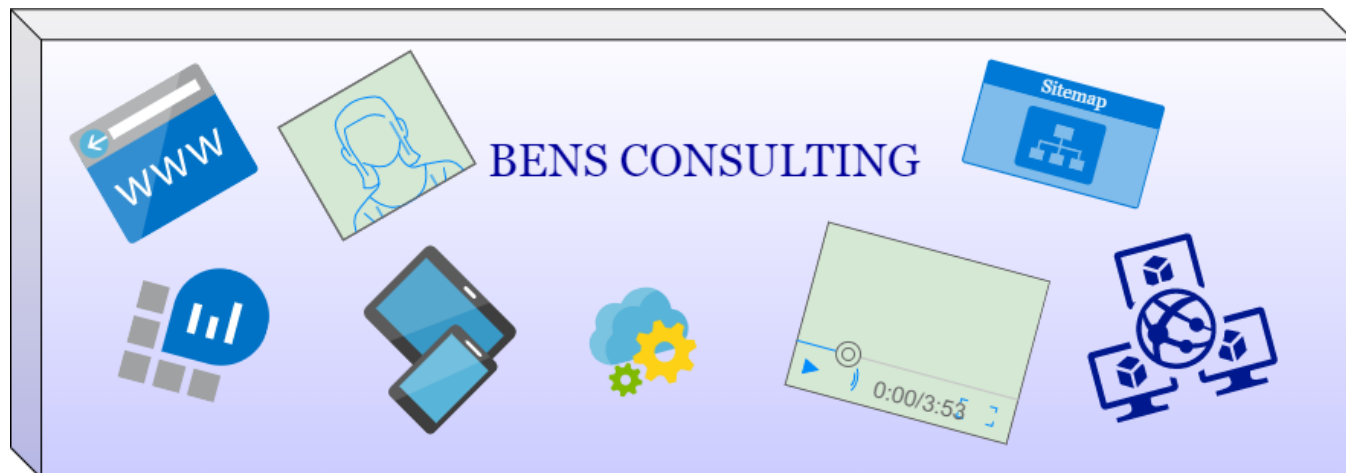


LGBTQ [REDACTED] Website Redesign by BENS Consulting

[https://lgbtq\[REDACTED\].com/](https://lgbtq[REDACTED].com/)



Final Report

December 8, 2021

Prepared for [REDACTED]

BENS Consulting redesign team:

Brian [REDACTED], Nicole [REDACTED], Esteban Lopez, Sandy [REDACTED]

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Objectives and Problem Statement	4
Problem Statement	4
Business Objectives & Design Objectives	4
External Stakeholders	5
Internal Stakeholders	5
User Research Plan	5
User Interviews	6
Card Sort	6
Follow-Up Survey	7
User Personas	8
User Journey Maps	9
User Scenario Pre-Changes	9
User Scenario Post-Changes	10
Site Model	10
Sitemap	11
Wire Frames	11
Recommendations	13

LGBTQ [REDACTED] Web Re-design, Brian [REDACTED], Nicole [REDACTED], Esteban Lopez, Sandy [REDACTED]

Executive Summary

The LGBTQ [REDACTED] website was created and is run by editor [REDACTED] to promote curated LGBTQIAP+ literature. The website caters to all ages and provides a list of LGBTQIAP+ books to recommend to its users. Dahlia states in the website that she only lists books in which queer characters have a point of view (POV). Though there are different standards for what constitutes a queer book, the LGBTQ [REDACTED] requires this rule for books to be recommended on the website. The blog site is managed by a single person, [REDACTED], and blogging policies are provided to inform users of the site's purpose to list recommended books and not for book review. The LGBTQ [REDACTED] represent the queer community and highlights largely underrepresented LGBTQIAP+ literature.

[REDACTED] has contracted BENS Consulting to redesign her LGBTQ [REDACTED] blog site. Her primary business objective is to promote queer literature and provide an online platform as a shared space for users. There are significant improvements for the user experience when reviewing the page layouts on the site. BENS Consulting has proposed enhancements to improve the site's navigation to help increase ease of access to site content and provide a stronger sense of control for the user.

The overall goal for the project is to reduce information overload, confusion, and frustration from the user experience. The project overview includes the background, problem statement, user research, and project recommendations for the redesign project. BENS Consulting has contracted Brian [REDACTED], Nicole [REDACTED], Esteban Lopez, and Sandy [REDACTED] as the project team members to support this effort. The team's design objective is focused on clarity, findability, and delightfulness of the LGBTQ [REDACTED] website.

