Design Exercise: Start a Professional Website

*Using pencil and paper and then WordPress or another website or blogging tool, design and begin a professional website.* Researchers use professional websites to gather, contextualize, and share their research with peers, colleagues from other fields, the general public, and potential employers and funding agencies. It is often useful to research and create a plan for your website, listing its intended audiences, the content you’d like it to contain, and the type of experiences you hope the site will produce (it could simply inform peers but it could also engage a wide range of audiences).

![Basic Website Layout](image)

Then gather your content and group it according to project, category, type of media, or timeline: this can help you see possible ways of structuring your site. Or, alternatively, sketching the architecture can help you organize the content. Explore other other sites can help you decide on possible look and feels.

Think of your website as the meeting place or interface between your audiences and your professional work and self, with your homepage providing both the first impression and the entrance into your work. The homepage can set expectations and guide the visitor’s overall experience.

Once you have a good idea of your audience(s), your content, your structure, and your look and feel, use WordPress to begin building your site. Explore different themes and customizing them to build the architecture and information design that will produce the type of experience you’re hoping your visitors will have.

While you can format pages for your cv, writing samples, or conference presentations, it wise also to convert these to pdf format and enable visitors to download them (rather than providing Word or PPT files). Also, provide contact information and links to email and social media accounts. Use Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to enable others to find your site more easily, and be sure to use backup features or plug-ins so that you won’t lose your site should trouble arise.
CRASH COURSE: Transmedia Knowledge, Smart Media, Design Frames

What are transmedia knowledge, smart media, and design frames? Transmedia knowledge is knowledge that moves across media to reach different audiences. Smart media are emerging scholarly genres that use digital media to make arguments and express ideas and emotions. Genres include video essays, podcasts, scientific posters, theory comix, websites, and more. Design frames provide a language to evaluate and create suites of smart media for classes, eportfolios & professional websites.

Transmediate Research into Smart Media

- Define audience and desired experience: think near and far; explore range of impacts
- Select smart media genre(s): given desired impact, choose 1+ smart media genres
- Assess paper’s arg, evidence & rhetoric: reverse-engineer existing xD, IA, and iD
- Redesign/find/create content: given genres’ affordances, generate text, images, etc.
- Make smart media: produce and review/crit smart media in light of desired UX

Design frame 1: CAT (Conceptual, Aesthetic, Technical)

- Conceptual: argumentative, expressive, rhetoric or experimental content
- Aesthetic: visual, aural, textual and interactive qualities of media
- Technical: selection and use of tools and techniques to make media content

Design frame 2: UX (User Experience)

- xD: Experience design: impact on audience or user (tutor arts: theater)
- iA: Information architecture: structure of information (tutor art; architecture)
- iD: Information design: look and feel of individual moments (tutor art: graphic design)

Project-based pedagogy

- Assign specific projects, not free-form “make media”
- Give time for training and workshopping
- Create space of trust and experimentation
- Use group work even with individual projects
- Create and use critico-creative design frames (eg, CAT, UX)
- “Crit” work by sharing and discussing with peers using frames

Sample projects

- Remediate a paper: adapt an existing paper into one or more smart media genres
- Theory comix: turn a research question into a quest, with characters cast from course readings
- Method-to-service: deterritorialize theory by turning a specialized method into a public service
- Redesign a program: role-play as a consultant and propose a redesign of a department or student service

Resources

- InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere, Prezi, WordPress, Keynote are professional tools
- Experience design, Information architecture, and Information design are career tracks
- DesignLab Smart Media Kits: online media kits found here: designlab.wisc.edu/smart-media