pull-down-menu. Especially the six case studies presented in this special are in an exemplary manner written and designed.

http://health.philly.com/specials/mistakes/krt.asp
External Links

Technical possibilities – value to the journalist:

• in the same window

• in a frame

• in a separate window

Qualitative criteria, content:

• designation as “external”

• give context and author of external web site

• direct link to relevant information
  (if possible not only to homepage)

->Problem: maintenance!
Language and Words: Some General Remarks

- Short sentences, but: varying length of sentence (max. 13 to 15 words)
- Not more than one topic per sentence, not too many facts in one sentence
- Clear structure with short paragraphs: not more than one topic per paragraph
- Hierarchical structure of information
- Main points in main clauses, side points in subsidiary clauses
- Use verbs in the active rather than the passive form
- Subject, verb, object
Language and Words: “microcontent”

Web readers first scan the content of a page briefly before deciding to invest their full attention. They want to discover quickly what the essence, the “microcontent” of the page is.

To do this they need:

• headings
• sub-headings
• the first words of paragraphs
• navigation points

-> These structural elements should convey the core of the information and mirror the whole page “in miniature”.

-> They should not contain repetitions.

-> Headings, sub-headings and navigation points should be able to stand by themselves.

-> Extensive use should be made of sub-headings.

-> Lists are also a valuable aid to rapid orientation.

Example: navigation points

good:

• Information on opening hours

bad:

• click here for the opening hours
• further information on opening hours
• the opening hours of the museum vary daily
Eyetracking-Study

Stanford Poynter Eyetracking-Project:

The blocks with figures show the order in which text was read on this front page.

Radio and Internet I:
Additional Value for the User

(1) Public relations and self presentation pages
   - information on the station, programme guide
   - information on the studio team (names, pictures)
   -> really useful to user?

(2) Internet products with reference to one specific programme
   -> supplementing the radio programme

   - used parallel to the radio programme
     • Webcams
     • for Internet topics: tips on surfing from the studio team, discussions on these tips among the listeners
     • for non-Internet topics: users' questions by e-mail; current web updates featuring statements by experts containing additional information for which there is no space in the radio programme

   - used independent of the radio programme
     • archives: all previous programmes are available
     • additional information about the different programmes: background, service, tips, databases
     • Background and services via a mailing list (e.g. recipes, tips)
(3) presented independently of one specific programme:
   In-depth specials and topic sites
   
   -> bundling and repackaging the radio programme

   - Combination of different programmes and features about a particular topic with links to further texts, documents, pictures, etc.
   - combination of individual features taken from various programmes, grouped by topic
   - can be left in the web for several weeks, months, even years
   - should be constantly updated with features on current developments and events
   - theme projects: radio series and an established web address

   -> user can carry out his own research
   -> user participation
Multimedia

Text Foto Audio Video Animation

→ main difference between traditional radio feature and multimedia:
  • no need for text spoken by a reporter
  • background information can be presented as text
  • in audio: only original sound of persons involved
    or “atmospheric” elements recorded on-site

→ combination of text and audio elements: a text and photo feature
  can be complemented by “atmospheric” audio elements recorded
  on-site that are heard when reading

→ Short video sequences should concentrate on essentials; no boring
  short cuts

Good examples for multimedia features: Chicago Tribune
(http://chicagotribune.com/ws/fulllisting/)

    chicago/article/1,,ART-26224,00.html

  • Boxing story: A different dance: http://chicagotribune.com/ws/front
    /0,1413,22,00.html

Good examples for Infographics on the Web:

USA today
http://www.usatoday.com/olympics/ogs/index.htm

MSNBC
The "Chicago Tribune" successfully combines text, video and audio as for example in the story about young women living on the street. In addition to pictures showing the four portrayed women, the surroundings in which they live and short texts about their lives in audio takes, the women talk in audio takes. This makes the story much more authentic and real than a radio feature or even than a newspaper report using only text and pictures.
Community Building: Interactivity

- Communities: group consciousness through communication

- 7 possibilities for communication between authors and users:
  - live chat among readers and with editorial staff
  - discussion forums on particular topics, which can also be suggested or created by users themselves (more serious)
  - general "guest books" in which the users can write whatever they want to (general)
  - pro and contra votes on certain issues (problem: simple query)
  - direct linking of user e-mails to the part of the article in question
    (example: http://www.feedmag.com/essay/es226_master.html)
  - e-mail as a new, direct dialogue between journalists and users
    -> new articles based on selected questions and answers
    (example: http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/cubs(ws)/item/0,1308,41327-42121-43367,00.html)
  - top ten lists as a new form of interactivity that implements the community feeling directly. (example: msnbc.com)
Community Building: Concepts of "Daily Me"

- Personalized title pages: user selects certain categories, headings and topics – on returning to the site the user is presented only with those features he selected on his previous visit.

- A number of user groups with similar preferences is generated; the programme is then distributed via separate channels (sometimes over 100) – each appropriate to the respective group.

  --> Examples: MyYahoo (my.yahoo.com), radio stations "Spinner" and "Rolling Stone" (www.spinner.com, www.rsradio.com); also: chart radio – personalized radio (www.chart-radio.com): Users can program lists of songs (jukebox/"radio made by your own").

- Newsletters inform users about certain topics, previously selected by the user (technical organisation via mailing lists)

- Personalised contents through user productions (providing web space for users); example: www.geocities.com