



Company	Northwest Film Forum
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URL	<a href="http://www.nwfilmforum.org/">http://www.nwfilmforum.org/</a>
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**1. History:**

The Northwest Film Forum (NWFF) is a Seattle-based nonprofit arts organization. Founded in 1995, NWFF serves as “Seattle's premier film arts organization, screening over 200 independently made and classic films annually, offering a year-round schedule of filmmaking classes for all ages, and supporting filmmakers at all stages of their careers” (nwfilmforum.org). As such, NWFF is a largely educational and financial resource, providing Seattle with alternative films and showcasing filmmakers with an emphasis on Pacific Northwest talent. NWFF membership ranges from 600-1,000 members at any given time (washingtonfilmworks.org). These member largely fall into the demographics of industry professionals and family audiences.

NWFF prides itself on focusing on local filmmakers and bring opportunity and events to the Seattle arts community. The NWFF offers diverse programming and educational opportunities for both youth and adults. The organization is run by a core team of 6 employees. The projection, box office, concessions, and other daily administrative and maintenance of the theatre are run by a dedicated team of volunteers. Volunteers are the heart and soul of this organization.

**2. Objectives:**

Our team plans to review and evaluate the existing information architecture of the website in order to determine the current scope of information and any usability issues. The information architecture is the structure and organization of all of the content contained within a website.

We will begin with a competitive analysis to gather initial data about the website. We will use this data to complete more specific analysis via a card sort, a heuristic evaluation, and usability testing to further our understanding of the website's functionality and what can be improved. We will then make recommendations for an optimized information architecture. The goal of the project is to make the site more user-friendly and more usable to movie-goers, filmmakers, and the community at large.

### 3. **Methods:**

- **Competitive Analysis**

The goal of a competitive analysis is to understand how Northwest Film Forum's (NWFF) website measures up to its competitors. Our team will research the websites of comparable businesses (SIFF, Grand Illusion Cinema, Central Cinema, and Sundance Cinema), assess the strengths and weaknesses of each site, pinpoint similarities between competitors' sites and that of NWFF, and identify common patterns in information architecture.

Through making these comparisons, we can determine how NWFF can distinguish itself from its competitors, where design improvements can be made, and what usability mistakes to avoid.

- **Card Sort**

According to usability.gov, "Card sorting is a method of sorting and grouping topics within the website into logical categories that make sense to users." In card sorting all the ideas will be written on index cards and grouped according to content. Card sorting will help our team to understand our users, who are the visitors of NWFF website.

We will conduct both an Open card sort and a Closed card sort in order to understand and evaluate the difference between the results. In an open card research our team will organize topics from content within website into groups which makes sense to us and name each group which is created to make easy to describe the content. In closed card sort we will pre-define categories and sort topics from content within the websites.

The outcome of card sorting will be used to sort the information architecture in functional groups as well as arrange in meaningful topics.

- **Heuristic Evaluation**

Heuristic Evaluation is a method of assessing a website's interface in terms of usability. The heuristic method is based on the set of principles developed by Jakob Nielsen in *Usability Engineering* (1995). The primary purpose of a heuristic evaluation is to identify usability issues. Our team will analyze the NWFF website according to the ten heuristic principles, as outlined by the Nielsen Norman Group:

1. **Visibility of system status:** The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.
2. **Match between system and the real world:** The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.
3. **User control and freedom:** Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.
4. **Consistency and standards:** Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions.
5. **Error prevention:** Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.
6. **Recognition rather than recall:** Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.
7. **Flexibility and efficiency of use:** Accelerators -- unseen by the novice user -- may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.
8. **Aesthetic and minimalist design:** Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.
9. **Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors:** Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

10. **Help and documentation:** Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

By conducting a heuristic evaluation of the NWFF website our team will be able to determine how well the site in its current form complies with the heuristic principles and make recommendations for optimized usability.

