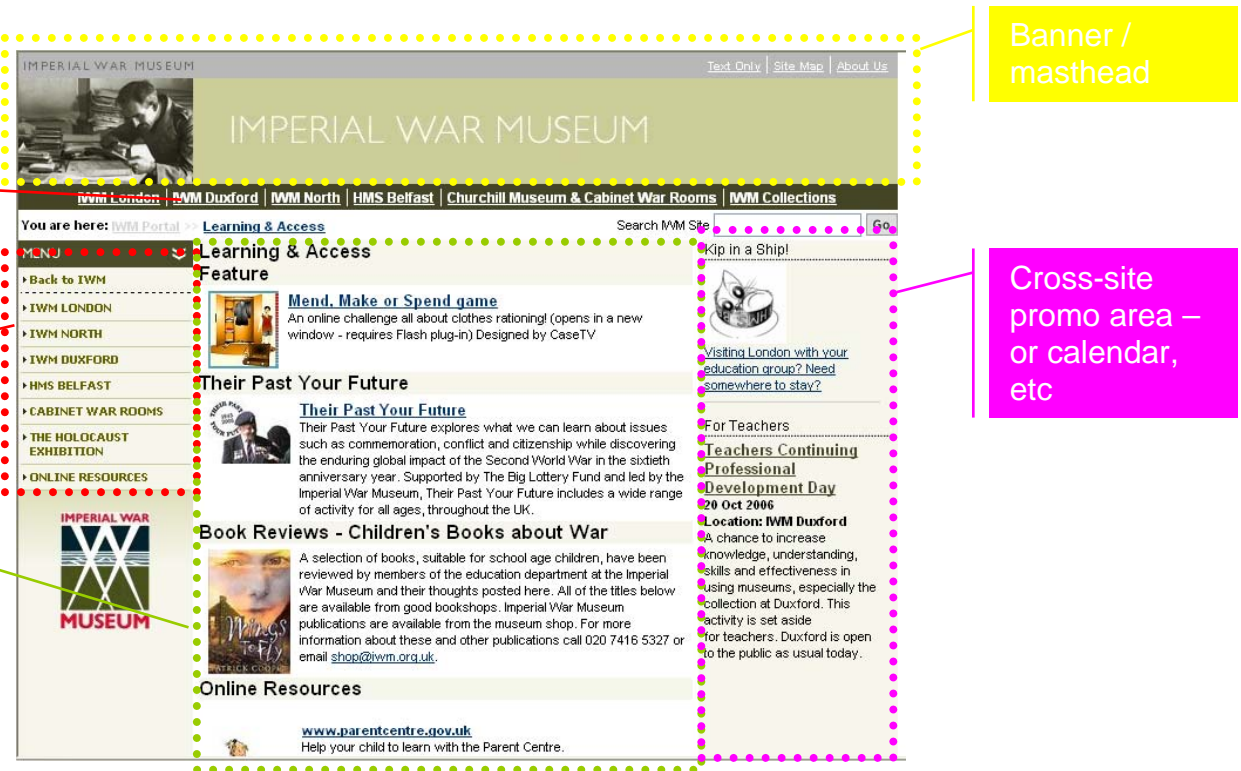


Website elements and functions



Navigation

1. offers **links** to all pages in the site with as few clicks as possible
2. implies information structure – acts as a **contents listing**
3. should also show the user **≥ where they are in the site ≤**

Main content area – body of page

4. User's attention should be drawn here, above other elements
5. Break up into separate visual elements – on all pages, esp upper levels
6. Avoid really long pages (scrolling) except at deeper levels of site

Masthead/banner area

7. Establish visual identity – helps put message across and tie pages together
8. Top left usually includes logo with link back to home page

Cross-site promos area

9. Use this to promote things users may not know about – either related, or complementary. (User may be a teacher and a student, a bridegroom, an arms specialist...)
10. Can also use this for calendar or for related links, resources, etc

Marketing tips

Motivation, then information

Decide on a **key message** – check it ‘works’ for you *and* your users - and stick to it. For example, for resources:

- Research the market (Google as if you were the user, ask teachers, etc). What will it compete with?
- Decide on the USP: local interest? (Hist, Geog, Literacy, Science) Easy to use? Unique collection? etc
- Refine the marketing message (single sentence/image) at beginning of project (along with vision statement) and work towards it (keep checking...)

Keep the **design simple** – don’t be seduced by Flash, over-busy or minimalist design – focus on what you want the website to do:

- **Who for? (audience)**
- **What ‘real-world’ outcomes? (e.g. learning outcomes)**
- **How will they use it? (learning experiences)**

Actively **seek feedback** on your site, and **act on it**
Critical comments are more helpful than positive platitudes

Most people scan, rather than read, web pages:

- Learn how to *write for the web*
- Use *more images and fewer words*
- Choose them so as to *reinforce the key message*

Online marketing elements to consider...

Content of website itself

‘Viral marketing’ games, offers, etc

Blogs

Search engine optimisation (SEO)

Key point: make your site popular, so other people link to it

Email marketing

E-newsletters

Click-throughs: Google AdWords

RSS feeds

- **to you**
- **from you**

...in concert with **events, phone calls, printed material, word of mouth etc**

Web 2.0 is...

