

# Creating Content & Writing for the Web: A Seminar

## Session Three

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# Welcome!

- Introductions
- Overview of our first session:
  - Format, form, and substance: how these inform content and interact
  - Studies about reading online and electronically: eyetracking studies from the Poynter Institute, studies by usability “guru” Jakob Nielsen and his Nielsen Norman Group, Maryanne Wolfe’s exploration of reading in Proust and the Squid (she is a researcher from Tufts), and others
  - The F scanning pattern that most readers use online: <http://www.nngroup.com/articles/f-shaped-pattern-reading-web-content/>
- Best Practices based on research and usability findings
- Challenges \*\*
- Our Projects

# Today's Session

- \* Content Curation versus Content Creation
- \* Developing Your Content Strategy
- \* Collaborative Content Creation
- \* Editing Content for Online Publication
- \* Using storyboarding and wire-framing to support best practices

# Coming Soon

- Creating Content category/section of the Web Content Development Blog:  
<https://blogs.cul.columbia.edu/webcontentdev/>
- Formal Style Guide(s) specific to the web  
[https://culis.columbia.edu/units/marketing/style\\_guide.html](https://culis.columbia.edu/units/marketing/style_guide.html)  
<https://wiki.cul.columbia.edu/display/LDPDWCM/Style+Sheet+Questions>
- Apps and Tools recommendations on the Web Content Development Blog

# Curation versus Creation

- Curation is trending (Pinterest, Tumblr, some of the ways Twitter can be used, LibraryThing, others...)
- But how does this trend relate to what we do?
  - ▶ Pinterest is becoming an important discovery tool for image-based content
- How does content curation relate to your work?
- Our focus here is primarily on creation but it is important to consider how our content creation enables (and encourages) its curation
  - Digital Content & Pinterest
  - Online Exhibits & Pinterest
  - Descriptive or informational content and wikipedia

# Thinking Strategically about Content

- Elements of a content strategy: content audit, content requirements, appropriate content review cycle, editorial cycle/calendar, who is responsible for what
- First: think about your organization and its needs. Ask hard questions.
- Content Audit
  - From your CMS or using a tool such as [Screaming Frog](#) or your analytics tool
- Tools like Excel allow you to list out pages, using Page IDs (this lets you associate other documents with those pages), Page Title, and URL
- Editorial calendar and review cycle tools

# Collaborative Content Creation

- Goals and audience for your content need to be very clear and understood
- Steps of the collaborative process: pre-writing process, planning and logistics, information gathering, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing
- Don't immediately divide the writing into pieces. Brainstorm and work together on planning the content itself first. This will help create a coherent, cohesive voice.
- If pieces are written by various people, merge them together into a logistical flow and then edit for consistency of voice and tone
- Enthusiasm helps! Collaborative content development can be challenging. Fake it till you make it!
- Expect conflict!
- Recognize up front that there will be many revisions!

# Editing Content for Online Environments

- Editing is tough, time-consuming work
- Editing online content can be even tougher. Polish titles, headlines, subtitles!
- “Slash by half and then by half again” is something you can apply when you edit your own content but might be harder to do when you are working with others’ content.
- Edit for active voice and action verbs.
- Copy edit for paragraph and sentence structure, styles, consistency, flow and brevity. If you have a style guide, this is easier to do.
- Try to put things in logical order.
- If you cannot break through a wall of words with a writer, then try to push that density further down the page by providing a clear and concise intro and list of topics covered.
- Edit for style consistencies and for jargon. Try to clearly explain jargon when jargon must be used.
- Proofread!!!



# Tensions in Content Creation & in Creating Content for an Institution

- Fast comprehension & impatient readers versus capturing readers attention so they read further and return
- Making content scannable when it is complex: when should we make content easy to digest? Our online writing is not always “writing to do.” Sometimes it’s “writing to learn.”
- Marketing and brand-speak versus “real” content – we and our users want “real”
- Creating content and developing content as a team has real strengths and real limitations as well. How does the organization deal with this? Does it acknowledge it or have strategies in place to help?
- “Selling” the importance and benefits of your content within the organization
- Using your organizations frameworks for your content\*

# Storyboarding & Wireframing

- There are a lot of tools for storyboarding and wire framing available
- But you can simply do this using paper and pen/pencil
- Storyboarding is a visual/graphical representation of your story or content. It can be detailed enough to include your audience or a bare-bones sketch.
- A wireframe is also a basic visual guide used to suggest the structure of a webpage. “Structure” could be anything from a user’s path across your content to the hierarchy of information on a single page.
- Thinking of content as a narrative and a conversation, your use of storyboarding or wire framing can help you visualize that conversation: where is your reader speaking or thinking or digesting and where are you providing more detail or more scannable content?