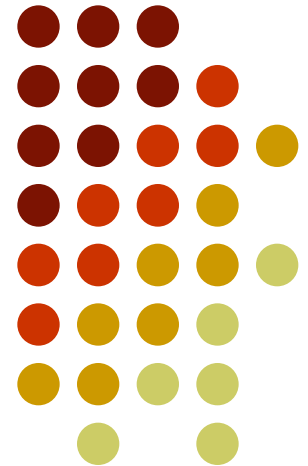# DIY Usability Testing in the Archive

Evaluating user experience for

The Museum of Modern Art Archives' website

The *Perceived* Problem…

- Reference archivist is inundated with backlog of email inquiries from public
  - Questions are often not archives-specific
  - People ask questions that could be answered with our online resources

- Staff sees the users as the problem
  - "Why do we get so many misguided questions?"
  - "Why don't researchers use our online resources to answer their own questions?"

The *Real* Problem…

- Researchers default to emailing reference staff because the archives website is not serving their needs
    - We have a website made by archivists, for archivists
    - Need a website geared towards our target audience: academics, students, art historians, art professionals, the generally curious

The Challenge…

- Evaluate the user experience and usability of the MoMA Archives website

- Use data collected to:
  - Gain insight into the researchers' experience
  - Create alignment within the department
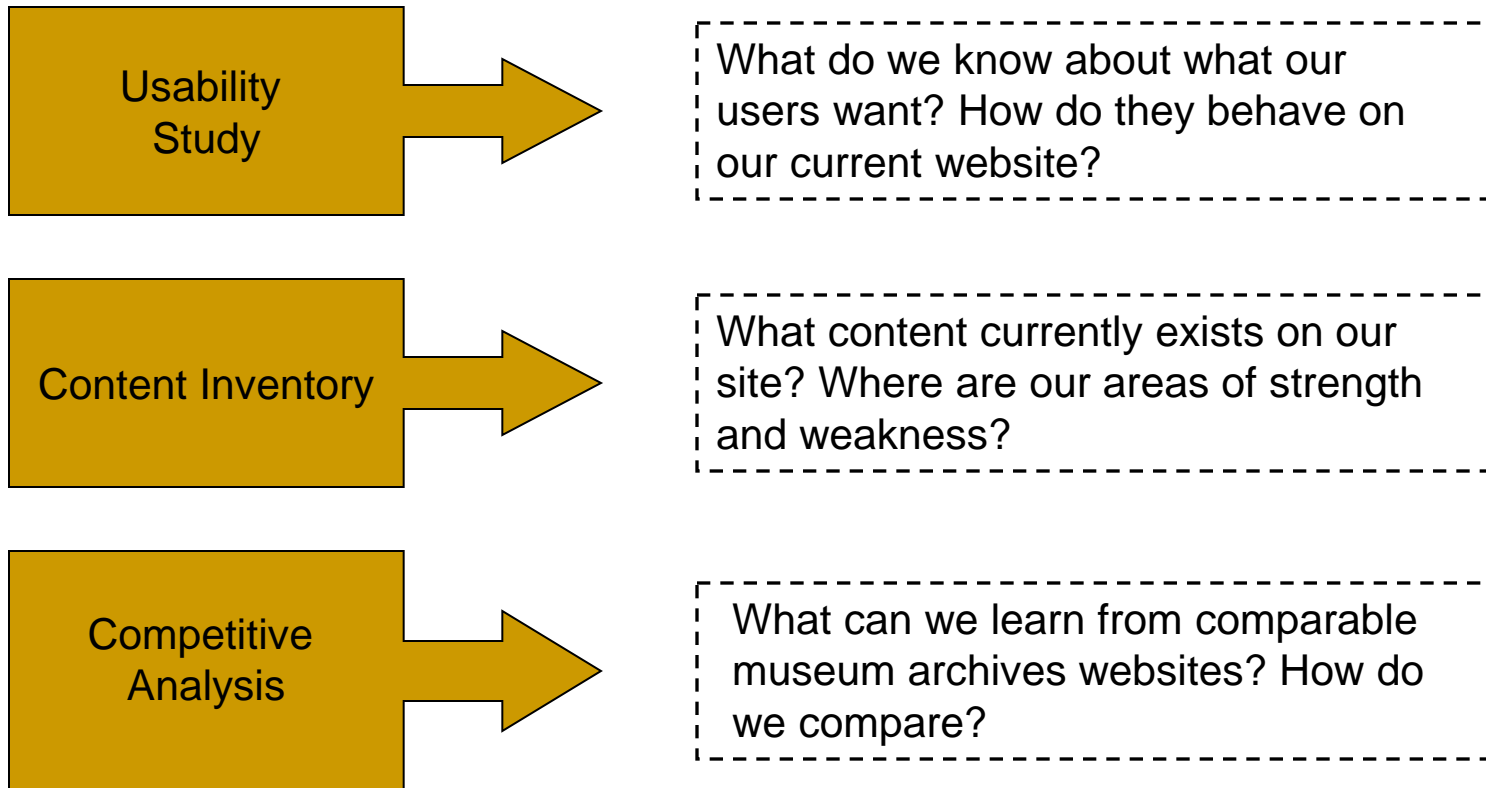 - Inform design changes to the website

