Updating Your Web Presence: Tools and Tips

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UUA Web Team

#UUsGetSocial
Workshop Outline

Is your website effective? Can people use it, and are they getting the message you think you’re sending?

1. **Follow Best Practices**
   - a. Content
   - b. Accessibility
   - c. Usability
   - d. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
   - e. Mobile-ready Design

2. **Evaluate Your Site**
   - a. Identify Goals
   - b. Determine Metrics of Success
   - c. Analytics
   - d. User Testing

3. **Q&A**
Best Practices for Website Design

Best practices are **systemic principles** that make it much harder to “mess up.”

Use most of your time and energy to make:
- really **clear**,  
  - really **good**,  
    - really **helpful content**.

And then don’t make it hard to use!
Website Content Principles

Content is the core of your website. Be sure your content:
• supports your mission,
• helps your users find what they need, and
• encourages web visitors to engage.

Useful checklists for congregational sites:
• Information to Include (Or Leave Out)
• Peter’s Big Checklist of Considerations
Writing for the Web

• Be task-oriented.
• Omit fluff.
• Assume your visitors don’t know about your group.
• Avoid “insider” language.
• Don’t over-emphasize (bold, italics).
• Avoid instructions. Just make the task clear.

Letting Go of the Words, by Janice Redish
Everyone Scans: No One Reads

People give up on a page quickly. Scanning helps them accomplish their goal.

- Avoid a wall of text.
- Put the most important information first.
- Include white space.
- Use bulleted lists.
- Each paragraph should focus on a single idea.
- Use topical headers.
- Make links meaningful.

Games and Pastimes.
The Romans, especially during the times of the emperors, had a passionate love for performances in the circus and amphitheatre, as well as for chariot races, horse races, foot races, combats of animals, and feats of strength and agility. The daily life of the Roman people may be summed up as consisting of taking their food and enjoying games in the circus (panem et circenses). A taste for similar amusements was common to the Gauls as well as to the whole Roman Empire; and, were historians silent on the subject, we need no further information than that which is to be gathered from the ruins of the numerous amphitheatres, which are to be found at every centre of Roman occupation. The circus disappeared on the establishment of the Christian religion, for the bishops condemned it as a profane and sanguinary vestige of Paganism, and, no doubt, this led to the cessation of combats between man and beast. They continued.

Games and Pastimes.
The Romans, especially during the times of the emperors, had a passionate love for:
- performances in the circus and amphitheatre,
- chariot races,
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- foot races,
- combats of animals, and
- feats of strength and agility.

Gauls and the Roman Empire
A taste for similar amusements was common to the Gauls as well as to the whole Roman Empire; and, were...
Accessibility is not just about making sure that people with disabilities can use your site. It’s about allowing a wide variety of users and devices to use everything you offer.

Make sure your site can be enjoyed beyond your current, known audience.

An accessible site helps every person who uses your site, not just the ones with special needs.
For Example: Why Post Transcripts?

Captions and transcripts...
- help those who can't play sound.
- are good for people who learn better by reading.
- help information be unambiguous.
- make quoting and sharing easier.
- get content into search results.
- allow people to scan the content.
- don’t require special software.
- are critical for the deaf.
Accessibility Specifics

Check your work: turn off styles and images, use your keyboard—does everything still work and make sense?

- Don’t use images in place of text; do use alt tags.
- Caption audio and describe video.
- Provide keyboard controls.
- Use meaningful text for links.
- Check color contrast of text and background.
- Use correct markup for forms and tables.

Cynthia Says is a free web-based tool to find errors.
Usability refers to the ease with which people can use a website in order to achieve their goal.

- Take advantage of common elements.
- Easy-to-use beats fancy.
- Training shouldn’t be necessary (but testing is).
- The most-looked-at part of a page is the content.
- Plain text works better than buttons, fancy colors, large formatting, or anything that looks like an ad.

*Don’t Make Me Think*, by Steve Krug
Your menus, or Information Architecture (IA), should make it easy for people to find what’s on the site.

- Use language and groupings that are obvious to as many people as possible.
- Test it! Let people show you what works and what doesn’t.
Menu Pitfalls

User input and testing will maximize the success of your site’s menus.

• “Evil attractors,” or “dirty magnets,” get clicks for stuff that isn’t in that section.
  – Ambiguous: “Accessibility,” “Education,” “Service”
  – Meaningless: “Resources,” “Tools,” “FAQ”

• Avoid insider language like “RE,” “GA,” or “OWL.”