- **Usability Testing**

*“Usability testing refers to evaluating a product or service by testing it with representative users. Typically, during a test, participants will try to complete typical tasks while observers watch, listen, and take notes. The goal is to identify any usability problems, collect qualitative and quantitative data and determine the participant’s satisfaction with the product.” -usability.gov*

Usability testing will be completed using in-class participants. Participants will be asked to complete specific tasks on the NWFF’s current website . Our team will create a set of goals to see how participants go about achieving an end result. The team will assess how easy or difficult it is for them to complete the process. We will observe how many clicks it takes, how much time, and how many back clicks it takes for the participants to find specific content or complete tasks. Observing how participants interact with the website will help us better understand what content is easily accessible and what content is hidden or lost within the current architectural design of the site.

Data collected while observing the participants in our Usability Test will inform our team on how we should reorganize the current site’s navigation and content in order to make it more clear to end users, and help create a better, more usable website.

#### 4. User Profiles:

User Type	Goals	Tasks
<p>Moviegoer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All ages</li> <li>• All levels of media experience</li> <li>• Seattle-based and out-of-town visitors</li> </ul>	<p>Moviegoers want to check the upcoming film schedule and any upcoming events. Want to buy tickets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View a monthly calendar</li> <li>• Purchase tickets online</li> <li>• Find location</li> </ul>
<p>Member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults age 18-65</li> <li>• All levels of media experience</li> <li>• Primarily Seattle based</li> <li>• A mix of casual cinema fans, cinephiles, and filmmakers</li> </ul>	<p>Members can have one of several goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy tickets to a film</li> <li>• Read about upcoming events</li> <li>• Lookup classes being offered</li> <li>• Find membership benefit information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase tickets online</li> <li>• View upcoming events on calendar</li> <li>• Find news about NWFF</li> <li>• Find class schedule</li> <li>• Find membership section that describes benefits</li> </ul>
<p>Filmmaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seattle based</li> <li>• Tech savvy</li> <li>• Various ages</li> <li>• Starving artist</li> <li>• Young</li> </ul>	<p>Filmmakers utilizes the NWFF site to find out about new films showing, new opportunities and seminars for filmmakers, as well as grants, funding, and film competitions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out what's playing</li> <li>• Look for class schedule</li> <li>• Reserve equipment rental</li> <li>• Find out about volunteer opportunities</li> <li>• Find information about grant opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p>Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Film Students</li> <li>• Seeking information</li> <li>• Excited</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Mostly film students will visit the website in search of information for their study as well to get involved in different activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking to join workshops</li> <li>• Getting involved to volunteer</li> <li>• Get a job</li> </ul>
<p>Volunteer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All ages</li> <li>• Movie fan</li> <li>• Filmmaker</li> <li>• Student</li> <li>• Employed elsewhere</li> </ul>	<p>Interested parties looking for new volunteer opportunities. Seasoned volunteers looking for future volunteer opportunities that work with their busy schedules.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find info about volunteer opportunities</li> <li>• View monthly calendar</li> <li>• Contact volunteer coordinator</li> <li>• Sign up to volunteer</li> </ul>

## 5. Recruitment & Incentives

Recruitment will primarily be done in the form of in-class exercise. If further testing is required, we will recruit colleagues and friends in the Seattle area who have and have not visited NWFF or its website before. Because we should not expect anyone to participate for free, incentives for participation include good participation grades and an active participation return for our classroom colleagues, and may also include popcorn and/or twizzlers (to foster a cinematic ambiance).

## 6. Responsibilities & Proposed Schedule

All responsibilities will be shared between team members.

**Week Three (04/18 – 04/22):** Proposal of Project & Research Activities

**Week Four (04/25 – 04/29):** Website Competitive Analysis Report

**Week Five (05/02 – 05/06):** Heuristic Evaluation for Websites Report

**Week Six (05/09 – 05/13):** Conducting a Card Sort for Your Website Information Architecture

**Week Seven (05/16 – 05/20):** Card Sorting for Website Information Architecture Report

**Week Eight (05/23 – 05/27):** Usability Testing for Your Website Kit

**Week Nine (05/30 – 06/03):** Usability Testing for Your Website Interface

**Week Ten (06/06 – 06/09):** Usability Testing Your Website Interface Report

**Final Week (06/13 – 06/17):** Research Activities Final Presentation

## References

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