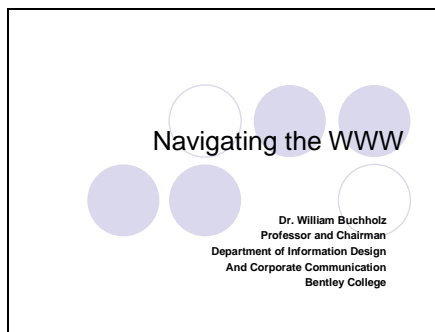


Navigating the WWW

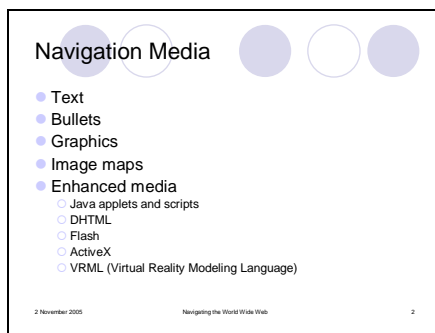
Dr. William James Buchholz
Professor and Chairman
Information Design and Corporate Communication
Bentley College
175 Forest Street
Waltham, MA 02452-4705
wbuchholz@bentley.edu
781-894-1416

The complete PowerPoint presentation is available as a Web slideshow at
http://cyber.bentley.edu/faculty/wb/presentations/navigation_files/frame.htm

Slide 1



Slide 2



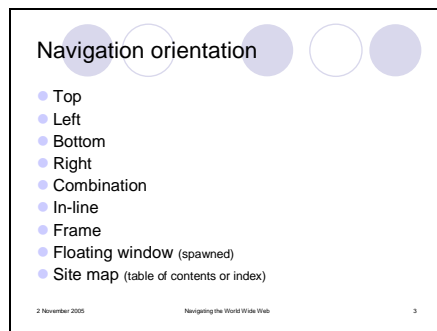
Plain and simple text is probably the most common (and by far the best) form of navigation media. Viewers feel confident that in clicking on text that says HELP, they will be taken to a page that offers them help. While a cute graphic of an extended hand waving about could also signal help, some viewers may not understand your icon or may interpret the wave as something other than an offer of help. To avoid any possible confusion, therefore, stick with text. You are always safe using meaningful text as your principal navigation medium.

While some of the eye-catching effects that can be achieved dynamically on a page using java applets, java scripts, or active X components may seem desirable, remember that using them with simple text can give you the best of both worlds. I strongly recommend that you consider DHTML for your optical effects in navigation, as most Web visitors use modern browsers that support DHTML very well.

Above all, when designing navigation media, be sure to take into consideration the technical constraints of the majority of your

site visitors. If, for example, you know that many of your visitors have slow modem connections, they may be perusing your site with the images off in their browser. You must then be sure to have informative ALT text “behind” the navigation imagery so that your navigation does not “break.” Remember, too, that you want to avoid situations where visitors must download software programs (such as Java applets or Flash readers) to navigate your site. No matter what you choose as your navigation medium, be sure to have redundant text systems that will always function.

Slide 3



The most obvious places for navigation media are the top and the left positions of your screen. You can always be sure that people will look there first for aids in moving through your site. In recent years, people have also become accustomed to the bottom of a page as a potential location for contents bars. It is a good idea, in fact, to have on every page of your site a navigation bar that leads to all the site’s main pages. Such bars are commonly found on the top and/or bottom of the page. Very few sites use the right hand side of the page for navigation.

In-line (sometimes called *ad hoc*) navigation consists of hyperlinks that appear in bodies of text. The usual convention is to have these underlined in blue; they turn red when clicked, and when visited turn to purple. Though you can eliminate underlines and change hyperlink colors, I would recommend your sticking to the underline and color convention. You can never go wrong doing so.

Navigation elements placed in frames, floating windows, or drop-down menus can serve your purposes well, as long as you make sure that these elements are properly sized, targeted, and functional under all conditions. Floating windows, because you are calling on the browser to do double duty, could work well, if you can be sure that the visitor’s browser is up to date and configured correctly.

It’s always a good idea to practice navigation redundancy, especially with frames and floating windows. Make sure that your pages have a secondary means of navigation just in case your visitors have trouble accessing your frames, floating windows, or drop-down menus.

Slide 4

Navigation I

- Previous/next [Kirsanov](#)
- Tree [JPowered.com](#)
- Text [The Daily Report](#)
[Michael Hancher](#)
- Breadcrumb trail [Sun Microsystems](#)
[Useit.com](#)

20 April 2006 Navigating the World Wide Web 4

The breadcrumb trail is also known as a *path analysis*. It is simply a horizontal representation of the site taxonomy, the hierarchy of categories and subcategories (folders and subfolders or parent/child categorical relationships) that lead to the page displaying the path. The title of the page depicting the path should be listed verbatim as the non-hyperlinked final item in the path. Visitors are able to travel to any point listed in the path, as these are almost always hyperlinked nodes. Breadcrumb trails are usually located in the upper third of the page on which they appear.

Slide 5

Navigation II

- Drop - down menu [Information Design](#)
- Color - coded tabs [Barnes & Noble](#)
[Amazon.com](#)
[Best Buy](#)
[Lissa Explains it All](#)
- Drop-down, flyout [Microsoft](#)
[Crate and Barrel](#)
[Bentley](#)

20 April 2006 Navigating the World Wide Web 5

Drop-down menus are space-saving devices, but the design tradeoff is that the visitor must rely on recall (memory of the list), as the items in the dropdown are not visible until the list is opened.

Many of the color-coded tabs in the sites listed on this slide combine tabs and drop-down or fly-out menus. Open Cube develops some very interesting software that helps designers make these menus.

Slide 6

Navigation III

- Flash
 - [Olive](#)
 - [Dr. Martens](#)
 - [Nathan Shedroff's World](#)
 - [Disneyland](#)

20 April 2006 Navigating the World Wide Web 6

Slide 7

Navigation IV

- Site maps
 - [Apple](#)
 - [LA Times](#)
 - [GM](#)
 - [USA Today](#)
 - [ebay](#)
- Huh? [Entropy 8](#)

2 November 2000 Navigating the World Wide Web 7

Slide 8

Tips

- KISS
- Logic & predictability
- Redundancy (text to save the day)
- Target placement (new window/frame?)
- Return calls (home, next, previous, menu)
- Visual cues (cursor, tooltip, change of state)
- Fitts' Law
- Technical limitations (functionality above all)
- Aesthetics

2 November 2000 Navigating the World Wide Web 8

Keep your navigational aids as simple and logical as possible. Your visitors will thrive on being able accurately to predict with certainty where your aids are and how they work.

Do not be afraid of redundancy. Navigational aids top and bottom cannot hurt. You might also consider employing a left-hand frame for your page menu. With a left-hand menu, topics are always before the visitor's eyes for review and selection. You probably should make sure that your menu frame takes up no more than 25% of the screen real estate.

Keep in mind that good navigational systems offer visual cues to the visitor. When the mouse is over a link or when it is clicked or released, something should happen: usually shape or color changes signal navigational process under way. Don't get overly clever, however. A site laden with java applets may look cool in a high end machine with a 17" monitor being fed through a wide band. But most of your visitors won't have that luxury.

You should probably plan for most visitors accessing your site at 28.8 modem speeds on the low end. Their monitors will most likely be set to a resolution of 800 X 600 or 1024 X 768.

Test your tricky navigational devices in I.E. and Netscape, 3.0 and up – lower if you determine that your visitors have old browsers. Remember, the coooolest dynamic pages don't look cool at all when they don't work.