• Don’t make menu items without content.
Organizing Pages into Menus

- Topic- or task-based menus are usually best.
- Audience-based labels rarely work.
- Format can be useful at deeper levels.
- Alphabetical lists work for reference information.
- Date sorting is good for recent or date-reliant items.
- Putting important items first can be helpful.

It’s okay to use more than one kind of organization.

Analytics may support one approach over another.
Redesigning Menus (IA)

- Perform a content audit.
- Engage in some card sorting exercises.
- Do some tree testing to make sure your labels work.

Getting The Website Information Architecture Right: How to Structure Your Site for Optimal User Experiences
Card Sorting Places Like with Like

- Make one index card per topic or page.
- Have people sort them and name their groupings.
- Try open, closed, and Modified Delphi sorts.
- Check search terms for word prevalence.
Card Sorting Similarity Matrix
Users Agree on Major Groupings

- Principles & Beliefs
  - Social Justice
- Young Adult Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Religious Education
- Adult Faith Development
  - Parenting
- Teachers & Religious Educators
- Tapestry of Faith Curricula
- Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education
- UU Directory
- Giving & Generosity
  - Publications
    - Calendar
    - News
- UUA Finance
- General Assembly
- UUA Governance
- Staffing & Ministers
- Safe Congregations
- Accessibility
- Communications
- Church Office
- Small/Midsize/Large Congregations
  - Finance
- Membership & Growth
- Governance
- International
- Pastoral Care
- WorshipWeb

- Religious Education, Lifespan Faith Development, Faith Education
- Directory
  - Our Association, Churches, People and Events, About the UUA
  - Staffing & Ministers
    - For Congregations, Congregations, Caring in Our Congregations

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Tree Testing to Test Your Menu

• Ask users to find specific answers with non-leading questions.
• Track where they go. TreeJack shows what they try first, where they go awry, where they end up, and how much time their journey took.

Task 1
You need a form to submit your expenses from a recent trip. Where would you look?

Accounting → Financial Forms
Meetings & Travel → Travel & Expense Report

Direct Success: 43 (80%)
Indirect Success: 9 (17%)
Failure: 2 (3%)
Skip: 0 (0%)
Maintaining Your Menus

• Retest menus every few years or when you add significant new content.
• Test sections of the menus in manageable chunks.
• Usability tests can indicate whether a change in *labels* or in *design* is called for ([UsabilityHub](#)).
Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is about making sure your pages are well-formed:

- for the search engines like Google which "index" your site, and
- for the human beings who will see a page full of search results.

Offer a search box for your site on all your pages. SEO works on your custom search too!
SEO: Titles

• Use accurate, precise titles (front-load keywords).
• Search results pages list titles and people scan the first few words (F-Shaped Pattern by Jakob Nielsen).
• Be clear rather than creative.
SEO: Using Keywords

- Keywords are words and phrases that people are likely to search for.
- Use analytics to find out what searches bring people to your site, and what searches they perform on your site.
- Include “incorrect” but popular terms, like “baptism” as well as “child dedication.”
- Use synonyms or related terms in text and headings.

Baptism/ Child Dedication in Unitarian Universalism - UUA
Apr 10, 2012 ... Baptism/ Child Dedication in Unitarian Universalism. Rather than holding Christian-style baptisms, most Unitarian Universalist congregations …
https://www.uua.org/beliefs/congregationallife/worship/.../6976.shtml
Labeled UUA.org
SEO: URLs (Web Addresses)

• Use readable page addresses.
  – [UUA.org/careers/ministers/becoming](https://UUA.org/careers/ministers/becoming) is a meaningful web address.
  – [UUA.org/?node=366](https://UUA.org/?node=366) offers no clues.

• URLs tell search engines (and people) about structure of your site.

• People can edit URLs to move within the hierarchy to more general information.
SEO: Links

• Link to every page, so search engines find them.
• The quantity and quality of links to your pages improve their search engine placement.
  – Add links among your pages.
  – Post links on Facebook, blogs, etc.
  – Encourage links from other sites by having great content.
Mobile-Ready Page Designs

- Mobile (phone and tablet) use has more than doubled from 15% to 29% over the last two years on UUA.org.
- Search engines favor mobile-friendly sites.
- Test your site by dragging the side of your browser window to make it narrower.
- Test all your controls with your keyboard, and remember: touch screens don’t have “hover.”
- Mobile users want all the content: give them your whole site instead of a limited app.
Responsive Design at Desktop Size

Whoever You Are, We Welcome You

Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church is a welcoming, urban congregation that puts Unitarian Universalism into action by celebrating life, nourishing the spirit, and inspiring a commitment to justice. Join us each Sunday at 10:30am weekly.

