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## The Taming of the Site: Helping Users Find What They Need Where They Expect It

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# THE TAMING OF THE SITE

Help Users Find What They Need Where They Expect It

# Jessica D. Gilbert Redman

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@MLISrevenge  
#tamingthesite  
#NCompLive



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# Did you inherit an **overgrown** legacy site?

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Or has it just grown  
**wildly** over time  
with too little  
pruning?



## ARE THESE **SYMPTOMS** FAMILIAR?

### **CONFUSING**

Users get lost or give up trying to find what they're looking for, creating an increased load on librarian and staff time.

### **OUTDATED**

Users reach out to staff or librarians with questions about information that you discover is old and outdated.

### **UNHELPFUL**

Users either find too little information for their needs or they're overwhelmed by the depth of the information that they see.



## **BROKEN LINKS**

Links that go nowhere or images that are broken.



## **GHOST PAGES**

Pages in your CMS that aren't linked anywhere on the site or are duplicates of live pages.



## **WAYWARD NAV**

Competing menus or misleading wording/jargon that confuses users instead of guiding them.

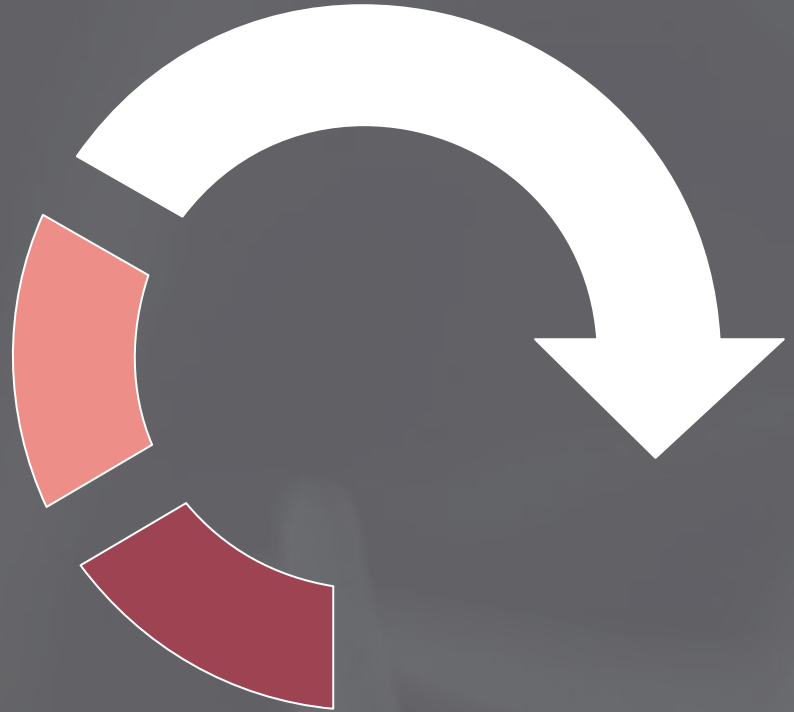
“Content is a hairy,  
complicated beast.”

—ERIN KISSANE / *The Elements of Content Strategy*

# SO LET'S DO A CONTENT AUDIT!

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Multiple reviews  
to make sure you  
know what's  
going on with  
your site.





# REVIEWING YOUR CONTENT IN THREE STEPS

## BACK-END IA

Audit each page that shows up in your CMS

## FRONT-END NAV

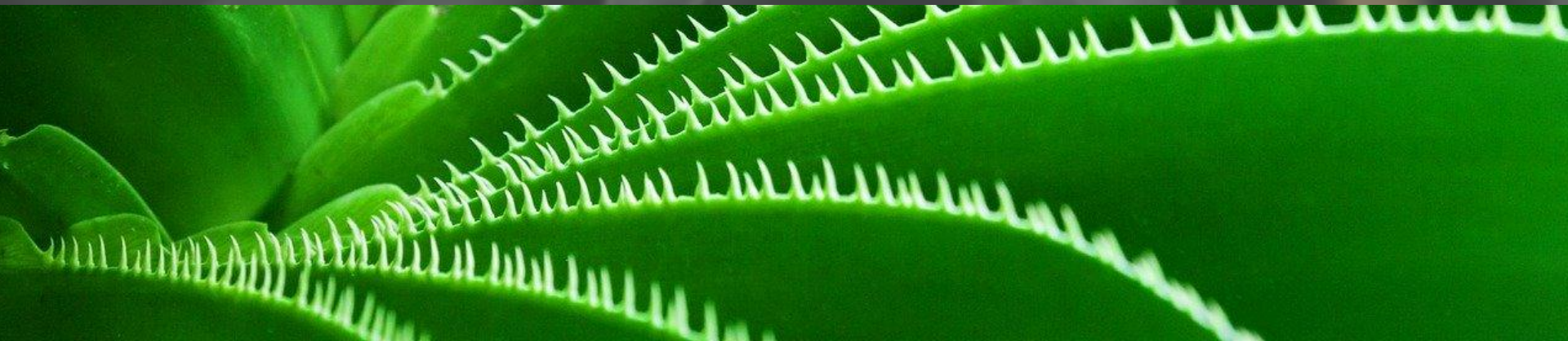
Walk through your site a page at a time and document your findings

