

Introduction

Hello all, as a reminder for my final project plan, I would like to create a resource website for the elementary library I work at. For this evaluation exercise, I have elected to use two other library websites which exhibit some familiarity to what I would like to create. One of the websites is from another library division at my school, the other from a different (public) elementary school in the community. I elected to choose these websites in order to gain ideas from both close and outside perspectives. The websites are shown through the following URLs:

Messing Library

<https://micds.libguides.com/messing>

Long Elementary Library

<https://go.lindberghschools.ws/Page/1848>

Comparing and Contrasting -- Similarities and Differences

As an initial impression, having both websites pulled up, the eye notices similarity in terms of color scheme and design. Both websites exhibit their primary school colors (red or green) against a blank white background. The simple two-tone layout of each website is aesthetically pleasing and invites the user to explore further. As another similarity, both websites offer adequate option tabs for the user to engage in further content. The Long site gives resource tabs along the side, the Messing site at the top of the home page. As another similarity, both sites offer access to the library catalog through the homepage links and tabs. In following these, the viewer notices both schools are on the same library database system (Destiny by Follett) which is popular in schools. As a main difference, the Long site displays a much more simply designed homepage, with only one image and some basic contact information. The Messing site is different, with more options and images popping out at the reader throughout the homepage. In contrast to the simplicity of the Long site, so many options from the start may feel overwhelming to the viewer. By this first impression, there looks like much more content on the Messing page than the Long page overall.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Both websites exhibit strengths. One strength of both is easy access to the library catalog. This is a valuable tool that ensures that viewers can easily look for resources at home, which is likely a main purpose of the web pages! Another key strength is listing contact information for students and family members who may need help locating resources or navigating the digital space. Another important strength of both sites is that they are built within

platforms which do not require the authors to code the pages themselves, rather, enter data into spaces which will be coded by the website platform. As for weaknesses, the Messing site is entirely too busy, and some of the information tabs are left incomplete. Some of the content is only usable for specific audiences, as well. Also, the content throughout the tabs and the homepage appears to be laid out in no particular order, not symmetrical, and just looks cluttered and confusing to the user. Weakness for the Long site actually shows the opposite. There is little to observe on the home page, and some tabs only include one link or resource available to follow. Simply put, there may be room for more content on the Long site, therefore teachers and students may be missing out on resources they may receive if the site is updated with more information. Finally, some of the information on both sites appears to be out of date, or unimportant in the summer months. This is a reminder that websites must be consistently updated to best reach their audiences.

Scenarios Website 01

The Messing website includes a large variety of content which may be used by different audiences. For example, in one scenario a student may log on to the site to find information about MLA styling, which is primarily used over other styling methods at this school. The MLA guide on the webpage may prove useful when finalizing research papers and bibliographies. As another scenario example, a parent may wish to participate in the yearly author visit, and log on to the site to find out more information. On the website homepage is information about when the next author visit will be, and they can also find the contact information for library staff, which will allow the parent to reach out and inquire about specific details.

Scenarios Website 02

The Long website could easily be used by different audiences. For example, one scenario could show a student who is at home or at school, looking up books to read over winter break. The student could use the website to reach the online catalog to search, find books by a certain author, and determine if they are available to checkout and read on the days off. As another scenario example, a teacher at Long or another school in the district could use the library website to find online classroom resources. Under the 'Interesting Websites' category (tab on the home page) teachers will find access to a database which stores such electronic resources.

Feedback to Peers

Sarah Kramer

Hi Sarah,

What an important topic you have chosen. I had not previously even considered the idea of coaching teachers about digital resources. How valuable this could prove to be, though. With so many different applications and digital resources now available (especially some at cost to the teachers!) it is important that teachers are making the right choice for their students. Helping them out with this seems like an excellent calling, and a great way to undertake this course.

At first glance, both of these sites look useful, clean, organized, and worthy of deeper exploration (I bookmarked them!). After playing around a little bit, I can see that the 'Sweeney' site is more singular, the 'We are teachers' is more pluralistic... meaning, Sweeney is one individual promoting her successful work through this website. The 'We are Teachers' clearly includes the work of many teachers.

I think this could be good or not so good for audiences of both sites. If you like what you see with Sweeney, why not stop there? This could be an excellent resource to keep following a single coach who offers advice that you like... however if you want to explore more perspectives on resources, We are Teachers will definitely be more useful. This site looks to offer more perspectives on similar products.

Overall, I think both sites do contain elements which you may want to incorporate into your final project. Personally if I were to author something similar, I think it would be more beneficial to participate in a network such as We are Teachers, rather than create my own as an individual. I think partaking in the network could allow more customers to see your work more quickly, and 'get your name out there' so to speak.

Thanks for sharing, and best of luck in the coming weeks!

Kevin O'Connor

Hi Kevin,

I think you have a really good idea for a final project. Not only will this idea fulfill requirements but also engage your students in a digital classroom space. Most of the classrooms which I have worked with over the last few years do maintain some sort of digital presence, so it becomes important for teachers to 'hop on this train.' The level of usefulness of such sites is determined by the teacher, which resources are available and how much students are able to get out of them.

At first glance, the LHP site is better looking. The colors and graphics are as impressive as the extent of the content including resources, deadlines, examples and assignments. Clearly someone put some serious time into this site, and continues to do so. However, with so much content speed bumps are inevitable. I was intrigued to see some of the (fiction) books included in my library were being used in science projects, and wondered how. After clicking around, I ran into permissions issues and found out little information.

Also, I think there is some unnecessary and potentially unsafe oversharing of information on this site. For example, I wouldn't think it necessary to include a map to get to the school on a specific classroom website. To protect the intended audience of students and families, such a site should not contain this information. Moreover, I am not a fan of the link to a 5th grade Twitter account, either. I understand parents like to see what their kids are up to at school, but in my opinion there are safer forms of social media and blogs such as 'Seesaw' which allow access to the school community.

The Mercury site is more cluttered and has some outdated information on the homepage. I really like the idea of showing the audience the school schedule, but it needs to be updated for the current school year. Also, the colors and fonts are a bit more straining on the eye. The tabs on top of the page are initially difficult to read, and the bottom of the homepage has ALOT of blue, which is also eye-straining.

On the plus side, this site looks like a springboard to a lot of valuable resources though. My suggestion for this site would be an overhaul of the design, while still keeping a lot of the content. I think you could lay out the information a lot more aesthetically pleasing using the new Google Sites, as opposed to the old format.

Overall, I really hope this feedback helps. Again, I really like the idea of a digital classroom space as a resource for students and parents. Thanks for sharing, and best of luck in the coming weeks!