

IDIA 630.185 Assignment 1 – organization, labeling, and navigation analysis Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum <http://ndm.si.edu/> or <http://www.cooperhewitt.org/>

Introduction

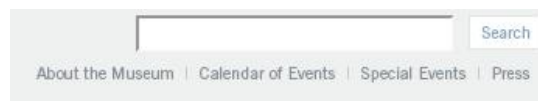
The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum has a clearly labeled, hierarchically structured website that supports both known item and exploratory searching. The site is geared towards users who browse, whom are most likely the primary target of the site (potential museum goers, NYC public, NYC tourists, designers/artists, arts educators, children, students, etc), but also offers supplementary navigational systems for frequent visitors.

Site Organization

The National Design Museum’s website is an ambiguous hybrid scheme, categorized primarily by topic with quick links geared towards specific audiences. The global navigation focuses on topic, with the most emphasized navigational bar (emphasis by background color and text size) featuring the museum’s primary divisions (current exhibitions, permanent collections, education, the national design awards) and important links meant to draw user’s to the museum (visit Cooper-Hewitt, join & support, shop). The emphasized links encourage many types of users to browse the site.



The top global navigation separates out (by location and text size) information about the museum and time sensitive links (calendar, events and press). These links appeal to users who have plans to visit the museum or are frequent visitors.



The bottom global navigation is the least emphasized (by font size), and features important links used primarily by frequent users of the site or known-item seekers.



The site is structured polyhierarchically; it structures the content hierarchically by topic but also offers quick, audience focused links and uses a complementary hypertext structure in contextual navigation. For example, the body of the home page offers a quick link section for educators:



and within the text for the education resource landing page, there is a contextual navigation link to learn more about why design education is important in the classroom. This appeals to both repeat, known-item seekers and exploratory seekers within the educator audience.

Exhibitions | Collections | Education | Visit Cooper-Hewitt | Join & Support | National Design Awards | Shop

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The Taxi Cab

Site Labeling

Labels throughout the site communicate the content efficiently through key words. Link labels are usually brief and emphasized in bold and a larger text size. The labels are most meaningful to frequent museum goers (*collections* infers permanent collections, while *exhibitions* infers temporary and special exhibits), but also clear enough to a browser who is not as familiar with the language of museums. The



Collections

About the Collections

[Drawings, Prints, & Graphic Design](#)

[Product Design & Decorative Arts](#)

[Textiles](#)

[Wallcoverings](#)

[Library](#)

About the Collections

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum's collection is international in scope, includes both historic and contemporary design, and extends from one-of-a-kind to mass-produced items.

Find out more:

[Michelangelo Unveiled](#)

[View the Collections Online](#)

The collection encompasses the rich holdings of the Museum's [Library](#), [Archives](#), and four curatorial departments: [Product Design and Decorative Arts](#); [Drawings, Prints, and Graphic Design](#); [Textiles](#); and [Wallcoverings](#). Designers seeking inspiration for new product lines draw ideas from the diversity of the collection. Scholars and students exploring the history of design use the collection as a primary resource. Writers seeking historical authenticity refer to them for firsthand experience of objects. Collectors—novice and seasoned—use the collection to expand their understanding and develop their expertise.

Highlighted links in the body of the page serve to interest viewers to learn more. *Michelangelo Unveiled* is less meaningful to a new viewer, but might intrigue them enough to read further. The page also contains a link to an external (new window) website, the Smithsonian eMuseum, where viewers can browse through museum's collection online.



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More specific, audience based links directing users to the same content as global navigation sits on home page. For example, the *Educator Resource Center* is a quick link to a page within *Education*:

Educator Resource Center

- ▶ Lesson Plans
- ▶ Video
- ▶ Resources

Upcoming Events

Vital Empathy
Feb 22, 2007

DESIGN LIFE NOW

NATIONAL DESIGN TRIENNIAL 2006

- ▶ Designers
- ▶ Podcasts
- ▶ Blog
- ▶ Events
- ▶ About the Exhibition


Featured Podcast: Charlie Lazor

the **SHOP**



Shop Online

[Exhibitions](#) | [Collections](#) | [Education](#) | [Visit Cooper-Hewitt](#) | [Join & Support](#) | [National Design Awards](#) | [Shop](#)



Educator Resource Center

Lesson Plans
Video & Audio
Resources for Educators

Education at Cooper-Hewitt

Cooper-Hewitt's dynamic educational programs provide insight into the ways in which design shapes our lives every day, encouraging us to understand how design can best be used to shape a positive future.