For this project, it is presumed that the key project stakeholder, [REDACTED], will be available as a resource throughout the entirety of the project. Dahlia will provide her expertise in order to meet project objectives. It is apparent that the content of the website is fixed by the author and only the restructure of the website will be changed. Lastly, it is visible that the website's target audience is the LGBTQIAP+ community who are interested in book suggestions that showcase the LGBTQIAP+ point of view.

Provided in this report is a user research that consists of user interviews, card sorting, and a follow-up survey. These three components will support the redesign project by identifying users and gaining user feedback to meet both the business and design objectives of the project. User interviews will identify users of the site, card sorting will support the clarity and findability of site content, and a follow-up survey will be provided post go-live of the new website design to identify whether project objectives were met.

BENS consulting also provides recommendations at the end of the report to present feedback from users and findings from the website's redesign launch. Future enhancements for the website are also gathered from identified issues and data gathered from the launch and provided on this report. A follow-up survey is one example that is provided as part of the website's sustainability plan to have an ongoing evaluation process from users post the website's launch. Specific recommendations are located at the end of this report.

Objectives and Problem Statement

Problem Statement

The weaknesses of the website stems from information overload, poor navigation tools, and frustration of site content access from a user experience. There is a need to establish the purpose of the site and provide convenient access to users who want to find LGBTQIAP+ books on the website. Another opportunity is to shorten or make the information provided more concise and to the point. The viewers are burdened with information overload, multiple clicks, and a lengthy page scroll. To improve access to site content and provide more user friendly controls, it is recommended to enhance the site's page through a redesign and meet the deliverables of the project.

Business Objectives & Design Objectives

The primary business objective of LGBTQ [REDACTED] is to serve as a promotional tool for queer literature. The site promotes books written by queer authors and/or featuring queer characters by hosting author interviews, curating lists of books, as well as cover reveals and guest posts. Authors who wish to promote a book can submit a pitch to [REDACTED], where, if approved, they can post a blog where they talk about their book, or another topic of their choosing. Moreover, authors can also purchase ads that will promote their work on LGBTQ [REDACTED]. While there are affiliate links so users can potentially purchase one of the books featured on the site, this is only a secondary feature on the site. In addition to links to Patreon and Ko-Fi pages, the affiliate links on LGBTQ [REDACTED] are to help offset [REDACTED]'s costs of maintaining the site.

Our design objectives are to focus on improving the clarity, findability and delightfulness of the site. First, as it stands now, it is hard for a user to determine what the purpose of the website is. As there are a mixture of lists, interviews, ads, and affiliate links, it is possible to mistake the site as some sort of review blog, news site or even a place to buy books. BENS consulting wishes to focus our redesign efforts on making the purpose of the site very overt and clear to the user so they do not mistake the site as being something that it is not. Second, we noticed that there were unclear categories and a vast amount of headers users have to sort through in order to find what they are looking for. We wish to standardize the categories and make them more akin to a library in an attempt to increase the site's findability. Finally, on an aesthetic level, the site could use some work in making it easier for users to read. Looking through posts requires users to continuously scroll and, due to font and color choices, it can be difficult to visually see what some of the headers are saying. Thus, we wish to increase the LGBTQ [REDACTED]' delightfulness by changing the fonts, colors and make it so that users do not have to scroll quite as much. By implementing these elements in our redesign, it is our hope that users coming to LGBTQ [REDACTED] looking for a new book recommendation will have a pleasant user experience and find something that suits their interests and needs.

There are two types of target users for this project. One type are users who are first navigating the site and the rest are users who are familiar with the site. Another set of users identified are either authors or publishers looking to promote books. The central user is [REDACTED] who runs and curates the website (LGBTQ [REDACTED]). By targeting the end users, this site redesign will have a focus allowing both the curator and promoters to reach and satisfy their target consumers.

An overview of stakeholders includes every category of user as external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders working on the project and with the power to approve projects are the project team and others in BENS Consulting. Listed below are subcategories organized into external or internal stakeholders.

External Stakeholders

Stakeholders with no direct power or input in this particular project are the affiliate bookstores linked in the website. These bookstores include Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and others. Users looking for curated recommendations will be the target as indicated in the 'Users' section above.