## CONTENT

Make note of what you find on each page

**DON'T BE TEMPTED  
TO HAND THIS OFF**

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# MAP YOUR INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE



Follow the directory structure of your site within the CMS that you use to carefully construct a faithful outline of the site structure.

- Create an ID that tells you which level you're on.
- Maintain separate levels as you go down into directories.
- Do not skip any pages, even if you know they are not being used.

# THIS LOOKS **COMPLICATED** (BUT IT'S NOT)

| ID      | Level 1 - Home | Level 2 - Landing | Level 3 - Section         | Level 4 - List            | Level 5 - Detail        | Link  |
|---------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 0       | Home           |                   |                           |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu">https://library.und.edu</a>   |
| 1       |                | about/            |                           |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/">https://library.und.edu/about/</a>   |
| 1.1     |                |                   | access-services/          |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/">https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/</a>                                   |
| 1.1.1   |                |                   |                           | access-services-forms.php |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/access-services-f">https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/access-services-f</a> |
| 1.1.2   |                |                   |                           | circulation.php           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/circulation.php">https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/circulation.php</a>     |
| 1.1.3   |                |                   |                           | forms/                    |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/forms/">https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/forms/</a>                       |
| 1.1.3.1 |                |                   |                           |                           | adjunct-faculty2015.pdf | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/forms/adjunct-fac">https://library.und.edu/about/access-services/forms/adjunct-fac</a> |
| 1.2     |                |                   | committees.php            |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/committees.php">https://library.und.edu/about/committees.php</a>                                       |
| 1.3     |                |                   | contact.php               |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/contact.php">https://library.und.edu/about/contact.php</a>   |
| 1.4     |                |                   | deans-message.php         |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/deans-message.php">https://library.und.edu/about/deans-message.php</a>                                 |
| 1.5     |                |                   | departments-and-branches/ |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/about/departments-and-branches/">https://library.und.edu/about/departments-and-branches/</a>                 |
| 2       |                | ask-a-librarian/  |                           |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/ask-a-librarian/">https://library.und.edu/ask-a-librarian/</a>   |
| 3       |                | az.php            |                           |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/az.php">https://library.und.edu/az.php</a>   |
| 4       |                | borrowing/        |                           |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/borrowing/">https://library.und.edu/borrowing/</a>   |
| 4.1     |                |                   | ill/                      |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/borrowing/ill/">https://library.und.edu/borrowing/ill/</a>   |
| 5       |                | computing/        |                           |                           |                         | <a href="https://library.und.edu/computing/">https://library.und.edu/computing/</a>   |

“There will come a day when you’ll find yourself casually typing out ‘1.2.1.2.1.1.1,’ and at that moment, a fellow auditor somewhere in the universe will ring a tiny gong for you.”

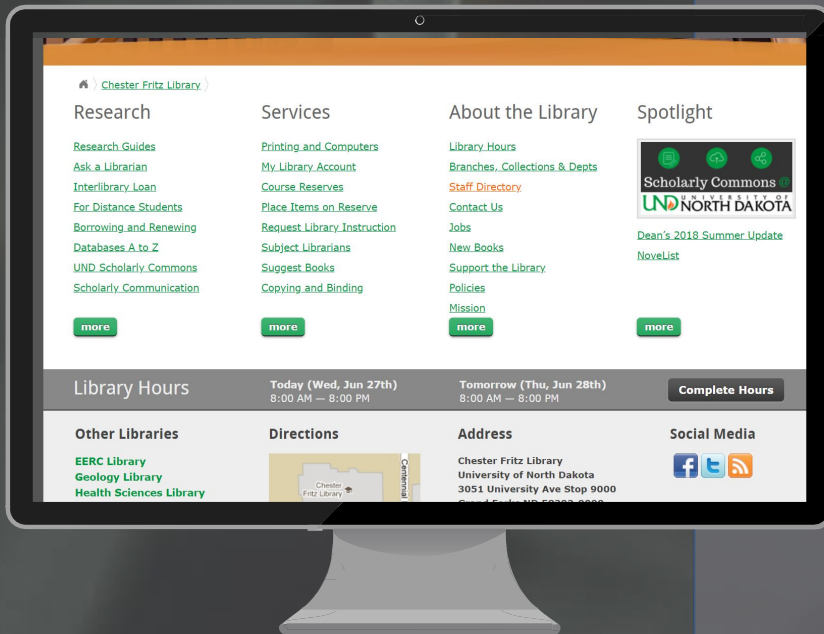
—LISA MARTIN / *Everyday Information Architecture*

# MAP YOUR NAVIGATION



Follow the navigation structure of your site on the front end that users are seeing and using every day.