Many of the Museum's programs present "design" as a verb, engaging audiences in

Public Programs

Tech On Your Terms: Blogfest
February 8, 2007

Vital Empathy
February 22, 2007

Education at Cooper-Hewitt

Educator Resources

- ▶ **Educator Resource Center**
Find and create design-focused lesson plans, talk to educators from around the country, and more.
- ▶ Videos for Educators
- ▶ Curriculum Guides
- ▶ Books & Articles
- ▶ Resources on the Web

Education at Cooper-Hewitt

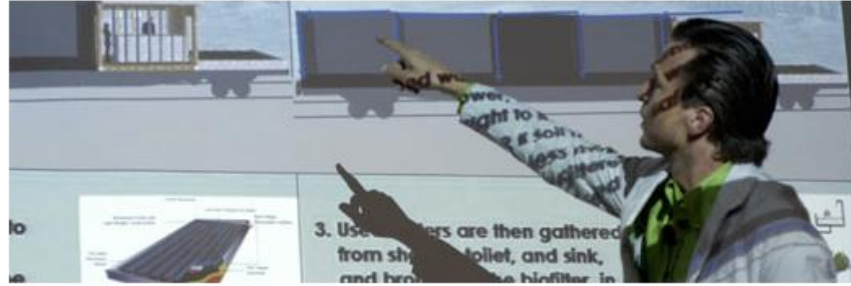
Public Programs

Youth Programs

Educator and Community Programs

[Exhibitions](#) | [Collections](#) | [Education](#) | [Visit Cooper-Hewitt](#) | [Join & Support](#) | [National Design Awards](#) | [Shop](#)

Educator Resource Center



Design in the Classroom

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The section used in the previous example does point out some inconsistency in the labels which may cause users to miss important content. On the *education* landing page, *educator resources* contains

five navigational labels: *educator resource center*, *videos for educators*, *curriculum guides*, *books & articles*, and *resources on the web*. The *educator resource center* landing page contains four navigational links: *lesson plans*, *conversations*, *resources*, and *about*. *Curriculum guides* and *lesson plans* take the user to two different pages, as does *resources on the web* and *resources*, however the similarity in labeling may give the user the sense that they lead to the same content. Because the *education resource center* leads users to a subsite, while the following *educator resources* navigational links maintain the same local navigation, users might miss the four navigation links below. Perhaps emphasizing all of the *educator resources* links with a brief description (and not just *educator resource center*) will improve the granularity of these labels.

Site Navigation

The National Design Museum site uses an embedded navigation system with a supplementary search system and site map.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum website. The header includes the museum's name, a search bar, and a secondary menu with links for 'About the Museum', 'Calendar of Events', 'Special Events', and 'Press'. A primary navigation bar below contains links for 'Exhibitions', 'Collections', 'Education', 'Visit Cooper-Hewitt', 'Join & Support', 'National Design Awards', and 'Shop'.

Callouts on the page identify specific navigation features:

- global navigation:** A box points to the main navigation bar at the top.
- local navigation:** A box points to the 'About the Museum' section on the right side of the page.
- contextual navigation:** A box points to the 'The Museum' section on the left side of the page.

The 'About the Museum' section includes links for 'The Museum', 'The Mansion', and 'The Smithsonian Institution', followed by a list of the Board of Trustees members.

The 'The Museum' section features a large image of the Carnegie Mansion and a portrait of Paul Warwick Thompson, Director. The text describes the museum's mission and its collection of over 250,000 design objects.

Both global and local navigation serve as site identifiers throughout the site, but local navigation is not always consistent. For example, in the image below the global navigation lets the user know she is in

the *Education* section, and the emphasized heading at the top left show that she is in the *Educator Resource Center*, however it is not as clear that she is in the *About* page.

Educator Resource Center Home Lesson Plans Conversations Resources About

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Another page within the *Educator Resource Center*, *Conversations*, provides a heading, but it is not the most visually emphasized text on the page.

Educator Resource Center Home Lesson Plans Conversations Resources About

Conversations Start a new conversation

Conversation Title	Date Created	Replies	Views	Last Post
Structured learning? or Learning-on-the-fly?	Feb 4 2007	1	19	Feb 10 2007
Blogspot	Dec 27 2006	8	126	Feb 9 2007
Books and Art	Dec 5 2006	6	154	Feb 9 2007
Design as a lens	Dec 3 2006	4	118	Feb 8 2007
Naea Convention in NYC	Jan 2 2007	4	127	Feb 7 2007
architecture project- form and function	Dec 3 2006	7	178	Jan 15 2007
Carolynne Kellner and George Latos, Providence, RI	Sep 26 2006	11	152	Jan 13 2007

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Other sections of the site, such as the *Contact Us* page below, use a different color to show what page within the local navigation the user is in. Perhaps using this approach more consistently throughout the site will give users who enter into a page other than the home page better contextual clues to where they are within the hierarchy of the site.



Visit Cooper-Hewitt

[Museum Hours & Location](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Phone Directory](#)

Contact Us

General Information: 212.849.8400

Tours: 212.849.8351, or email:
chtours@si.edu.

Find out more:

[Membership: Join Today](#)

Conclusion

Overall the National Design Museum's website feels successful in its architecture. There are many audience based and contextual links that access the same content, and the global navigation helps users to quickly move from one section of content to another. Improvements can be made to the consistency of the local navigation throughout the site, however a clear hierarchy and labeling system make the site accessible to the diversity of users who visit the website.