Internal Stakeholders

The BENS Consulting project team is the internal stakeholder as a group, this group is responsible for communication with all stakeholders as appropriate in order to inform a successful redesign. Another group of stakeholders are BENS Consulting employees not directly involved with this project for critical feedback. The primary stakeholder, with power, influence, and interest in the success of this project is [REDACTED]. With buy in or a greenlight from [REDACTED] this project will be successful.

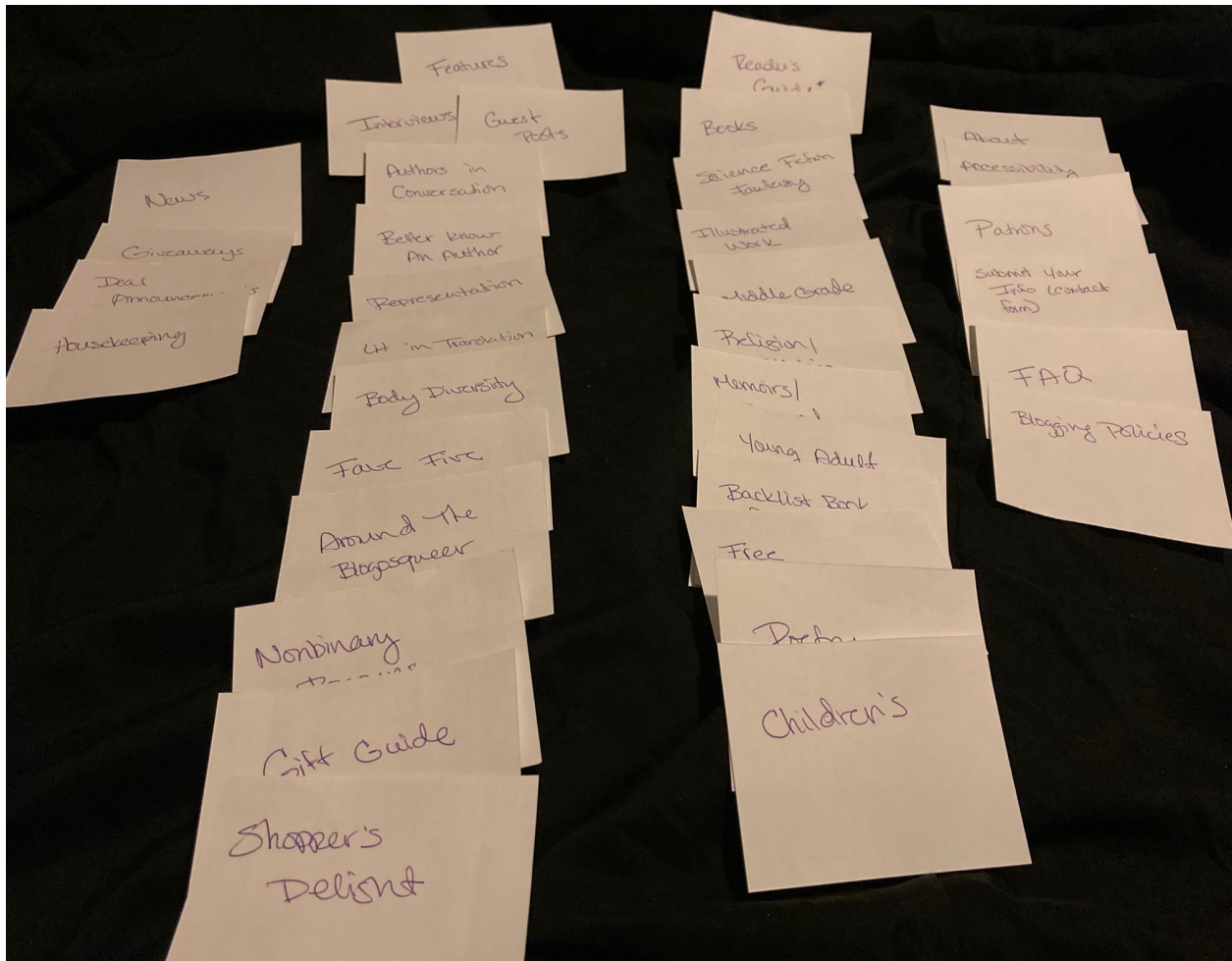
User Research Plan

In order to help guide our redesign of LGBTQ [REDACTED], it was necessary for us to conduct user research which we split into two phases. First, we conducted user interviews in order to get to know the users of the site. Before we started our redesign, it was important that we identify the target users of LGBTQ [REDACTED] as well as understand their needs and behaviors. By conducting user interviews, we were able to develop user personas, gain insights as to how users navigate and find information on the site. This information was very valuable and helped us pinpoint exactly what our users thought the purpose of the site was and allowed us to present information on the site that accurately reflected its purpose. This helped us work towards our goal of increasing the site's clarity as users felt like they had a better chance of finding what they are looking for since they knew what the site was about. Second, in order to improve site navigation and rework the site's information architecture, we conducted a card sort where we can organize site content into relevant categories. LGBTQ [REDACTED] has a lot of content to browse and sort through. With some restructuring of the information architecture, it made it a lot easier for users to sort through site content to find what they are looking for. Finally, we plan on sending out a follow-up survey once users can test the site's new redesign. As we want to ensure that the site truly satisfies its user base, we would like to ask both potential and current users to provide feedback on our redesign. Moreover, we would like to make sure that we have made as many improvements to the site's clarity, findability and delightfulness as possible and find out what other improvements we can make. The best way to do this is to do research once our prototype has been completed.

User Interviews

This initial stage of our user research consisted of speaking with some potential users of LGBTQ [REDACTED] and establishing their motives for using the site, their familiarity with queer literature, what content they would like to see on the site. Additionally, we were able to get their impressions of what the site presents itself as. To do this, the team at BENS Consulting created a list of open ended questions to ask our participants. By using open ended questions, we were able to get a more in-depth understanding of what potential users of the site were looking for by allowing them to explain what they mean. Additionally, we were able to see how familiar they were with queer literature. This knowledge let us see if we needed to add any aspects while restructuring the site's information architecture. These interviews lasted for approximately 30-45 minutes and were conducted via Zoom.