The Goal…

User-friendly website design =

More satisfying user experience =

Less need to email reference staff =

Happier researchers and archives staff!*

*Results may vary

Ways to evaluate the website

Usability Study	→	What do we know about what our users want? How do they behave on our current website?
Content Inventory	→	What content currently exists on our site? Where are our areas of strength and weakness?
Competitive Analysis	→	What can we learn from comparable museum archives websites? How do we compare?

Usability Study

- Engage with members of your institution's target audience to understand their needs
  - In-person or remote interviews
  - Surveys
- Collect quantitative data (task completion rates) and qualitative data (emotional feedback, suggestions)

Usability Study: Recruiting Participants

- Determine target audience demographic

- Send out a screener survey

- Schedule appointments with users who fit target audience demographic

Usability Study: Interview Setup

- Ideally two people lead the interview
  - Moderator: guides the interview, answers questions
  - Note Taker: records participant's reactions, feedback, success at completing tasks
- Interview materials
  - Moderator script
  - List of tasks for participant
  - Notes template
  - Consent form
  - Reward for participant

Usability Study: Interview Tasks

- During interviews users…
  - Complete tasks on the Archives website
  - Explain their process in carrying out the tasks
  - Talk about their expectations for what they would find on the site
  - Make recommendations about how the website could be improved

Usability Study: Post-Interview

- Moderator and note taker discuss their observations from the interview, record participant's suggestions/issues

- After all interviews are completed, data is aggregated into a report and recommendations can be made

Content Inventory

- An audit of all the content within a website, usually in the form of a spreadsheet

- Tells us what type of content is on a website, how up-to-date it is, and assesses its value to the organization

- Identifies areas of strength and areas that need to be improved upon

MoMA Archives Content Inventory
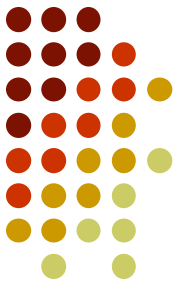
	A	B	C	D	E
1	**Page ID**	**Page Title**	**Section Title/Summary**	**Content Type**	**URL**
2	0.0	**Archives**	**n/a**	**Homepage**	http://w
3	0.1	Archives	Photograph of reading room	Photograph	http://ww
4	0.2	Archives	Photograph Caption	Text Body	http://ww
5	0.3	Archives	n/a	Local Navigation	http://ww
6	0.4	Archives	n/a	Text Body	http://ww
7	0.5	Archives	Search Finding Aids	Search Box	http://ww
8	0.6	Archives	Funding Note	Text Body	http://ww
9	1.0	**About the Archives**	**n/a**	**Webpage**	http://w
10	1.1	About the Archives	Photograph of archival materials	Photograph	http://ww
11	1.2	About the Archives	Mission Statement	Text Body	http://ww
12	1.2.1	About the Archives	Link to holdings	Link	http://ww
13	1.3	About the Archives	Institutional Records Policy	Text Body	http://ww
14	1.4	About the Archives	Manuscript Collections Development Policy	Text Body	http://ww
15	1.5	About the Archives	Access Policy	Text Body	http://ww
16	1.5.1	About the Archives	Link to holdings	Link	http://ww
17	2.0	**Visit the Archives**	**n/a**	**Webpage**	http://w
18	2.1	Visit the Archives	Location	Text Body	http://ww

