

Quality Control:  
A Technical Criticism of Group-Collaboration Websites

Nick Carlson

Media Production, Section 1

Professor Goble

April 23, 2007

## Media Production Website

This website has style and appeal. The color scheme is contemporary, and the pages have simple, consistent layouts. The Flash animation has an excellently depicted computer, and it works well (although it is somewhat unidentifiable to the user if he or she first sees it when it is in its upside down state). The banner is hip, but not distracting, and the color coding of the banner and navigational items gives the user an excellent orientation aid. I also feel that the design of the navigation bar is a fresh take on what could otherwise be a boring part of the site, and the inclusion of forward and backward buttons was great. The site makes it clear when it was last updated, and it gives contact information up front.

Overall, the concept of the site is excellent. Only a few aspects could be improved. Each webpage lacks the title of the page in the browser's top bar. The contact page is not very practical, as the information is in the form of an image. The user is not able to click a hyperlink to send an email to the address shown and cannot select and copy it in its graphic state. Perhaps a better idea would be to make that information into text and lay the computer image in as a background image. In addition, the site has no site map. This is a small piece of the site, but it needs to be there nonetheless. The video is the portion of the site that needs the most work. The opening shot is very long, and in many shots Professor Goble just walks off screen. The wide shot that focuses on the class is also a bit lengthy. Perhaps some camera motion could be employed or even other shots (close-ups, medium shots, etc.). Also, the piece has an abrupt ending that leaves the viewer wanting.

Overall, this is a good site. It just needs some work on very specific areas.

## RiverPlex Website

This site contains a few good aspects of web design. The layout of the screen (with a sweeping header and sidebar) is a fresh look at web layouts. The site has good images on the homepage that make it feel like a professional site. In addition, the site has contact info and update info prominently displayed. Of particular note was the link to Adobe Acrobat Reader near the link to the PDF version of the flyer; this shows great foresight into user interaction. The flyer itself is very professional-looking and is able to effectively fit a large amount of information into a rather small, well-laid out space. Also, “back to top” links are present on all of the pages that warrant them.

This site does show places in need of improvement. Images are missing from the header, the Flash animation is not present, and neither is the video. There are a few spelling errors, such as “Tea Kwon Do” and “Message Therapy” that need fixing. Perhaps the most important aspect of this site that needs work is the management of information. This site is for a real client, and that makes it tough to trim down information. Still, there is so much information that is being presented on this site that it is hard to find exactly what one is looking for. Text scrolls quite a bit because the paragraphs are not web-friendly. The navigation is confusing because the user doesn’t have a “big picture” of how the site is laid out. Better grouping of navigational elements could help here. Also, a reevaluation of the copywriting could be a big help. Be selective when it comes to what *needs* to be on the website and what the client *wants* on the website. The client must be happy, but they will be less happy if their website is confusing and unusable (even if it’s because they demanded too much content be on the site).

## Wackerle Center Website

This website exhibits many qualities of good web design. The layout is simple and easy to navigate. The user is able to figure out exactly where he or she is on any given page, and the categorization makes logical sense to the types of individuals that are meant to visit the site. Contact info is displayed in the navigational bar which makes it available for quick access. The site has an overall tone that is very clean, clear, and professional—which is precisely what this institution is looking for. In addition, the promotional video was fantastic. The voiceover is clean, and the shots are well-edited. There are nice transitions and a variety of shots. Of all of the pieces of the site, this part strikes the viewer as the pinnacle. The flyer also has a nice, active layout with a good use of both photograph and quotation.

Only a few details do need improvement. On the flyer, there are a few spelling and style errors. The sentence beginning with “It receives academic credit” leaves the viewer wondering what “it” is. Even though the antecedent is mentioned in the previous sentence, the whitespace between the two paragraphs insinuates a separation in thought. Also, the phrase “in depth” requires a hyphen. Furthermore, it would be nice to see a link to the download page of Adobe Acrobat Reader near the link to the flyer. As for the Flash introduction, the idea is good, and the presentation is rather professional, but since it only displays at the top of the page the content below the header distracts the user. Perhaps this animation could be made into a full-browser introduction animation (with a skip button) that leads into the site. Also, the Wackerle Center font on the header does indeed look professional, but it also seems a bit outdated. In order to represent an ever-changing program that adapts to fit modern technology, perhaps you should reevaluate the font choice. Finally,

it would be best to shrink the empty space at the bottom of each page so that scrollbars only appear when necessary. Overall, though, this is a site with great content.