Card Sort



After conducting our user interviews, we conducted a card sort. Unlike the user interviews, this card sort was conducted in-person and used paper cards. This card sort was a closed card sort, using categories we created and were based on the existing nomenclature on the site. We opted to use a closed card sort in order to keep our research as concise as possible. When we presented this idea to [REDACTED], she agreed. The categories the team came up with are as follows: News, Interviews, Guest Posts, Features, Books, Reader's Guide, and About. Our overall goal was to increase the clarity and findability of the site. Therefore, we decided to test the site's current information architecture to see and use terms that were already found on the site but not necessarily as high level categories. These categories were found on the sidebar of the site and we thought that they would be good candidates for high level categories. We also added an additional term ("features") that we also thought would be a good high level category and that we had seen on other, similar, websites. The card sort consisted of 30 cards with content on the cards mainly focusing on some of the other categories that were on the sidebar or on the dropdown menus underneath the categories on the navigation bar.

Follow-Up Survey


Our final user research component will be a follow-up survey once a prototype has been created. This will consist of closed ended questions that the team at BENS Consulting has developed and will be focused on gathering data on user satisfaction using the site and whether or not we have improved certain frustrating touchpoints. In addition to asking the participants we previously interviewed and people who participated in the card sort, we will also send the survey out to current LGBTQ [REDACTED] users to see if and/or how satisfied they are with the improvements we have made to the site and what further improvements can be made. This survey will take approximately 5-15 minutes to complete and will be distributed via an external link to a questionnaire.

User Personas

The users of LGBTQ[REDACTED].com are individuals who are interested in exploring queer literatures, as well as authors who seek to promote their book through a LGBTQIAP-friendly platform. Users picked for this exercise are a mix of individuals who have experience using e-commerce bookstores like LGBTQ[REDACTED].com. All user personas selected have the motivation to explore queer literature whether its academic, leisure, or business-driven objective. The users represent how a typical customer will use the website and how they will interact with the redesign, allowing the BENS consulting team to apply necessary web information architecture heuristics to improve user experience.