Content Inventory:
Areas of Strength

Page Title	Content Type	Note
About the Archives	Webpage	Contains important information on history, policies
Archives Holdings	Webpage	Straightforward presentation; organization by location helpful
Visit the Archives/Contact	Webpage	Good content that might benefit from being moved to homepage
Oral History	Webpage	Easy to navigate; brings together multiple resource types nicely
Exhibition History List	Webpage	Easy to scan and search

Content Inventory:
Areas of Potential Weakness

Page Title	Content Type	Note
Archives	Homepage	Should contain information about how users can access the archives and when and where they can do so
Archives Highlights	Webpage	Interesting content, but hidden deep within the site and does not lead users back to the collection that the materials originated from
Selected Readings	Webpage	Useful information, but also a dead end; citations should be linked to DADAbase catalog records
Press Release Archives & MoMA Online Press Office	Links	These two links are redundant and should be combined to point to the general Press Release Archives page

Competitive Analysis

- See how other museum archives use their websites to help researchers

- Compare the content and functionality featured on the websites with our own

- Smithsonian Institution Archives
  - http://siarchives.si.edu/

- Guggenheim Archives Collections
  - http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/library-and-archives/archive-collections

Competitive Analysis: Content Matrix

- Inventory of types of content are featured on other archives websites:
  - Text
  - Photographs
  - Audio
  - Videos
  - Links offsite

Content Matrix: Collections & Holdings

Content	MoMA	Smithsonian	Guggenheim
Collection Finding Aids	X	X	X
Collection Highlights	X	X	
Digitized Materials		X	X
Frequently Used Collections		X	
List of Collections	X	X	X
Press Release Archive	X	X	
Online Archival Exhibits		X	X
Oral History Program	X		
Oral History Transcripts	X		
Oral History Videos	X		
Records Management FAQ		X	
Records Management Policy	X	X	

Competitive Analysis: Functionality Matrix

- Inventory of types of functionality used within other archives websites:
    - Search tools
    - Contact forms
    - Sharing
    - Social media

Functionality Matrix: Information Discovery

Content Area	MoMA	Smithsonian	Guggenheim
Global Search Box	X	X	X
Collection/Finding Aid Search Box	X	X	X
Faceted Search		X	
Browse Collections by Collection Title	X	X	X
Browse Collections by Creator		X	
Browse Collections by Category	X	X	
Change Browse/Search Results View		X	
Sort Browse/Search Results View by Relevancy		X	
View/Browse Digitized Items		X	X

Interpreting and Presenting Findings

- Seek out patterns in user task performance and feedback

- Gather data, findings, and recommendations into a hard-copy report and presentation

- Use the insights from the study as a jumping off point discussing changes

- Share findings with website "allies"
  - IT, Web Services, Development

MoMA Archives Website: Findings & Recommendations

- Short Term: Consolidate and Clarify
  - Focus on re-organizing content we currently have on the website
    - This includes incorporating existing assets like blog posts and exhibition websites into the site
  - Move need-to-know content like access, visiting, and holdings information to homepage
  - Retire content that does not get much traffic or is not updated often

MoMA Archives Website: Findings & Recommendations

- Long Term: Enhance and Guide
  - Refine searching, browsing, and sharing functionality
  - Author audience-specific guides or resources
  - Provide access to digitized materials through DAM and links with finding aids

Sustainable User Experience

- User Experience does not end with a report and updating a website
  - UX needs to be taken into account throughout a website's lifecycle
  - Revisit data and re-test as changes occur
- Plan for future content and functionality with User Experience in mind

DIY Usability Testing Resources

- Usability.gov

- Prom, Christopher. "**Using Web Analytics to Improve Online Access to Archival Resources.**" *American Archivist*, Spring-Summer 2011.

- Survey Monkey

Thank you!

Alana M. Miller

alana.m.miller@gmail.com

alanammiller.com

linkedin.com/in/alanammiller