

Hardest Decisions

Melody Group 1

Erik Evangelista, Rodya J. Perez, Kandice Wong

Primary Navigation

One of the primary points of contention our group faced were the options provided in our primary navigation, for instance: where should we put our user-semantic gateways in relation to the general main webpage gateways? What primary navigation buttons in the current iteration are important and need to be preserved, and which ones need to be reformed or consolidated? Our main goal in addressing the primary navigation was to create a selection of links that addressed a broad range of issues while at the same time catering to specific needs. One of the main difficult subtractions was the “Library” link. We understood that the university’s library was a renowned one, but we didn’t feel that it was primary navigation material since it referred to a specific institution rather than something that belonged to a general title page. That being said, we wanted to make sure that the library was accessible from multiple other ways to inform its prestige, for example, under the the current student gateway as well as under the “Campus Landmarks” section of “About UI”. “Arts and Culture” was another link we felt was awkward to have on the primary navigation because it didn’t seem like a primary navigation item that would garner too much activity; for all these sorts of items regarding the culture and livelihood of campus life, we created “Life @ UI” under the “About UI” page, alleviating this issue.

Along similar lines, there were many times where we too trigger-happy on adding items to primary navigation. There was a point where looking at our primary navigation was itself fatiguing and hard to read because of the number of items that were on it, which had at one point included “Life @ UI”, “Library” “Community Involvement”, “International”, “Research”, “Admissions”, “Academics”, “Visitors & Friends” and “Athletics” all in one breath. This triggered heated discussion because one group member thought that “International” and “Athletics” were important to have as cues of discourse whereas another thought that they weren’t as important as an emphasis on the University’s famous library and other points of livelihood on campus. Since we all felt there were different points of interest that needed to be represented, we made the primary navigation categories fairly broad in their expanse, but made sure that the categories within those links well separated and salient, thus guiding users looking for a specific things into broad categories, and then orienting them visually and saliently to a further, more specific division, allowing us to communicate all we wanted to efficiently without compromising the coherence of our primary navigation.

Influences from Other Websites

The influences from all the websites we liked were hard to shake off. Many times when coming up with the redesign, we were almost completely replicating one website’s entire design because we liked it so much. To that end, we not only were blatantly plagiarizing, we were undermining the many other websites that we liked. Oxford University’s websites was one of these websites, where we all immediately became enamored with the extremely minimalist layout, expanded site map, and visible and accessible search function; our first iteration looked almost completely like the website. Expounding upon that, whenever we would take an

abundance of influence from the design of one website, another website would fill us up with all sorts of other ideas from their design, and we became indecisive in what we wanted the final design we wanted to look like. For instance, the University of Hawaii at West Oahu had an abundance of information that was organized very neatly yet densely—in this case, the dense pack of information directly conflicted with the very minimalist design of Oxford's! The other problem stemming from this was the notion that we were essentially creating a collage of different website designs rather than coming up with a holistic and individual one that had a unified architecture and feel. It was only after constant trial and error that we were able to discern a fine balance between all our influences and create a cohesive website. We took the minimalist but condensed header organization Oxford has, juxtapose the University of Hawaii's neat side navigation scheme, and instantiate a layout similar to USC's primary navigation, achieving what we thought was a clean but informative and communicative consolidation of these different designs.

Breadcrumbs and Sidebars

Another decision we had to make was with regards to redundancy and breadcrumb communication. The main problem area was between the "Visitors and Friends" and "Parents" architecture, where both contained information pertaining to visiting the campus, such as "Directions to Campus" and "Campus Map". The problem was the sidebar; in the Parents user pathway, there is a sidebar that contains all the links that a parent user would need, including those directions, and those stay consistent throughout their usage of the gateway. For "Visitors and Friends", however, it's a different sidebar since it's not part of the parent gateway. The question was when users got to the maps and directions page, what would the sidebar display? Putting both parent-pathway links and visitor and friends-pathway links together proved too cluttering, and separating them compromised the space elsewhere on the page. We decided to instantiate different pages of the map and directions page with the same content, but one with the parent-user sidebar when linked from the parent pathway, and one with the visitor-and-friends sidebar when linked from the visitor and friend's pathway. Though this is not economically sound, we had to sacrifice economics for ergonomics in this case.