Clayton (He/Him) – 25-year-old student from San Francisco, CA	
	<p>Personal Background:</p> <p>Clayton is a journalism student at San Francisco State University in San Francisco, CA. In his free time, Clayton loves to hike and photograph nature. He enjoys spending the weekend outdoors with his friends. Clayton is a social justice advocate and regularly attends marches and rallies to support the BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) population. He loves to read and learn about queer icons of the early to mid-20th century. Clayton identifies as bisexual and have tried dating both men and women.</p>
<p><u>More about Clayton</u></p> <p>Motivators:</p> <p>Clayton is an avid fan of Rupaul's Drag Race and religiously watches every season of the show. Clayton believes that the show had a huge influence in mainstreaming drag culture. Clayton is keen on learning about gay culture history.</p>	<p>Technological Literacy:</p> <p>Computer: Highly proficient Internet: Highly proficient. Aspiring Influencer/YouTuber, uploads videos reviewing shows Mobile: Highly proficient. Text/Call every day. Networking: Highly proficient. Uses social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to connect with people all over the world.</p>

<p><i>Networking:</i> Uses social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to connect with people all over the world. Has 2 best friends that go out with every weekend.</p>	<p><i>Hobbies:</i> Photography Hiking local Bay Area trails. Loves Mission Peak Volleyball- he was in varsity in high school. Attends concerts/shows. He loves pop, RnB, and EDM music.</p>
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<p>Joey (They/Them) – 35-year-old professor from Berkeley, CA</p>	
	<p><i>Personal Background:</i></p> <p>Joey is a faculty at Berkeley City College teaching queer ethnic studies. Joey is passionate about learning LGBTQIAP history and sharing their knowledge with their students. Joey is also an aspiring author. They recently finished their first book about their experiences growing up queer and finding their identity and community. Joey is an advocate of transgender rights and is active in the community for promoting safe sex practices.</p>
<p><u>More about Joey</u></p> <p><i>Motivators:</i> Joey would like to discover queer literature and authors to use for their class.</p>	<p><i>Technological Literacy:</i> Computer: Highly Proficient Internet: Highly Proficient. Writes his own blogs about recent events and news about queer-related topics Mobile: Highly proficient, has a lot of apps installed in their phone.</p>
<p><i>Networking:</i> Active in the community, mentors students in an LGBTQIAP club at their university.</p>	<p><i>Hobbies:</i> Reading and writing novels Watching documentaries They love to drink wine. Weekend trip to Napa</p>

User Journey Maps

User Scenario Pre-Changes

Joey is looking for a new book for their students to read in Asian American Sexuality class. Joey typically uses books that they personally read; but this semester, Joey thought of changing the assigned reading for their class. Joey went on his computer and Google searched “LGBTQ book

recommendation”. Joey finds LGBTQ Read’s website in the results page and clicks on the link. Joey lands on the home page, then scroll the page and read the highlighted posts. Joey did not find anything significantly interesting on the home page, so they went over at the tool bar and read through the categories. Joey hovers at the “Non-Fiction” category and selected the “Memoirs and Collections by Representation, Occupation, and/or Experience” category. Joey then scrolls down to see different subjects/topics and book recommendations for the category. Joey finds the “Southeast Asian” group and clicks on the book *Fairest* by Meredith Talusan. Joey was redirected to GoodReads.com and read the book review. Joey is interested in purchasing the book, so they clicked on the Amazon link to buy the book. Joey logs in on their Amazon account and pays for the book.

Joey’s experience required unnecessary steps to find and purchase a book. Joey shouldn’t have been routed to multiple websites. The review should have been located at the book’s page and not at GoodReads.com. LGBTQ [REDACTED] should also have a list and links of where it’s available to purchase the book.



User Scenario Post-Changes

The newly redesigned website showcases a consolidated and organized categorization of books at LGBTQ [REDACTED]. Joey can now browse books without having to exert effort and think where a specific book might be located. Joey gets on LGBTQ [REDACTED]’ home page, hover at the *Books* category in the toolbar, and select the specific genre of the book. A short book review is added in the description of the book, along with websites that sell the book. In addition to easier findability, Joey can use the *Advanced Search* bar to search books using several criterias.

