Introduction

Use this checklist to evaluate the online newspapers you encounter — or, more importantly, to critique your own.

http://highered.mheducation.com/sites/0072407611/student_view0/glossary.html

Layout and Design

☐ Is the home page attractive, inviting and well-organized?

☐ Can readers easily differentiate between promos, ads and live news?

☐ Is there a clear hierarchy of news content on the home page?

☐ In other words, is it instantly obvious which stories are most important?

☐ Do the headlines and design of the top stories on the home page show creativity or flair (rather than being predictably pre-formatted)?

☐ Does the site's design style match the personalities of its readers?

☐ Do pages use attractive, appropriate and consistent colors?

☐ Does the site avoid unnecessary blinky-floaty-glowy animated effects?

☐ Does the text on most pages avoid becoming too wide and wordy?

☐ Does the site use consistent styles for the basics: headlines, bylines, subheads, etc.?

☐ Does the site use consistent styles for the extras: graphics, liftout quotes, sidebars, etc.?

User-Friedliness

☐ Does the home page download quickly?

☐ Does the site offer a "Sunday Brunch"-style menu of stories, visuals, reader forums and multimedia options (audio, video, animated graphics, etc.)?

☐ Does the site provide services, stories and sidebars not available in the print newspaper?

☐ Are users always a single click away from the home page or main section fronts?

☐ Is a concise index constantly viewable, from any page in the site?

☐ Does the flag appear atop every page, to remind users where they are?

☐ Are all images necessary? Tightly cropped? Compressed into GIF or JPEG formats?

☐ Does the site function successfully with all images turned off in the browser?

☐ If someone visits this site looking for a specific piece of information, will it be easy to find?

☐ When reading the text of stories, do users find helpful links that expand/explain topics?

☐ Can users search the newspaper's back issues? Are the archives reasonably complete?

☐ Does the site provide helpful links to related resources outside the newspaper?

☐ Is it easy to send e-mail feedback, news tips or letters to the editor?

☐ Most importantly: Will visitors tend to bookmark this site and visit it again?

Site Management

☐ Does the site design feel current? (Has it been upgraded within the past year?)

☐ Are all stories time-stamped (or, at the very least, dated)?

☐ Are all stories and headlines well-edited?

☐ Do all pages share a well-coordinated system of navigation controls, typography and color style throughout the site?

☐ Are there annoying technical glitches (temperamental graphics, expired links, pages "under construction") that might frustrate users?

☐ Does the site provide newsroom phone numbers and addresses, for those who need to

do more than send e-mail?

☐ Are the publication name, Web address, date and copyright notice posted on every page (and do they appear on all printouts of stories)?

☐ Does anything on this site violate someone else's copyright?

Which Elements Need Redesign

Once you've identified your flaws and established your goals, you can pinpoint

specific items that need repair or replacement. As you compile your redesign

shopping list, decide what's sacred (your flag?), what's got to go (your ugly headline type?) and what's optional (maybe a fancy index would be nice, but not

essential).

To help you itemize the changes you need to make, try using this checklist:

Headlines and Text

☐ The Flag: ** Must be unique and expressive, like a corporate logo. Should you try a modern, stylish typeface? Special graphics effects? Color?

☐ **Headlines :** Want them bold and punchy? Or sleek and elegant? Want to try alternative forms (hammers, kickers) — or add topic labels?

☐ **Decks:** Should complement the main headline's typeface. Will you add them to every story? Want different styles for news and features?

☐ **Standing Heads:** Choose one expressive, stylish type family for all page toppers, logos, sigs, etc. Want screens, reverses, other graphics effects?

☐ **Text:** Must be comfortable to read. What's the ideal size and leading?

☐ **SPpecial Text:** Want a sans-serif alternative for graphics, sidebars, briefs? Should be a font with versatility (strong boldface, italic, etc.).

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Architecture and Design

☐ **Page Grids:** Should you try a new system of column widths and page formats? Will this work with ads — or just on open pages?

☐ **Page Headers:** Where do you want them — at the top? Sideways? Indented? Can they incorporate graphic extras (factoids, calendars, etc.)?

☐ **Briefs:** Should you regard them as fundamental building blocks and anchor them throughout the paper? Can you include art?

☐ **Special Features:** Polls. Quotes. Stats. Calendars. Quizzes. Contests. Letters. Cartoons. Can you build these into standing page formats?

☐ **Rules & Boxes:** They're a key part of your overall look. Want them loud? Quiet? Decide on ideal line weights. Box styles. Screen densities.

☐ **Promos & Indeces:** How prominent? How flexible? How much art can you add?

☐ **Ads:** Can you keep ad stacks modular? Cleared from key pages?

Content and Organization

☐ **Sectioning:** Can you restructure the news into innovative topics and departments? Can you create special themed pages or packages?

☐ **Sequencing:** What's the most interesting, effective flow of topics through the paper? Where can you pile ugly ad stacks to do the least damage?

☐ **Non-Text Options:** Can you repackage information in a variety of forms – besides text and headlines? Can you anchor these alternative formats?

☐ **Interactivity:** How user-friendly should you be? Where can you give readers more opportunities to speak, participate, interact?

☐ **Liftout quotes**

☐ **Column Logos:** A graphic device that labels regularly appearing material by packaging the writer's name, the column's name and a small mug or drawing of the writer.

☐ **Review & Preview**

☐ **Bylines:** The reporter's name, usually at the beginning of a story.

☐ **Jump Lines**

☐ **Jump Headlines:** A special headline treatment reserved for stories continued from another page

☐ **Initials Caps:** A large capital letter set at the beginning of a paragraph.

☐ **Cutlines:** A line or block of type providing descriptive information about a photo

☐ **Cutlines for standalone photos:**

☐ **Credit lines:**

☐ **Editor's notes:**

☐ **Maps & Charts:**

☐ **Refers:** A line or paragraph, often given graphic treatment, referring to a related story elsewhere in the paper.

☐ **Corrections:**