Web Design Considerations

Visual Hierarchy

- o The visual hierarchy of content elements is just as important in web design as in print.
- o Apply your knowledge of grid design for print work to your web designs.
- o Considerations:
  - ▪ Relative size of elements
  - ▪ Placement and position
  - ▪ Contrast of page elements
- o Examples:
  - ▪ Hierarchy: fac.aii.edu/~ph381/gd321a/syllabus.html
  - ▪ Grid: www.oregonfoodbank.org; www.tacit.com

Consistency

- o Carry your look and feel to every page on the site.
- o Place navigation elements in the same position on every page.
- o Three key reasons way consistency is good:
  1. Improves ease of navigation for users – predictability.
  2. Reduces download time for graphics since images are cached.
  3. Reduced development time.
- o Don't remove the link users are currently on.
  - ▪ Removal can cause confusion & disrupts the user's visual memory.
  - ▪ Highlight the current area with bold or a rollover effect instead.
- o When possible, use completed HTML pages as templates.
- o The home page of a site can have a distinctive appearance. The home page has a different set of goals and objectives than interior pages, and the design should reflect those goals.
- o Examples: www.idexsolutions.com

Make your pages freestanding

- o Users can come to your page from anywhere on the web.
- o Make sure that every page has enough identifying information.
- o Think of your web page like a page in a daily newspaper. You can pull a page from a newspaper and still know who published it and when. Your web page should be able to accomplish the same thing.
- o Example: www.waterfrontbluesfest.org, www.idatech.com
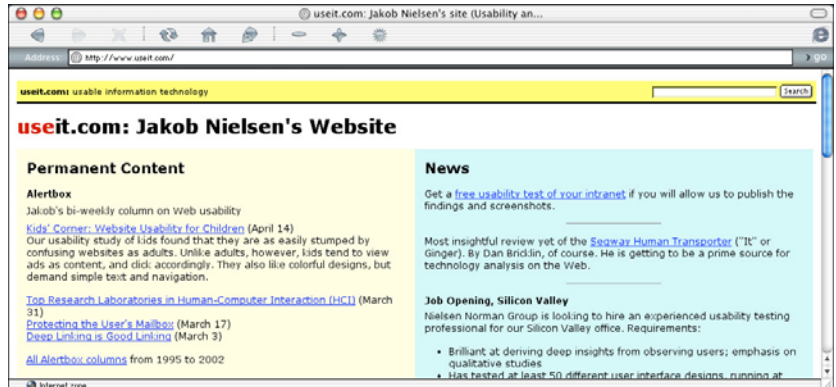
Page Weight

- o There are a number of reasons we are concerned with page weight:
  - ▪ Most Internet users use slow analog modems.
  - ▪ Even if a user has a broadband connection to the Internet, users prefer faster-loading pages to slower ones (think Google).
- o Achieving a reasonable page weight involves establishing a balance between HTML text, HTML elements, and bitmap graphics on a page.
  - ▪ Sites can be graphically rich and attractive but take forever to load
  - ▪ Sites can be primarily text and load quickly but be plain-looking
- o We slice and dice so that pages are not 100% graphics.
- o Inter-mixing text, HTML objects and graphics to create a web page has become an art form, blending technical and visual design skills.
- o Using zero-bandwidth graphics (HTML objects, colors, tables, CSS) helps reduce page weight.
- o Example: www.styleendures.com, www.w3c.org *vs.* www.sapient.com

Page Width

- Unlike print, you do not know the final size dimensions of the medium that will display the work. The end-user makes this determination.
- You always need to take into consideration what your page will look like on a smaller or larger monitor than the one you commonly work on.
- Always ask yourself "What will my page look like if I make my browser window larger or smaller than my working area in Photoshop?"
- You can specify your page design to either always display at a fixed width, or to scale to a percentage of the current page width. (100%, 80%, etc…)
- UseIt.com Example:
  - Note that the content columns simply resize to fit the width of the browser window.

Browser window width set to 640 pixels   Browser window width set to 1024 pixels

- You must account for monitors of all different sizes:
  - Smallest average monitor pixel dimensions are 800x600 — approximately a 15" monitor.
  - One notable exception to this size is the primary education market, where older computers and monitors are the norm.

