

Memorandum

To: Elizabeth Pass, Associate Professor, School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication
From: Morgan Howell, WRTC 356 section 1 [MFH]
Date: October 27, 2015
Re: YWCA of Richmond Website Redesign

For my second project, I redesigned the YWCA of Richmond's website. I chose this website because the organization was not centralizing the programs offered to survivors of domestic violence enough and I wanted to emphasize the "human" aspect of this organization. I also wanted to enlarge the "escape" button and create separate pages for each service provided. "Escape" should be more prominent. If a woman is in danger of her abuser catching her looking at this website, she needs to immediately see the escape button that will take her to Google.com. I disliked how so much emphasis was placed on awards and award recipients, how the picture of the children's program on the home page did not link to the children's program page on the website (it linked to the YWCA's Pinterest page!), and how the menu cuts off under "client resources." The children's program page was the largest usability issue I noticed on the website. It neither did what I wanted it to do (link to the childhood development page), nor did what I expected it to do (it surprised me that it linked to Pinterest) (Reiss xviii). I wanted to reorganize the tabs and slash information that was irrelevant to survivors of domestic violence. I changed the YWCA of Richmond's original audience of concerned onlookers to survivors who need pertinent information about how they can receive help.

The Design Process – Discovery

When I first started this project, I answered Beaird's questions on page three of *The Principles of Beautiful Web Design*. I first identified what the YWCA of Richmond does. The YWCA of Richmond is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing support for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. The organization offers services such as individual and group counseling, a 24-hour regional hotline, emergency housing, and childhood education. Using these services, the organization hopes that these women and children can find liberation and the strength to begin their new abuse-free life. The organization already had an existing logo that states "YWCA" in orange text, and personalizes it by adding "of Richmond" in smaller text underneath the logo.

My target audience is primarily women and children in the Greater Richmond Area who are victims of domestic violence. The audience is also concerned loved ones and people who want to volunteer with the YWCA of Richmond. The only other domestic violence organization in Richmond is Safe Harbor. I took

inspiration from Safe Harbor's excellent website organization in respect to explaining all the programs provided (see Figure 1).

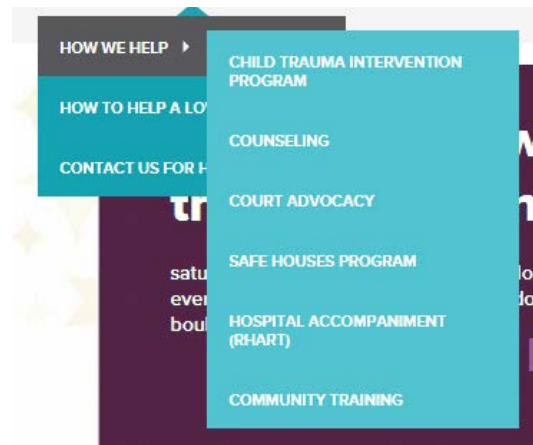


Figure 1. Safe Harbor Shelter Menu Organization, Safe Harbor Shelter
Source: <http://safeharborsshelter.com/>

It was through this website that I realized components I could improve (such as including a separate page for each service provided). Safe Harbor Shelter also presented a complete list of donations needed that I inserted into my new YWCA of Richmond website. It's unusual that the YWCA of Richmond lacked elaboration on the services provided (see Figure 2).

FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The YWCA Domestic Violence Program offers free comprehensive crisis services for survivors of domestic abuse and their families. The YWCA Domestic Violence Program serves women, men, and children in the Greater Richmond area. There is no cost to participate in the program. The YWCA Domestic Violence Program provides the following services:

- Individual and group counseling
- Access to a 24-Hour Regional hotline
- Emergency housing, if needed
- Safety planning
- Referrals to other services, as needed

Figure 2. YWCA of Richmond Programs Provided, YWCA of Richmond
Source: <http://ywcarrichmond.org/violence/>

No further detail was provided about the services the YWCA of Richmond provided. The bullet points did not link to pages that elaborated what each service does.

Colors

The original YWCA of Richmond website had an off white background (see Figure 3).

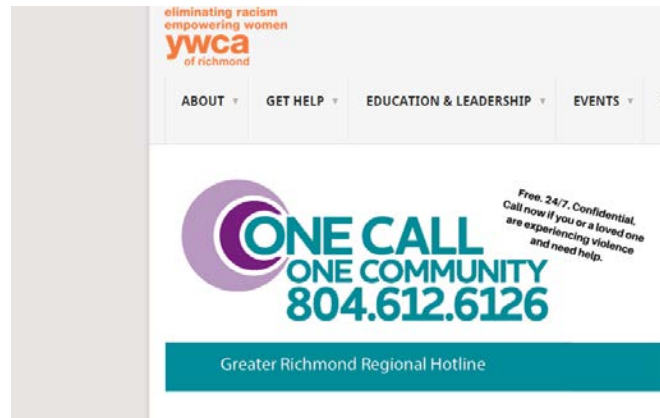


Figure 3. White Space on Original YWCA Website, YWCA of Richmond

Source: <http://ywcarichmond.org/>

There was too much white space on the website, so I chose green as the background theme color. Green contrasts with the orange logo color. Both the yellow-green and yellow-orange colors are tertiary. Tertiary colors, "...mix a primary color with an adjacent secondary color form" (Beaird 53).

