**Lindsay Hively**

TO: John Butterfield, Site Editor at DATE: November 3, 2018

 American Psychological Association

FROM: Lindsay Hively, Student at

 Longwood University

**SUBJECT: APA Website Design - Recommendation Report**

**Report Introduction**

 **Topic**

The following report focuses on the design elements of the website for the American Psychological Association, or APA. This includes the overall design of the website regarding its accessibility, reliability, and functionality for viewers. Also emphasized is the general design of individual web pages, and if the use of the minimal space and typeface in each web page assists readers in the best way possible. The last topic considers the graphics on the site, if they add or detract from the featured text.

 **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to inform you of potential design flaws inspected from the APA website, emphasizing the website’s overall design, individual page layout, and use of graphics. Following this information will include specific recommendations to improve these design faults. Positive elements included in the site will also be noted.

 **Summary**

This report recommends that the makers of the APA website consider the design flaws that were perhaps overlooked or misconstrued. After comprehensively evaluating the website’s design elements and functions, a number of suggestions can be made to easily resolve issues regarding the following content:

* Overall design of the site
* The design of each web page
* The graphics on the site

It is important to acknowledge the recommendations from each of these points, in order to collect information that may better reflect the intended audiences. Further discussion of each point follows.

**Report Discussion**

**Overall Site Design**

The overall site design appears to be effective. The links work properly and accomplish their objective. Necessary elements are also included, such as a search bar, top-level navigation tabs, a website title and logo, and other links located at the bottom of each web page. I have also checked the website on mobile devices, and noticed that all the elements are fully functioning and are appealing to the eye, even from a smaller screen. While these elements are all successful, malfunctions regarding the organization and accessibility of the site should be examined.

 **Design Flaws and Recommendations**

1. Since one of the main purposes of the website is to inform the audience of its identity, especially in brief summary, then the About Me tab should not be placed last in the top-level navigation bar. Instead, simply place the About Me tab in the first available location, so viewers can immediately notice and access it.
2. Generally, there is an overwhelming contrast in colored banners on each tab. Although these color changes can help cluster different sets of information, there are alternative ways that the information can be “chunked” on a web page. The contrast in color may fail to lead a viewer’s eye in the intended direction. In place of using different colored banners for each chunk of information, consider separating the information with ample white space or dotted/dashed lines.
3. Although advertisement sales help make the APA website more profitable, the ads shown at the bottom of each web page are slightly distracting. I would reconsider if the ads are really worth their place on the website. In my opinion, they only cause a greater design overload. Consider creating an advertisement tab, such as those seen in the yellow pages.

 **Web Page Design**

Concerning the design of each web page, a few positive elements are frequently noted, including typeface legibility, format consistency, and effective use of space. These elements create a positive user experience. However, the following website pages are ones that I recommend reviewing, revising, and editing for conciseness. Also provided are personal suggestions to guide you in the revision process.

 **Design Flaws and Recommendations**

1. **Contact Page:** Names of contact members are not stated; hyperlinks are instead used to direct viewers to other windows. To revise this, simply include the names of contact members before inserting the hyperlinks.
2. **Member Page:** This page, especially the PsycIQ section, is very information-dense. Because of this, there are a lot of different topics compiled into one place. Reorganize the information in a specific way, whether it be by importance or relevance – whatever the purpose is for this section. Specifically, bring to the top the video entitled “Why I’m an APA member.” This video summarizes what the APA is all about, and encourages others to consider joining the association. From there, separate the text according to useful information for non-members and then for registered members. I do, however, commend the four sub-tabs concerning an individual’s membership, growth, focus, and training.
3. **Psychology Help Center Page:** Many headings are displayed in the left hand column on this page. This may distract the readers, inhibiting them from finding a resource they need. Similar to the Publications and Databases page, I would transfer to the “Interest Area” subheadings so that they are displayed directly beneath the top-level navigation tabs, in a horizontal fashion. This may be one of the most important pages to make as concise as possible, considering the primary audience. The audience for this page is specifically in need of therapeutic help, and may be experiencing a mental health imbalance. Reliable and efficient assistance is what they genuinely need most.
4. **Science Page:** The title of this page is slightly misleading. Because the page describes APA’s promotion of research in the psychology field, the title of the page should reflect that. Instead of using the general term “Science,” change the title of the page to “Research.” This may help attract the intended audience.

 **Site Graphics**

The APA website contains a variety of graphics and visuals. Importantly, these graphics seem to have the purpose of supplementing the provided text, not overcasting or detracting information. For every image or symbol, there is text explaining it. The images also seem to flow across each webpage evenly. An admirable feature displayed on this website multiple times are photograph montages. These montages are placed at the top of select pages, and allow information and corresponding images to fade in and out of view. Overall, I do not see any blank areas that could otherwise be filled with graphics, which is a favorable quality.

 **Design Flaws and Recommendations**

1. Some of the images, especially the photo icons showing people, display solemn facial expressions, as seen in the Psychology Help Center tab. Reconsider this notion by using pictures of people and images that symbolize positivity, making the viewers feel welcome to learning more about the site.
2. Few images exhibit this, but some do not accurately represent the purpose of the text. For example, under the Publications & Databases tab, there is an image attached to the link stating: “APA Publishing Recourse Center.” Although there is text provided to make more sense of the link, the icon (displaying broken and bitten pencils) has no relation to the text. In general, make a greater effort to use images that best represent what the text is offering. For this link in particular, I suggest choosing an image related to guidelines and policies, such as a photograph of a file drawer or a clip art image of check marks and “X” marks.
3. Images that are copied and used in the website should be cited, or mentioned where they originally came from. Provide a link or citation for each image, one that isn’t too distracting for the reader. Or create a citations page that presents a collection of these citations. Regardless, permission should be granted by the original owner of the images for copyright.
4. There are also some web pages that appear cluttered, for the sole reason of using too many graphics. An example of this can be found on the Topics page. The banner displayed at the top, showing the images of many different faces, is not relevant to the text, and therefore does not need to be there. It only creates distraction. When there are white spaces that you can consider filling in with images, take time to debate whether or not the images appropriately supplement the text. Most of the time, keeping a page simple is more appealing to the eye than filling in space with unrelated images.

**Report Conclusion**

As an effective website designer, it is critical to acknowledge critiques from peers, and at times act on the suggestions that follow. In this case, a variety of recommendations are provided for the purpose of improving the APA website’s overall design, page layout, and implementation of graphics. It is my hope that this information is relevant to you, and may be of practical use.

I look forward to hearing back from you regarding these design recommendations. If you have any further questions or comments, I can be contacted from the following email address: lindsay.hively@live.longwood.edu.

Thank you,

Lindsay Hively