Operational Plan for Reorganizing and Redesigning the Editors' Association of Canada Website (editors.ca)

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Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The EAC website has a good domain name and contains a large amount of valuable content that could serve as a rich resource for members and other user groups. However, because the website is not effectively organized, that content is not easily accessible. As well, the design and format of the website are outdated.

Recognizing these issues, the national executive council established the Website Redesign Task Force in May 2011. The task force gathered feedback, conducted research and identified the major groups that use (or could use) the website: members, members-to-be, clients and educators.

Its recommendations for "today," "tomorrow" and "the future" include creating a new set of menus (Appendix A) related to the needs of the key user groups, reducing the focus on geographic regions, enhancing design and navigation features, improving user friendliness and adding multimedia content.

Introduction

The website's domain name, editors.ca, is easy to remember and type, and makes use of search engine optimization. In addition, a large amount of valuable content covering a wide range of topics has been posted on the site over the years. This content is potentially a rich resource for members and other user groups.

However, because the website is not effectively organized, that content is not easily accessible, often buried behind multiple layers of links embedded in long blocks of prose. Even members who use the site regularly, such as members of the national executive council and committee chairs, have difficulty finding materials they have used before.

Another concern, which is an issue for all websites, is keeping the content current and up to date.

Other issues:
- Two different logins are required: one for the member's area and another for Ineractive Voice.
- Best practices of web design are not being followed. The general layout, lack of graphics, lack of graphic navigation elements, and the coloured background make the site look dated.
- Navigation links are embedded in long blocks of text (hard to find).
- There are few photos and no videos.

Improving ease of navigation, updating the design and generally reorganizing the whole site will:
- Help members find the resources and services they need.
- Encourage potential members to join EAC and current members to renew their memberships.
- Improve access for employers who wish to advertise work opportunities and/or find an editor to hire.
- Raise the profile of EAC, not only among potential members and employers, but in the wider world, including media, business and government.

Process

The task force has taken the following steps to review and assess the current situation and the changes required:
1. Gathered feedback on what is good about the current site and what needs to change.
2. Identified user groups and stakeholders and created their profiles—who they are, what they seek and what we want them to find:
    a. members
    b. employers
    c. potential members (including students)
    d. educators and those seeking professional development
   Secondary user groups include:
    e. media, business, government and the general public
    f. staff and volunteers who maintain the website
3. Consulted experts personally and read books on the subject (see "References and Resources" section).
    a. Clevers Media, social media consultants who also provided website feedback
    b. Rachel Stuckey, who wrote a report suggesting a restructuring and redesign (Appendix B)

      c.   Dimitra Chronopoulos, who has experience in information architecture.

Philosophy

The task force agreed to:
- Organize navigation to suit the main user groups: members, employers, potential members and educators. Some links will necessarily appear in more than one menu, according to present best practices.
- Use plain language in naming the menus and avoid witty names such as "Read up" that invite multiple interpretations and opportunities for misdirection.
- Organize by concept, not location, while preserving the "one stop shop" for loyal branch/twig members. All content will be kept under the direction of those who developed it (e.g., pages that TO branch developed will now be accessible conceptually, as well as through a branch "landing page") but will now be more visible.
- Make member-only menus visible to non-members. Material is organized conceptually, rather than according to what is behind the pay wall.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The website redesign task force would like to see the following recommendations implemented within the next two months. We believe that taking these steps will:
- help EAC position itself as a group of professionals who understand best practices in all forms of communication, including website design and content
- enable the primary user groups to quickly and easily find the pages they need most.

The first goal is to give members access to information and resources. Also in the service of members, we need to ensure that employers/clients can use the site effectively, and that others can get a clear idea of EAC (what it does, why it exists) by visiting our website.

Recommendations for Today

1. Create a new set of menus using the drafted organization tree in Appendix A. (Using parallel structure for the existing French content.)
2. Reduce regionalization for the most part; aggregate resources centrally, not by location or by originating branch.
3. Revise the error page so that it says something more friendly and helpful than "access denied." (This was a key recommendation by Clevers Media, social media consultants.) For example:
   Please log in (at left) to access this members-only page.
   S'il vous plait, abondonez a gauche pour pouvoir visualiser cette page.

Recommendations for Tomorrow

1. Redesign the pages to reflect best practices for the web. Namely:
   a. a white background, less text and smaller blocks of text
   b. graphic navigation rather than links embedded in lengthy prose

c.　add graphic elements such as buttons and photos (and ad-like graphics promoting EAC services and benefits)
　2.　Establish an ODE task force to:
　　　a.　make it mobile friendly
　　　b.　fix the coding errors that make the search feature exclude the skills and media lists
　　　c.　make the "badges" graphic, not text in boxes (e.g., volunteer acknowledgement)

Recommendations for the Future

Add multimedia content. Video is the primary resource people use on the web. Web users, on the whole, access written content less and less. But we should also present in the modes that our target audience wants — especially potential members and potential employers (those who may not be so text-oriented as our editor-members). Print is just one medium members work in. Including video and other multimedia content will help us represent the abilities our members possess.