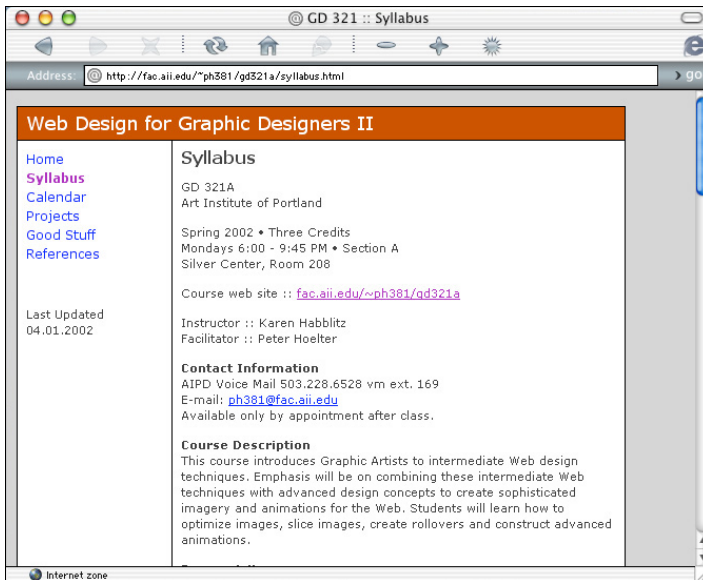| Maximum Width Recommendations	
For screen:	720 – 760 pixels
For printing:	535 – 580 pixels

- Hint: Build elements and colors that can be repeated horizontally.
- Examples: www.edgedesign.us, www.useit.com, www.samhealth.org
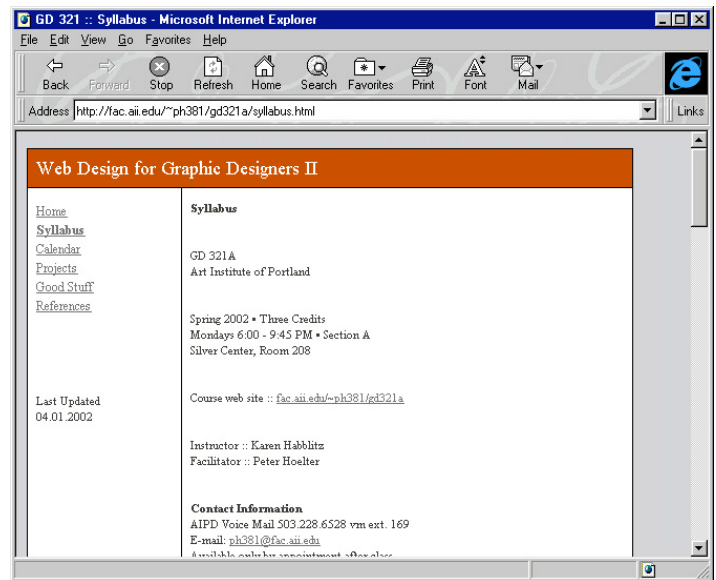
Page Length

- It's a given that most web pages scroll vertically.
- It is OK, if not expected, to have a page scroll.
- Plan for the scroll — Look for objects that can be repeated vertically.
- Given the same monitor size, the amount of available vertical pixels is different for each platform and browser.
- Try to keep important links above the *fold*, especially on the home page.
  - Issue is similar to the fold in newspaper publishing.
- Good practices:
  - Include a jump back to top button for long pages.
  - No more that 4 scroll screens on the smallest monitor size.
  - Use page turn metaphor instead of long pages.
- Examples:
  - Generally above the fold: www.usatoday.com
  - Good page turn metaphor: www.wired.com
  - Way too long/buried links: www.rayjardine.com

Graceful degradation in older browsers or systems

- o Insure that your content is visible to most users.
- o Check on a slow connection.
- o Check on smaller screens (640x480 13" monitor).
- o Check on older browsers:
  - ▪ Note that while the Syllabus page for this class looks different across browsers, the information and its hierarchy is still viewable.
- o However, it is not always necessary to design for the lowest common denominator.

Internet Explorer 5.1 for Mac OS X

Internet Explorer 3.0 for Windows 95