- As before, create level-specific IDs to keep your site's front-end structure clear.
- Include all links in the menu structure **and** all links on the page itself. You want to know how traffic is being routed around your site.



# NAVIGATION IS TRICKY

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Sites use different types of navigation systems, and some may be harder to trace than others. If you are careful and thorough for this part of the project, it'll help you find everything in one pass.

# KEEP TRACK OF CONTENT



Do this at the same time as your navigation review or shortly after. Your goal is to look at every piece of content on your site. Again, time-consuming but worth it!

You are looking for

- broken links
- missing images
- misspelled words
- too much information
- too little information
- outdated information
- confusing wording
- anything that gives you pause



# CONTENT REVIEW

## NOTES

- Keep notes as clear as possible.
- Think about your eventual audience. If you're the only one who'll see these notes, you can be as silly or irreverent as you want. If you're going to show them to others, "WTF?! Ha! Definitely NO!" is probably not going to cut it.
- Note anything that you think of while you're on each page, no matter how small it seems.
- Consider whether content would be better converted to another method of information relay.

### NOTES

Link to contact form is broken. Where did that graphic even come from? It's too low-res.

This needs to be completely updated. Nothing is current

Remove image of Bob from this page.

**Who wrote this?! None of this is helpful. Delete this page.**

Can this be converted into a research guide? This information should be updated more regularly than we can do on our site currently.

# BRINGING THE STEPS TOGETHER



Compare the pages that you have in your IA audit to the pages you found live on your site. What isn't accounted for on the live site?

Find any duplicated pages or information and make a special note of where it needs to live. You don't want the same info in multiple places.

Carefully consider your site structure. IA should inform your navigation, but not necessarily rule it. Consider spreading out and doing user testing.

# CONSIDER ALL YOUR DATA



## DIG IN

Don't be afraid to be stringent about your choices. Sometimes too much is just too much. Sometimes content or information needs to be pruned to make it better for your users.

Again, need to know, not nice to know!

## CONSIDER OTHER DATA

What other data do you have at your fingertips? Can you see any analytic data about where users are coming from? How long they are on specific pages? What are your most-visited pages? Least visited?

Whatever info you have will help!

# HOMEPAGE CONTENT

“Everybody wants a piece of it. [...] As a result, the Home page is the waterfront property of the Web: It’s the most desirable real estate, and there’s a very limited supply.”

—STEVE KRUG / *Don't Make Me Think, Revisited*

# CONTENT: FIND THE OWNERS

Chances are, your site is now too large for you to manage all content upkeep on your own. Now that you have a full content audit and know what pages you're keeping, it's time to start looking for content owners.

- For each page, consider who should be in charge of checking it on a regular basis for updates, missing or outdated information, etc.
- Consider a schedule for updates to maintain fresh information: is this twice a year? Once a quarter? What works for your group?
- Decide how you want content change requests to work. Do you want to set up a form for colleagues to fill out with errors? Think about content workflow and life cycle.

# CONTENT: MEET THE EXPERTS

Here's the fun part! Now you get to meet with the content owners and help them figure out how to create content for their pages.

- These content owners are the experts on this page's information, so use their knowledge! For example, meet with ILL staff about policies, procedures, and information they feel users need. Discuss instruction pages with other librarians.
- Content owners will feel more ownership of their pages if they help create it from the beginning or massively overhaul what's already there. Start from scratch if you need to.
- Consider can be better distilled in other formats: LibGuides, video, etc. Discuss this with the content owners.

# CONTENT ANALYSIS: WHY THIS PAGE?

Content analysis doesn't have to be overly complicated, particularly when you may not have a ton of time. Have the owner/experts consider these four questions for each page:

- What are we trying to achieve with this content?
- What do our users want and need from our content?
- How will we measure the success of our content?
- What can we do with our available time, talent, and budget resources?

Adapted from Halvorson, K., & Rach, M. (2012). *Content strategy for the web*. New Riders.

# REVISIT CONTENT REGULARLY

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Keep the momentum going!



# THANKS!

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Does anyone have questions?