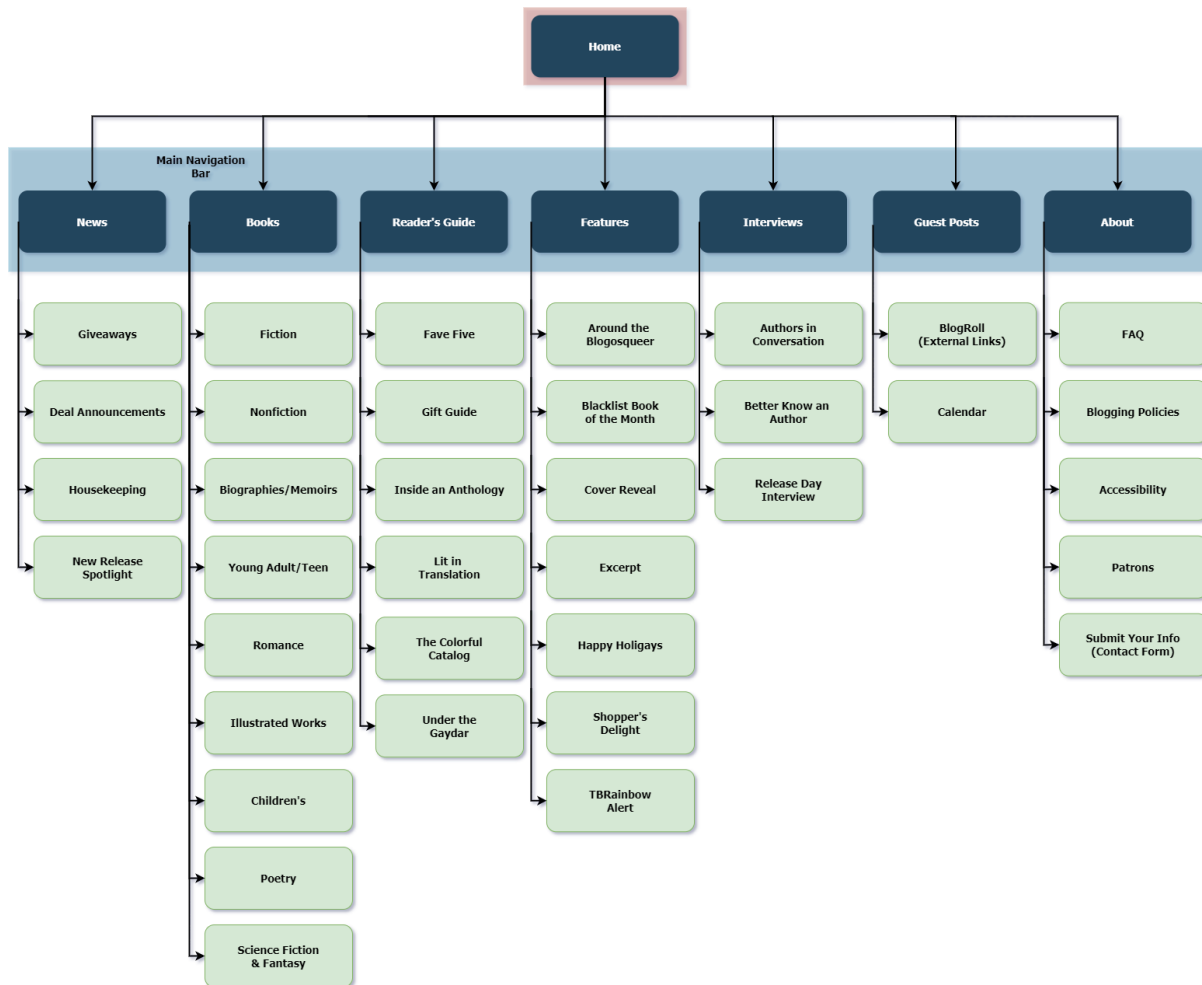


Site Model

The current state of LGBTQ [REDACTED] is that it is cluttered and some pages, including the home page, scroll for far too long. There is much content but it needs to be tamed. The navigation bar at the top of the site has 13 options. That there are 13 options in itself is not a problem (one member of this team saw that Amazon has at least 18 options in their navigation bar menu) but that there does seem to be conflict between some options and they are not grouped logically. The website promotes books. The navigation bar menu is listed alphabetically, which can be useful, but in this case it sandwiches support between SFF (science fiction) and Young Adult options. It doesn't make any sense, a user scanning the menu might miss that option. The menu options clash, some menu options are categories of age; such as children's, middle school, and young adult. These are not grouped together. Then there are the traditional categories of fiction and non-fiction; also not grouped together. Finally there are some genre options, including poetry, romance, and SFF. Since all the options are in alphabetical order, nothing is logically grouped together.