A continually evolving spectrum of approaches, embodying

- User focus
- Agile development
- ‘Always Beta’ (always evolving, in development)
- Social trust
- User generated content ‘by and for users of a particular group’

A continually evolving raft of technologies (distributed services)

- Blogs, podcasts, RSS event feeds etc
- Wikis – collaborative workspaces
- Mash ups – live data, filtered/combined
- Social networking (Facebook, Bebo, Linked In etc)
- Social bookmarking (del.icio.us)
- social tagging (user-defined descriptions etc)

Staying out of Web 2.0 is not an option:
your museum’s Web 2.0 presence will be created with or without you... get involved now

Simple, low cost enhancements to museum websites

Freebies (or cheapies) for museum websites:

Embedded Google map – free, easy to set up

Google AdWords – control spend on click-throughs

Google search within your website

WordPress Website Content Management System– free, easy to use, open source, excellent for small websites

Google Analytics (or Piwik) – understand your web statistics

SurveyMonkey.com – cheap, easy to develop online surveys

Evaluation and user testing of online resources

Be clear **when**, **why** and **how** to test at each stage, **and what you will do with the results**.

This is a rough guide – the *starred items are the most important, from the point of view of getting it right for the end users. Further information available from Martin Bazley at martin@ICT4Learning.com or 0780 3580 727

Before funding approval- project planning

***Evaluation of existing resources**

Use the 'W6 methodology' (*Who for? What for? How will they use it? When..? Where...? Why..?*) to review related sites/ideas as part of project planning

Outputs: greater awareness amongst institution/project planning team of likely audience needs and preference, possibilities and issues to be aware of etc

***Internal review of feasibility**

Use W6 (*Who for? What for? How will they use it? etc...*) to check that the project is self-consistent before testing it on the target audience – make best use of concept testing input.

Outputs: self-consistent web brief that survives careful scrutiny by critical friends

***Concept testing**

The idea of this is to check feasibility of the initial idea, before development.

Show *visual*/summary of the project to a focus group (or just one or two 'representative' teachers/target audience) – see whether the idea makes sense *for them* from all angles.

Prepare simple visuals (paper, Powerpoint, whatever works) and short summaries to get across key idea and one or two possible implementations.

Try to *elicit negative feedback* – beware of pleasing vague responses such as "I would definitely use it" ("*What* would you use it for? How would you *find it*? *Why would you use this* when there is already a BBC/commercial resource on the same subject...? etc)

For interactives, use storyboards or equivalent - easily done in Powerpoint or just sketched. Try to include some idea of graphic feel at this early stage too.

Outputs: revised project brief, or shelving of project in favour of another approach.

Post-funding - Evaluation as part of project development

Concept testing

Repeat internal review and, ideally, concept testing (as first round may have been conducted a long time ago – or not at all).

If not, then do as this as part of Refine website architecture

Outputs: revised project brief and/or website outline

***Refine website structure**

Use this to refine the information architecture(IA). Also useful as a cross check on the concept testing, in that asking people where they would click for 'x' or 'y' tends to highlight major flaws/opportunities for improvement with the initial project conception.

Card-based sorting (for IA) – individuals or pairs (dep on audience type/testing conditions) Be alert to feedback affecting project as a whole.

If web developers already appointed, make use of their expertise – but do not allow distortion of the project to suit particular products/techniques of theirs (if testing is done by an external consultant, they should provide the independent, informed viewpoint needed during this process, acting as audience advocate)

Outputs: revise website structure to accommodate users needs where appropriate

***Evaluate initial look and feel**

Use 'creatives' (graphic mock ups of at least two designs, indicating possible look and feel and also navigation schemes).

Focus group or series of pairs, looking at creatives on a screen or on card..

Outputs: Refine the design (look and feel of the site/resource) and where possible also the IA/website structure. Also useful as a cross check on the concept testing.

Outputs: feedback to project team and thence to designers

*Full evaluation of a draft working version

Do this early enough to allow major changes – and late enough to make it a really representative 'sample' – probably best to get just one part or area ready.

For classroom resources, conduct evaluation in the classroom, in realistic conditions.

For a general audience, use a neutral venue (preferably not the authoring institution or web developer offices) and let the user guide their own tasks as far as possible.

Outputs: potentially major changes required, especially to content, style of presentation, activities (length, order, tone, practical arrangements, etc) etc

Acceptance testing of 'finished' website

User testing but not worth spending too much time and money on, as the site is already built!

Outputs: Helps to identify broken links, missing images, etc. Fine tune usability issues e.g. navigation CSS, page order, placing of promos, blocks of text, reactions to particular images, etc etc. Need to focus testing on issues that can be changed at this late stage.

Summative evaluation

This is sometimes confused with acceptance testing – or in extreme cases, with formative evaluation. The purpose and approach are very different!

Focus on highlights of the finished resource, positive aspects of project (for funders, conference presentations...) etc.

Also (for internal consumption, or immediate sharing with others in sympathetic forums, and later sharing with others) project-level failures, lessons for future etc

Outputs: reports to funders and other stakeholders. Ideally also adding to social capital of organisation or sector to share lessons learnt and tips for future success

Spring Clean your website

If you can't afford a completely new website, consider a lite approach: spend a few £100 to address basic usability, accessibility and other issues and add a few free or low cost features to spruce up your site.

If you don't have a website, starting from scratch can be an advantage!