Theme

When I chose a theme, I considered the theme's use of rule of thirds, navigation placement, and header image size. I narrowed my themes down to three choices: Edin, Venture, and Canard. I ultimately chose the Edin theme because of its large header image for each page and its use of the rule of thirds.

Menu

The original menu for the YWCA of Richmond placed too much emphasis on less than relevant items (like strategic plans, financial information, and awards) for their target audience (survivors of domestic violence). I wanted to sharpen the information presented so the most relevant information was easiest to find and

includes the most content. I created a separate page that explains in detail the services provided to survivors of domestic violence (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Revised Menu, ywcarichmond.wordpress.com
Source: <https://ywcarichmond.wordpress.com/greater-richmond-regional-hotline/>

By placing each service as its own page, the user can find information faster and leave the website with positive feelings. Also, I placed a short description of each service that linked out to its respective page on my website under “How We Help.”

In addition, I pulled “Childhood Development” out as its own menu tab. The YWCA does a great job of providing information about this unique preschool program. I wanted to take it a step further by spotlighting it as its own menu tab.

Designing for Emotion

Regarding designing for emotion, Walter says, “Personality is a powerful way to engage your audience. It helps people understand who you are and shapes how they interact with you” (46). This quote is my inspiration for how I composed the emotional facet of my website. I examined risk management, design personas, and aesthetic aspects of emotion on the “Childhood Development” page.

Risk Management

I also brainstormed potential hindrances that may arise with my website. Let’s say, for example, the YWCA of Richmond’s phones go down or a user can’t fill out a volunteer form in the volunteer portal. Walter advises web designers on how to handle this situation by saying to, “...explain what happened swiftly, honestly, and clearly. Give people the facts of the event, communicate that you’re doing your best to resolve things, then update users regularly, even if not much has changed” (78). I’d update users by having an error page pop up on the website that reads, “Oops. It looks like the link you’re trying to click is unavailable. We are aware of the problem, and hope to get this link back up and running soon.” I can also post on social media that we are aware of the problem and we are repairing it.

Design Persona

I completed Walter’s design persona, and found it to be useful when thinking about the emotional aspect of my website. My brand is professional (because of all the services’ descriptions the YWCA of Richmond provides), yet human. I want to describe being “human” on a website first by defining what it’s not: solely showing statistics and lists. Rather, the “human” quality shows compassion and support, as if a helping hand is reaching out, saying “We’re here to help you.”

95% of the images used in this website feature only women, since men may be a trigger for some survivors of domestic violence. The other website, Safe Harbor, frequently uses both men and women photographs.

My personality image is Emma Watson because she is the UN Women Goodwill Ambassador dedicated to empowering women everywhere. She is educated, professional and gives a voice to the millions of women silenced by domestic violence.

The YWCA of Richmond is professional, educated, compassionate, supportive, empowering, guiding, hopeful, and forward-thinking. The YWCA of Richmond does not have jokes on its website or a cheerful, funny mascot. These elements would subtract from the professionalism of the website.

I imagine a guidance counselor's voice when I read the text on the website. The guidance counselor is informed of the best strategies for success in the student's situation, and wants to see her succeed.

I will engage my audience through infographics and request users to sign a "No More" campaign pledge option to the sidebar. I made the "No More" button appear more clickable (and therefore, more useable) to the user by adding a 3-D boarder around it to make it pop. Usable, clean design will also keep the user on the website because he can easily find what he's looking for (Walter 7).

Childhood Development

This was by far my favorite section of the website. I decided that instead of listing facts about the YWCA of Richmond's childhood development program, I'd engage the reader more aesthetically by creating an infographic. I used Canva to create this infographic. I could customize images and infographics to make it more personalized and align more closely with my website's professional-supportive personality. I chose the "Schoolbell" font on Canva because it reminded me of a kid's handwriting (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Schoolbell Font, Canva.com

Source: <https://www.canva.com/design/DABgYmPTDaQ/EESOmWtQniOQkk-mTAs7jw/edit>

According to Beaird, "Handwritten fonts provide a personal touch..." (137). I chose a bold san-serif font for the text because it stood out more against the tertiary colors of aquamarine and violet. I also alternated between violet and aquamarine to provide contrast to create emphasis (Beaird 23). The frames around each text box look like a child drew it with a marker. The personality I was aiming for here was professional (with the statistic and san-serif font) yet child-like (with the "Schoolbell" font and marker-esque frames). At the bottom of the page, I added a video of the YWCA of Richmond childhood development preschool. The

light-hearted music and children spins the YWCA of Richmond not only as a place for professional support, but also growth. While I was in Canva, I also decided to design an “escape” button (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. “Escape” button, Canva.com

Source: <https://www.canva.com/design/DABgcMN2GmE/QfptKm6jmP9FwwDcVyQ-mw/edit>

Although faint, the background is indeed gradient. I used a gradient instead of a flat color because it stood out more on the page from all the other flat design (Walter 67). I also added a 3-D boarder to make the “escape” button appear more clickable (and therefore more usable). Once clicking the escape button, instead of opening Google in a new tab, Google is opened in the same tab. This erases any surface evidence of visiting the website.