"Come as you are; become who you are inspired to be."

Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church. Weekly Sunday service at 10:30 a.m.
Responsive Design vs. Not

"Come as you are; become who you are inspired to be."

Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church. Weekly Sunday service at 10:30 a.m.
Choose a Responsive Design

- Page elements should grow, shrink, and relocate based on window width.
- Many content management systems like WordPress, Drupal, and Joomla offer responsive themes.
- Hosted site-builders like Weebly and Google Sites have responsive themes.
- Bootstrap offers free code and scripts.

Make “responsive” your first criterion the next time you redesign your site.
Evaluate Your Website Against Your Goals

Website goals are probably based on your organization’s mission. Your site might need to:

- provide information to members,
- organize tools for leaders,
- welcome newcomers,
- serve the community, or…
- you decide!

Make sure every page supports those goals—or at least doesn’t get in the way of them.
Questions Your Home Page Should Answer

• Who are you?
• What do you do?
• Why does it matter?
• How does that involve me?
• What do you offer?
• Can I find what I’m looking for?

(From The 5 Second Rule: Critiquing the Best Websites of 2009)
Define Success or Failure

What defines success?
• How many people visit a page? How long they stay?
• Clicks on a “call to action” link?
• Page shares, traffic from Facebook?
• Donations made?

What constitutes failure?
• Searching for something you thought answered?
• Leaving the site?

Choose one page, and one or two major goals. Formulate questions you can answer from data or tests.
Analytics and Reports

Traffic data:
• How many visitors?
• Where did they come from?
• Where did they go?
• How long did they stay?
• What browser or device did they use?

Search data:
• What searches brought people to your site?
• What searches did people do on your site
Google Analytics

- **Google Analytics** (GA) is widely used.
- It’s free.
- GA can be added to most sites (but not all, e.g., WordPress.com).
- Start with [A UUA Introduction to Google Analytics](#).

If you haven’t already, install analytics immediately. It’s easy to do, and you’ll be glad you started collecting data ASAP.
Google Analytics Reporting

Audience Overview

- All Sessions 100.00%

Overview

Sessions: 146,718
Users: 96,505
Pageviews: 542,790
Pages / Session: 3.70

Avg. Session Duration: 00:03:36
Bounce Rate: 45.19%
% New Sessions: 53.72%

New Visitor: 48.2%
Returning Visitor: 51.8%

Sessions

- New Visitor: 135,735 (% Sessions: 92.51%)
- Returning Visitor: 1,283 (% Sessions: 7.49%)

Demographics

- Language: en-us

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## Pages with the Most Views
(May-June 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Pageviews</th>
<th>Unique Pageviews</th>
<th>Avg. Time on Page</th>
<th>Entrances</th>
<th>Bounce Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. /index.shtml</td>
<td>542,790</td>
<td>398,807</td>
<td>00:01:20</td>
<td>146,558</td>
<td>45.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. /beliefs/principles/index.shtml</td>
<td>62,231 (11.47%)</td>
<td>49,136 (12.32%)</td>
<td>00:01:16</td>
<td>44,855 (30.61%)</td>
<td>34.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. /beliefs/index.shtml</td>
<td>15,319 (2.82%)</td>
<td>12,662 (3.17%)</td>
<td>00:02:05</td>
<td>4,751 (3.24%)</td>
<td>68.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. /ga/index.shtml</td>
<td>11,790 (2.17%)</td>
<td>9,558 (2.40%)</td>
<td>00:01:43</td>
<td>7,235 (4.94%)</td>
<td>43.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. /directory/congregations/index.php</td>
<td>10,338 (1.90%)</td>
<td>7,972 (2.00%)</td>
<td>00:01:08</td>
<td>5,100 (3.48%)</td>
<td>31.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. /ga/program/book/index.shtml</td>
<td>8,702 (1.60%)</td>
<td>5,687 (1.43%)</td>
<td>00:00:31</td>
<td>836 (0.57%)</td>
<td>38.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. /ga/program/14599.shtml</td>
<td>6,614 (1.22%)</td>
<td>3,818 (0.96%)</td>
<td>00:03:54</td>
<td>1,626 (1.11%)</td>
<td>25.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. /beliefs/welcome/index.shtml</td>
<td>6,545 (1.21%)</td>
<td>3,963 (0.99%)</td>
<td>00:02:31</td>
<td>1,734 (1.18%)</td>
<td>36.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. /re/owl/index.shtml</td>
<td>6,033 (1.11%)</td>
<td>4,779 (1.20%)</td>
<td>00:01:18</td>
<td>915 (0.62%)</td>
<td>56.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. /careers/openings/index.shtml</td>
<td>4,230 (0.78%)</td>
<td>2,856 (0.72%)</td>
<td>00:02:07</td>
<td>2,341 (1.60%)</td>
<td>52.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Goals: Actions You Want to Measure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Id</th>
<th>Past 7 day conversions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clicked a Link to Email any @uua.org</td>
<td>Goal ID 8 / Goal Set 2</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicked a Link to Email <a href="mailto:info@uua.org">info@uua.org</a></td>
<td>Goal ID 9 / Goal Set 2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicked to Another UUA Site</td>
<td>Goal ID 11 / Goal Set 3</td>
<td>1364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicked to Donate</td>
<td>Goal ID 5 / Goal Set 1</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicked to GA Registration</td>
<td>Goal ID 2 / Goal Set 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed the 'Contact Us' Form</td>
<td>Goal ID 10 / Goal Set 2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found a Congregation</td>
<td>Goal ID 1 / Goal Set 1</td>
<td>2825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opened One and One</td>
<td>Goal ID 3 / Goal Set 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time on Site &gt; 5 Minutes</td>
<td>Goal ID 6 / Goal Set 2</td>
<td>5996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed &gt; 5 Pages</td>
<td>Goal ID 7 / Goal Set 2</td>
<td>5476</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sets of Users: Segments

