

Analysis and Recommendations for the Website of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

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Executive Summary

This report highlights key design changes to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Arts (SFMOMA)'s website aimed at simplifying the site for better navigation procedures among members and non-members alike. The newly recommended site focuses on reorganizing with the idea of providing individuals easy access to navigate the web without the influx of subcategories and unclassified events that might create confusion for users. Furthermore, the recommended design fully satisfies users' experience in browsing and searching for the adequate items or events on the web. Contrary to the original site, the recommended site ensures efficiency in overall search. This plays a major role in the renovation of the site as it was often problematic for users to find what they wanted, quickly.

Introduction

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, is located in the city of San Francisco, California. SFMOMA serves a wide range of communities and embraces different cultures. Museums are an important place to visit for a number of reasons: they benefit and help shape communities, encourage diverse communities to talk and engage with one another, and bring communities together to facilitate focus on the past, the present and the future. With that being said, the website of the SFMOMA is an important first step that many users take to see what the museum has to offer. Largely due to focusing on a specific theme or diverse subjects being offered, the website catches the attention of the user(s). An important addition to the SFMOMA website commitment page states, "We are committed to repairing and building trust, and being an inclusive, accessible museum for people of color, LBGT+ people, women, people with disabilities, and many other integral members of our internal and external communities." This statement focuses on the promotion of inclusivity throughout their website and museum.

The website that will be highlighted for re-design can be found on sfmoma.org. Once entering the website, there are about 30 different pages to choose and browse from. This report will analyze why some areas should be re-designed. The pages we will focus on are: What's On, Stories, Artists+Artworks, Visit, Events, For Members, Become A Member, Ways To Give, For Educators, Press Room, Shop, Tickets, and Search. This report will demonstrate what changes can be made, and how a re-design will make an impact on the future of museum visitors and website users.

Existing Site and Discussion

Due to the extensive nature of the SFMOMA website, the scope of this report is limited to the eleven pages found in the website's navigation menu and their subpages that were deemed significant. The current organization of the website consists of introducing the content of the museum's holdings and its projects through the first three pages: What's On, Stories, and Artists + Artwork, as illustrated in Figure 1. Then, the following pages, Visit and Events, appeals to users who may visit the museum physically as it presents the variety of resources, services, and programs available. Membership to the museum is highlighted as a significant portion of the website as the For Members and Become a Member provides various types of subscriptions in addition to the Ways to Give page that encompasses membership, donations, and other partnerships. The museum establishes its role as an institution of informal learning through its next page For Educators which provides teachers and school administrators with resources to engage with the museum and its holdings. The Press Room page holds current and past news, announcements, and the upcoming exhibitions schedule for users to keep up-to-date with SFMOMA. Finally, the Shop allows users to browse and purchase items sold by the museum that are related to modern art and its collections. The Tickets and Search pages are different from the previous nine pages as they are linked in the upper right-hand corner for quick access rather than in the drop-down menu.

The advantages in the existing site map are the organized content within the What's On, Stories, and Artists + Artwork pages as users can browse through the format of such content or by its timeline, whether current or past. On the other hand, users can easily navigate through these pages with a more focused lens as the option to search by Curatorial Areas + Programs or For Researcher meets the needs of both browsing or specific search. Another beneficial feature

of the website includes how many of its pages mentioned and other subpages shown in Figure 1 address specific target users, such as physical visitors, members, potential members, educators, and even community-focused collaborators.

Some disadvantages of the museum's website are mostly repetitive pages that only serve to clutter a user's navigation experience as well as the hidden nature of collaborative opportunities with the museum. For example, many of the For Members and Become a Member page content and subpages are repetitive to the point where their separation into two pages is unnecessary. In addition, the Community Initiatives and Partnerships subpage is confusingly tucked away into the Ways to Give page that usually implies donating and fundraising purposes rather than collaborative efforts. Changes to remedy these disadvantages will be demonstrated in the proposed new site map.

Redesign and Discussion

The new proposed site map features changes through the consolidation of pages, the incorporation of group event opportunities, and the focus on visitors as the “Plan Your Visit” page, as seen in Figure 2, is moved forward for quicker visibility. The consolidation of pages includes the What’s On + Events page, Membership page, and subpages within the Shop page. The presentation of group event opportunities, such as For Educators, Corporate Engagement, and Community Initiatives and Partnerships, within the Plan Your Visit page creates a circular connection for visitors to become aware of these more hidden opportunities.

While creating the revised site map our group focused on the needs and habits of the different types of users who visited this website. Users who are visiting the website to quickly buy a ticket or plan their visit to SFMOMA may be less inclined to search through different exhibits or highlights of the website. For this reason we chose to feature Plan Your Visit first where all information regarding travel and visit arrangements can be found, especially for users who are out of town or are not familiar with SFMOMA. On the other hand users who are interested in browsing the website for new information may want to take more time perusing the new and old exhibits and events that are featured. Because of this, Whats On + Events, Artists +Artwork, Stories, and Membership is next in the proposed site map. The items listed in these sections are for those who may want to find out more about SFMOMA, have been to the site before, or are planning on having a longer relationship to the site and organization than someone who is visiting one time. Towards the end and back of the menu, we discussed putting more niche elements such as Ways To Give, For Educators, and Press Room. All items within these sections are for users other than the average visitor, members who are looking for deeper

services and require more time and effort to get involved. Additionally, we condensed some of the shop categories as we found that a few of the sections were redundant and many objects in some of the sections could be found in other sections such as Workplace and For The Home as well as Accessories and Jewelry.

Our original intention was to pare down the website, make it more simple for users who are looking at the website at a first glance, and more enjoyable for members who frequent the website for new events, stories, and exhibitions. We found that we still wanted to utilize circular connections and searches for users who may want more information and for browsing purposes. We discussed that there should be a Contact Us feature more than for press purposes. This would be an option for users to reach out to the museum about questions or requests that may not be represented on the website. Lastly, we synthesized some sections such as separate Events and What's On, as well as reducing some of the Artist + Artwork options as some seemed to fit in other categories like For The Educator or the Event section.

Recommendations

The current SFMOMA site features about 13 main pages available, including Search and Tickets. We found that the site doesn't seem to contain any dead ends within the pages. This facilitates browsing of art, artists, events, and other features that SFMOMA offers. When exploring this site we noticed that many main pages linked back to the same sub-pages. Additionally the large variety of browsing options created clutter and potential confusion. In our redesign we combined and narrowed down some options, while still facilitating circular browsing. For example, the shop tab has 12 sub-sections: New, Gifts, Custom Prints, For The Home, Workspace, Accessories, Jewelry, Books, Exhibitions, Kids, Only At SFMOMA, and Sale. In our redesign we condensed these by making Jewelry under Accessories, Workspace under For The Home, Custom Prints under Gifts, and Exhibitions under Books. This left us with a total of 8 major pages which would create a less cluttered environment when browsing. After many similar combinations we believe that the redesign allows for both smoother browsing and assists the site user who has a purpose.

Site Map Figures