User Persona (See Appendix)

I created a user persona to remind me of my audience as I designed the website. Walter defines a user persona as, “an archetypal user who represents a larger group” (32). I looked at publication from the *Bureau of Justice Studies* which reported that, “Females ages 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 generally experienced the highest rates of intimate partner violence.” In addition, “African-American women experience significantly more domestic violence than White women in the age group of 20-24” (*Domestic Violence by Race and Ethnicity*). I took these statistics into consideration as I designed my user persona.

Images

Another element I’m proud of is the images used in the website. The header image took me the longest to design. I edited the header image, combining 2 separate images from the YWCA website. (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Header Image, WordPress.com

Source: <https://ywcarichmond.wordpress.com/>

I edited and combined the images in Microsoft Paint (because I did not have Photoshop on my laptop). The header image of smiling women looks empowering to me, like hope is possible for these survivors of domestic violence. Then, I chose a header image for each page of the website. I primarily used photos of

women to set the scene for the rest of the page. These photos add more of a human feel to all the serious information provided.

Problems Encountered/Lessons Learned

I had never inserted an infographic into a WordPress site before, so I had initial difficulty completing this task. I thought I needed to code or download a plugin (both of which I'm unfamiliar with). I uploaded the infographic to my page, but it was too small to read. Had all my creativity with designing this infographic been for nothing? I searched WordPress forums, and found out the solution was much more simple than I originally thought. When I upload the image in "add media", there is an option to edit the picture to be small, medium, large, or full size. Full size was too big, but large worked just fine!

My second problem was getting the menu to be a classic, one-line menu placed at the top. Instead, I was thrown this unusual menu style when I picked the theme (see Figure 8).

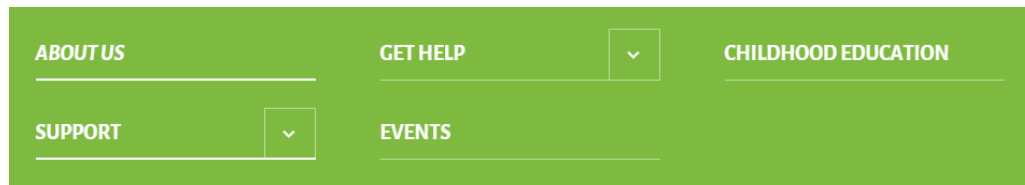


Figure 8. Default Menu, WordPress.com

Source: <https://ywcarrichmond.wordpress.com/wp-admin/customize.php?url=https%3A%2F%2Fywcarrichmond.wordpress.com%2F>

I once again searched WordPress forums, and found that my theme was on default menu style, but I could change it to classic menu style. I had to go to customize, then theme options, then under menu style click classic. Problem solved!

Future Improvements

If in the future, I were to hire professional web designers, I'd ask them to adjust a few components of my website. First, I'd ask them to make the sidebar headers hot links. This would make these sidebar widgets more usable. Second, I'd ask them to code the social media widget icons so they appear larger, and more usable for people with disabilities. Lastly, I would ask my web designers to code the bullet points on my website so that all the lines of texts are evenly lined up.

Works Cited

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- Reiss, Eric. *Usable Usability: Simple Steps for Making Stuff Better*. Indianapolis: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. Print.
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Appendix



Jane is a 21-year-old university student at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA studying Corporate Public Relations. Her dream job is working for Madison+Main, a local company that provides public relation solutions for emerging businesses. She is an English-speaking, African-American female who works at Sidewalk Café. She is extremely familiar with navigating the internet and carries her smartphone and laptop with her everywhere. Her humble downtown apartment (which she rooms with her boyfriend, Joe) offers spotty WiFi, so she sometimes goes to the local shops for WiFi. Recently, her boyfriend of 2 years,

Joe, has been acting out of character. He has been more easily irritated and snaps at her more and more. Jane is often left feeling like she is the reason Joe is always angry, and is desperately trying to salvage their relationship. She has a history of men leaving her (her father, her past relationships), and clings to Joe because she wants the security of a relationship and because he pays half the rent. Joe's angry words always leave her feeling scared and sad. She doesn't want to leave him because he pays half the rent and she would be left homeless. Walking to class, she sees advertisements for the YWCA of Richmond posted all over the Commons. At the suggestion of a friend (and to satisfy this nagging feeling in the back of her head), she checks out the YWCA of Richmond website. She identifies with many of the typical characteristics of domestic violence. She found the domestic violence information she was looking for quickly, and used the "escape" button when Joe unexpectedly came home early.