• View reports about specific segments of your visitors.
• Create your own custom segments.
Where People Click (Data from Crazy Egg)

- Site navigation and site search account for almost half the clicks on our home page.
- Newcomer information and congregational search are our next most-used areas.
Content Experiments

• Create two or more versions of a page.
• Each visitor sees one version.
• Google tracks the results against your goals.
Beware Being Misled by Analytics

• Averages can confuse things: are lots doing a little, or are a few doing a lot?

• Be aware of context: take note of site changes, other campaigns, world events, etc.

• Trends can affect your data; take seasonal traffic and the day of the week into account.

• Numbers are estimates: expired cookies and variances in user behavior can affect the totals.

• Analytics can tell us what happened, but we have to figure out the “Why?” (usability tests, surveys)
Running Usability Tests

• Visitors see the site as you can’t.
• Professional help is best, but DIY testing has tremendous valuable.
• Fix problems incrementally—don’t wait for “Project Overlord” to remove frustrations.
• In-person testing is eye-opening and compelling.
• Online testing grants the power of numbers.
In-Person Usability Tests

- Recruit three people to sit with you, one at a time.
- Coach them to think out loud.
- Don’t judge: you’re testing the site, not them!
- Give them 3-6 tasks.
  - Set up realistic scenarios based on your goals.
  - Write clear directions.
  - Avoid leading questions.
- Capture screen and audio for review (CamStudio is free).
- Develop a thick skin, and take pride in your willingness to make fixes.
Watch People Use UUA.org

• Faces catch the eye.
• Fly-out menus can get in the way.
• People scan pages in an “F” pattern, but most look at the page body first.
• “Obvious” things aren’t.
http://smallscreen.uua.org/videos/usability-testing-example
Follow Up with Fixes and More Tests

- 3 people isn’t a representative group.
- Surveys or content experiments can offer larger sample sizes.
- Focus on function, but don’t be deaf to aesthetics.
- Choose people from specific demographics.
Online User Testing

- Choose a page (or mockup) to test.
- Write simple questions (no more than six).
- Keep it short and simple.
- Include demographic questions (age, religious background, gender).
- Don’t ask identifying questions (which scare people off).
- Send your test link to “insiders” or strangers, depending on what you’re trying to learn.
Online Testing Tools

- Feedback Army
- SurveyMonkey
- UsabilityHub
- Optimal Workshop
- Zurb
Conclusions

Follow best practices.
- **Nielsen Norman Group**: Evidence-Based User Experience Research, Training, and Consulting
- **Usability.gov**: Improving the User Experience

Keep it simple: content is king.
Before spending money on redoing your site, figure out what the *real* problems are.

Get feedback to guide your redesign.
- Use card sorts and tree tests for menus.
- Run usability tests on design and content.

Test and improve in iterations.
Questions? Comments?

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UUA.org / websites
#UUsGetSocial Workshops

- How Congregations Can Deepen Engagement Online
- Updating Your Web Presence: Tools and Tips
- Reaching “Nones,” Activists, and Spiritual Seekers
- Digging Into Facebook, Twitter and Video-Making/Sharing

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Get your #UUsGetSocial sticker!