

Lunch and Learn – Building a research project website

Notes on session and useful links

This series is organised by the LSE KEI Integrated Service, a coordinated internal infrastructure to communicate, support and assess knowledge exchange and public engagement activities, as well as other pathways to impact, within the School. We aim to encourage LSE researchers to think about opportunities for knowledge exchange and public engagement throughout their research projects; to communicate the value of engaging non-academic audiences in research to LSE researchers and the wider LSE community; to showcase “effective” engagement activities; and to equip LSE researchers and research support staff with the skills needed to carry these out.

Find more information at lse.ac.uk/kei

[Link to slides and resources from this session \(via Google Drive\).](#)

What is good content? (see slides)

Susanna Helldén, Digital Team, Communications Division, LSE

Content has to engage audiences immediately, within the first 0.05 seconds

Things you need to think about (see slide 5):

- **Visual design**
How do you keep visitors on your page? They need engaging chunks of content.
- **Information design** – can visitors easily navigate the site?
- **Structure**- how do visitors digest the information?
Remember that people like to access information in different ways and you should cater to these different preferences (or conceptual models, see slide 10)
Think about including video and podcasts as well as text and images.
Ensure that the website is responsive – this is a key part of the LSE website design, so it works for different platforms (including tablet and mobile).
Ensure that the site is accessible, for example to the visually impaired. Again, this is something built into the LSE website, but you have to make sure you complete ‘alt text’ fields.
- **Scope**
What do you want visitors to *do* on your site? What is its purpose?
Use the “jobs to be done” model to think this through... What’s the situation your visitor is in? What is their motivation? What is the expected outcome?

Make sure you are communicating the right message – remember that on a global platform, with audiences accessing your content from different cultures/languages, things are open to misinterpretation. Make sure your messages are clear.

CHECKLISTS

1. GOOD CONTENT

Functionality:

- If people can’t achieve their goal then content has failed.

Reliability:

- If functionality or design is not consistent across the site then content has failed.
- Or if the functionality or design is consistent, but only works sometimes then content has failed.

Usability:

- If a 'slip of the finger' (human error scenario testing) interrupts, corrupts or deletes their activity then content has failed.

Content requirements:

- Does it work as people expect?
- Do people understand how to use it?
- Do people find it easy to use?
- Does it solve people's problems?
- Does it answer people's questions?
- Does it help people accomplish their goals?

Previous user experience:

- What have they experienced before?
- Is there a 'best practice'/industry standard in place?

User journeys:

- What might a user know beforehand?
- What could a user want to do after?

2. GOOD CONTENT CREATION

Content planning:

- Who are your users?
- What do your users want/need?
- SEO: On-page SEO and URLs
- Site IA: Strategically structure/place your content

Content production:

- Different types of copywriting
- Structure your text using the inverted pyramid
- Write headlines
- Sub-headings, intro's & written/visual cues in main body text
- Copy: To be 'to the point', i.e. short, succinct, concise & clear
- Using 'key messages'
- Imagery: Use visual communication to support your text/message
- [Find out more about writing for web.](#)

Post-publication:

- Future content planning
- Future content maintenance

How to build a project website with Contensis CMS (see slides)

Matt Hough, Digital Team, Communications Division, LSE

To make your website really work for you, content strategy must come first: the who, what where, when and why

The next step after generating content is information architecture. You should do a content audit (i.e. make a list of all your content) and then create a map of how it could be best structured in your site – for example using post its.

You are more likely to lose your audience if they have to click through lots of times to reach content.

So, always question whether the content really justifies a page of its own or can it be combined with other content? Fitting more content onto one page is a better experience for your visitor.

Think about how your visitors will navigate around the site – you should never have a dead end, and you should avoid always directing people back to the homepage. Think about your links and how you are directing people through your site.

You can neatly fit more content onto a page using features like accordions and promo boxes.

A [standard content page](#) is a good starting point for a landing page – you need a lot of content to build a [Level 2 landing page](#).

Good examples to look at:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/global-health-initiative/research/research-standard-page>

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/research>

It is never too late to think about your IA, even if your site is already live – take time to do an audit of your content and work out how people are travelling through your site, which are popular pages (look at Google Analytics) and then make changes.

How to measure success (see slides)

Ross Fisher, Digital Team, Communications Division, LSE

In order to measure whether your site is successful you have to think about *who* you want to look at your site and *what* you want them to do there.

Websites can be really helpful in providing quantitative success measures for things like grant proposals or reports.

Ways to quantitatively measure engagement with your site:

- [URL builder](#) can help you track exactly how people find out about your site
- [Readability checker](#) assesses whether your content is easy to understand
- [Accessibility checker](#) measures the accessibility of your site
- Google Analytics gives you an idea of how people behave around your content, how they arrived at your content, and something about who they are – where in the world they are and what kind of device they are using.

- Remember you can also ask for feedback from your users via online forms, social media polls or even by email. Qualitative feedback can give you important insights about how your site is being used.

If you would like to be set up on Google Analytics please contact the digital team

Comms.Digital@lse.ac.uk

More information about using Google Analytics, and guides for how to build websites on CMS can be found on the [Digital Knowledge Base](#).

SEO 101 & Search Console Training (see slides)

Grace Devenney, Junior Associate – SEO, Merkle

Search engine optimisation = increasing quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results.

Why is it important?

It is really crucial to be on the first page of search results, 91.5% of click-throughs come from the first page.

How do search engines like Google work?

Algorithms based on over 200 ranking factors, which change regularly (so if, when tracking your web performance through Google Analytics, you notice a sudden drop off in clicks, get in touch with the LSE digital team to see if an algorithm change might be affecting you).

There are 2 main categories of ranking factors: on-page and off-page.

Off-page = things you aren't really in control of (including how many other sites link through to your page, mentions on social media), though it does include the authority of the page and this is a big benefit of building your site as part of the LSE website, it will be much more discoverable via searchers.

On-page = where you have more control as you build your site. **Things you should be thinking about:**

- Page Title
Used by search engines to determine relevance of page
Make sure you include the main key words
50-70 characters max (so they don't truncate)
- Meta descriptions
This doesn't factor into the algorithm, but it is crucial as it is what gets users to actually click through to your site.
It should be clearly written, 155 characters and containing key words.
- Header tags
Ensure you use at least one Header Tag 1 on your page. Search engine use header tags to understand the structure of the site.
- Page Content
Always write for users, not for search engines, but try to focus on 3-5 key

words/themes on a page.

- Internal links (hyperlinks to text on the page)
These help show search engines that pages are relevant. Avoid phrases like 'click here' and 'learn more' these won't count, it needs to clearly say what you are linking through to.

To help you with your titles, descriptions and keywords, here are some tools you can use:

<https://technicalseo.com/> (Under 'SEO tools' you can find a SERP simulator, which shows you how a page will appear in a search)

https://ads.google.com/intl/en_uk/home/tools/keyword-planner/ (keyword research tool)

<https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=US> (keyword research tool)

Keyword research tools will help you understand what users are searching for in your area of interest.

Google Search Console: how do you track performance in searches?

LSE digital team can give you access to the Google Search Console, you can use this to search for your website landing page.

If you have a low number of impressions this means that your page is not coming up in a wide enough range of searches and you should consider the steps above to optimise your performance.