References and Resources

Christina Wodtke, *Information Architecture: Blueprints for the Web*
Webmonkey, *Information Architecture tutorials*
　　　http://www.webmonkey.com/2010/02/information_architecture_tutorial/
Information Architecture Institute, http://iainstitute.org/en/learn/library.php

Appendix A. Website Organization Tree

NOTES:
- Columns are not arranged in order of appearance.
- These are fly-out menus. When you hover on "hire," for example, a submenu will open showing the B column heads. Hovering over a B head flies out a C-level menu, etc.
- [brackets indicate a repeated head]
- <require login>

contact us	page of links to HQ, branches, & twigs home pages			
hire	ODE			
	how to select			
	post a job			
join	membership form			
	benefits of membership			
	local groups	[branches & twigs]	[home pages]	
		[meeting schedules]		
members	connect	[branches & twigs]	[home pages]	
		events [new]		
		social media (incl listerv)		
		<Search member list>		
	find work	<national job board>		
		<hotline>		
		<[ODE listing]>		
		<rates survey report>		
	your EAC	constitution & bylaws		
		leadership	board	
			committees	
			staff	
		AGM	next agenda	
			past reports	
			[annual report]	
		<member handbook>		
		cross-appointments [new pg]		

	volunteer	<opportunities> award	[pres] <nomination> [winners]
	services	renew <email> <[ODE listing]> <mediator> <insurance> <discounts> [contract "sfea"]	
	publications	branch newsletters [Active Voice] [contract "sfea"?] <[reports?]>	
professional development	print resources	PES MPES ECE thesis guidelines [?]	
	seminars	all calendar <podcasts/recordings> <iTunes> ?webinars?	by location
	certification	info preparation registration maintenance	
	<mentoring>		
	conference	current past Oops	<vote> <submit> results
	[scholarship]	[about] application [winners]	
	links	related orgs external training	
news	about	description history [board, committees, staff] [Active Voice]	
	PR	e-news news releases Annual Report speakers	
	awards	editing volunteer student	

Appendix B. Report by Rachel Stuckey

Rachel Stuckey's Website Ideas (prepared July 2011)
Holistic:
We can't organize our website like our org chart. We need to organize it in a user-focused way. This may require a dual structure for two different users: 1) potential clients/customers and new members and 2) members. I think the MLA website offers a good example of what I'm thinking--http://www.mla.org/. As a membership organization with a huge non-member presence, it had a dual focus. (anyone a member? Would love to see how the member-side is organized).

Community Building:
We need a social media aspect that moves beyond the 20th century technology of list servs and discussion boards. Can we have a facebook/twitter style community? At the very least we need a blog with comments options—could be an AV/branch newsletter Blog.

Within our member side, we should stop creating Information Wells of national, branch, and twig, and use a portal approach, where info can be access in a logical way through general EAC member page (all major programs, events, seminars, etc.) and then also through branch/twig sites where the info would reside with local-specific info. This has sort of been done with seminars, but not in a comprehensive way.

Technical Issues:
Keep me logged in! It's horrible when I click on a link in an email to member area and it keeps telling me "access denied" I can't remember the last time I had to sign into Facebook on my personal computer.

The LH menus has WAY too many links. Categorical floating drop downs across the top is more useable. Tom, Claudette, and Lee ought to be in one menu, Training, Certification, Conference are all sub categories of professional development. There needn't be a link to Member's Area…members should be invited to log-in and then have a DIFFERENT version the website, which acknowledges that they are logged in. Publications need to be highlighted, not buried in "Resources" with links to other organizations.

The member homepage should have links to major services as well as branches and twig homepages up front and not buried in prose and drill-down menus. Prose can still link out, but I shouldn't have to find the ODE or IV link in a paragraph once I'm in the member area.

Small black text on blue background makes me want to go to sleep. White page is best!

There should be floating dropdown menus so drilling down or clicking-through is not necessary. Consider, for example, if there was a link to all the professional development across the country. On the open side of the website, this could be presented as a link on the home page, with a dropdown menu that expands.

As the user floats over an expanding menu, they could select the location they are interested in, and then be taken to the relevant page. The Toronto Seminar page will like include any seminars happening in surrounding twigs, so Hamilton would link to the same place, but we can still advertise that they are in those locations. The EAC homepage almost does this now, but they link to the individual branches, not the seminar pages.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Certification
Seminars and Workshops
[RS comment 2] I would recommend not organizing this material for non-members by branch—organize by the shared knowledge of geography…

West Coast
- Vancouver
- Victoria

Prairie Provinces
- Edmonton
- Saskatoon

Toronto and South Western Ontario
- Toronto
- Hamilton

National Capital Region and Eastern Ontario
- Ottawa
- Gatineau
- Kingston

Montreal and Quebec
- Montreal

Atlantic Canada
- Halifax

Online   [RS comment] A girl can dream!

Conference