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Digitising Content Together

Ministerial NETwoRk for Valorising Activities in digitisation

Web writing



Reference

The Jakob Nielsen: "Be succinct! (Writing for the Web)",
1997

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9703b.html>

"How Users Read on the Web", 1997

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>

Writing for the Web

<http://www.sun.com/980713/webwriting/>

Web content management

<http://www.webcontentmanagement.it/scrittura.htm>

Web writing that works

<http://www.webwritingthatworks.com>

Museo&Web

[http://www.minervaeurope.org/structure/workinggroups/userneeds/proto
tipo/progproto/comunicazione/stilescrivere.html](http://www.minervaeurope.org/structure/workinggroups/userneeds/proto
tipo/progproto/comunicazione/stilescrivere.html)



Quality in communication

A high-quality cultural site must be intelligible and communicate clearly, combining contents and design in such a way that the user can navigate efficiently, effectively and satisfactorily.



Visual aspect

The graphic design of a web site is quite different from that of a book!

Reading from a screen is considered to be 25% slower than reading on paper.

What seems elegant and aesthetically pleasing to the eye in a publication can appear illegible or even visually disturbing on a screen.

The characters visualized by a computer have an inferior resolution in comparison to those on paper.



Visual aspect

The following elements must be taken into account when designing a web site:

- Legibility of the characters on the screen
- type of character
- colours
- alignment
- line length and spacing
- elements to be emphasized



Reading a web page

Quick glance: the visual information of a page is perceived as a whole together with the presence or not of particular questions.

Scanning: each word of the text is not read and the meaning is drawn from just a few words. This is the most commonly used reading technique.

It is the reading technique preferred by 79% of users.



Suggestions for facilitating the quick glance

- Few graphic elements
 - The same position on each page for any common functional blocks
 - Headings in hierarchical order from the general to the detail
 - Clear coherent visual information throughout the site (e.g. the same graphic symbols always with the same meaning)



Suggestions for facilitating scanning the text

- Highlight the headings as small abstracts
 - Subdivide the text into paragraphs
 - Separate paragraphs from one another by spaces
 - Halve the number of words used with respect to what you would use on paper.
 - Highlight the important words in a paragraph by means of the character used.
 - Make characters more legible.



Characters

Not all predefined characters of most operational systems are clearly legible in a web page.

For example, Georgia and Verdana are characters that are more easily read on a screen than Times New Roman because even while having the same dimension the characters are taller.



Colours

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) advises using an algorithm for calculating the right contrast between the colour of the text and the background

(Checkpoint 2.2) (<http://www.w3.org/TR/AERT#color-contrast>).



Style

BASIC SUGGESTIONS

- clear concise style; construct clear paths through a well-defined structure of paragraphs: titles, sub-titles, short texts, empty spaces, indexes;
- short texts (half of those on paper!)
- adopt the order of the "inverted pyramid" in arranging the contents, that is to say, first present the synthesis to then go down gradually towards the greater details;



Style

- use hypertext for layering the information on various levels (write “in depth” rather than “in length”);
- if possible avoid use of scrolling;
- be careful of punctuation that can sometimes be read incorrectly by screen readers.

A suggestion:

prepare a “style manual” of the site



Some simple advice

Non professional users: insertion of a glossary is a good idea.

Potential readers are all over the world! Be careful:

- of dates: in the United States day and month are reversed
- of phone numbers: always give the international prefix
- of acronyms: they are not always understood
- of the indication of the country of origin (to say Roma is not sufficient if the site is then translated into English)



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Thanks!

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