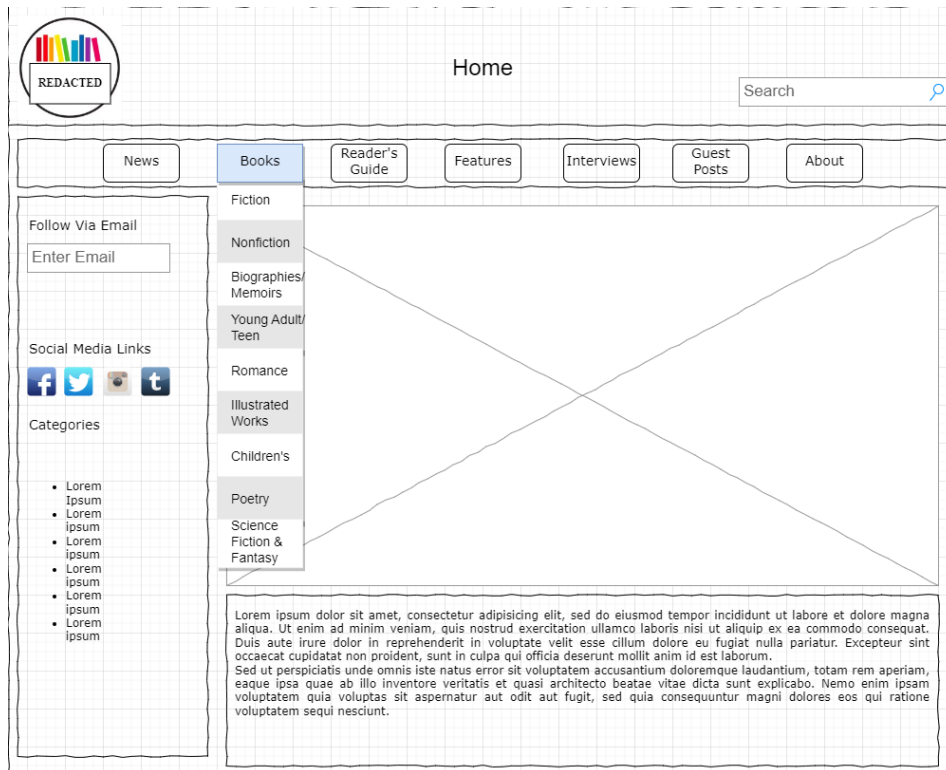
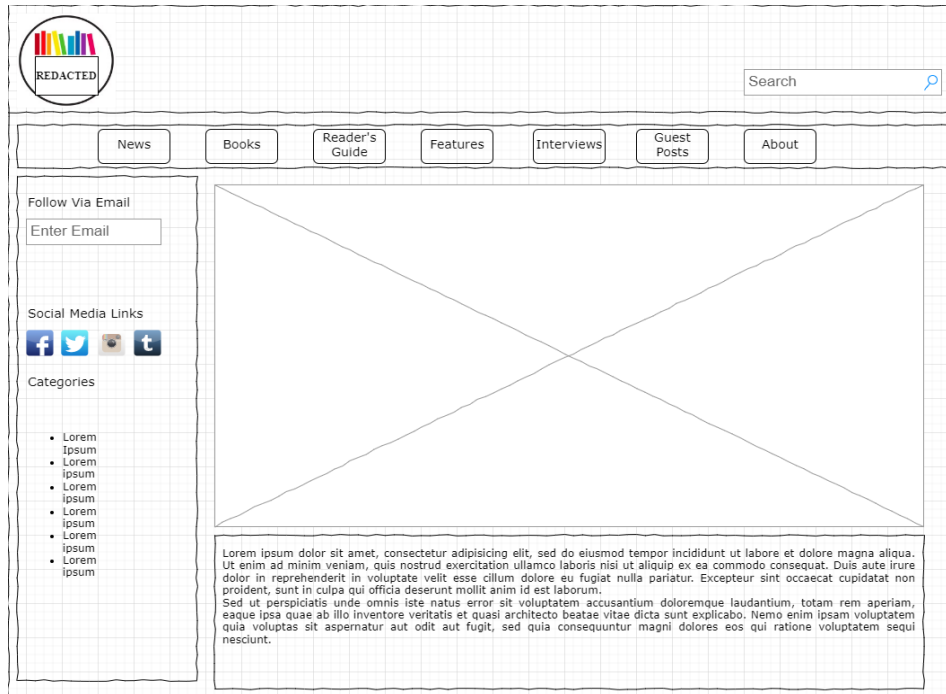
A first step would be to group options and allow users to browse or search according to a category. An initial proposal could be to have an about link, a contact/support link, and the meat would be to allow users to browse or filter by different categories. Sites like Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com include dropdown menus to give further options. Another simple feature that should be added is an indicator or selected state highlight to show which page the user is currently navigating.

Sitemap

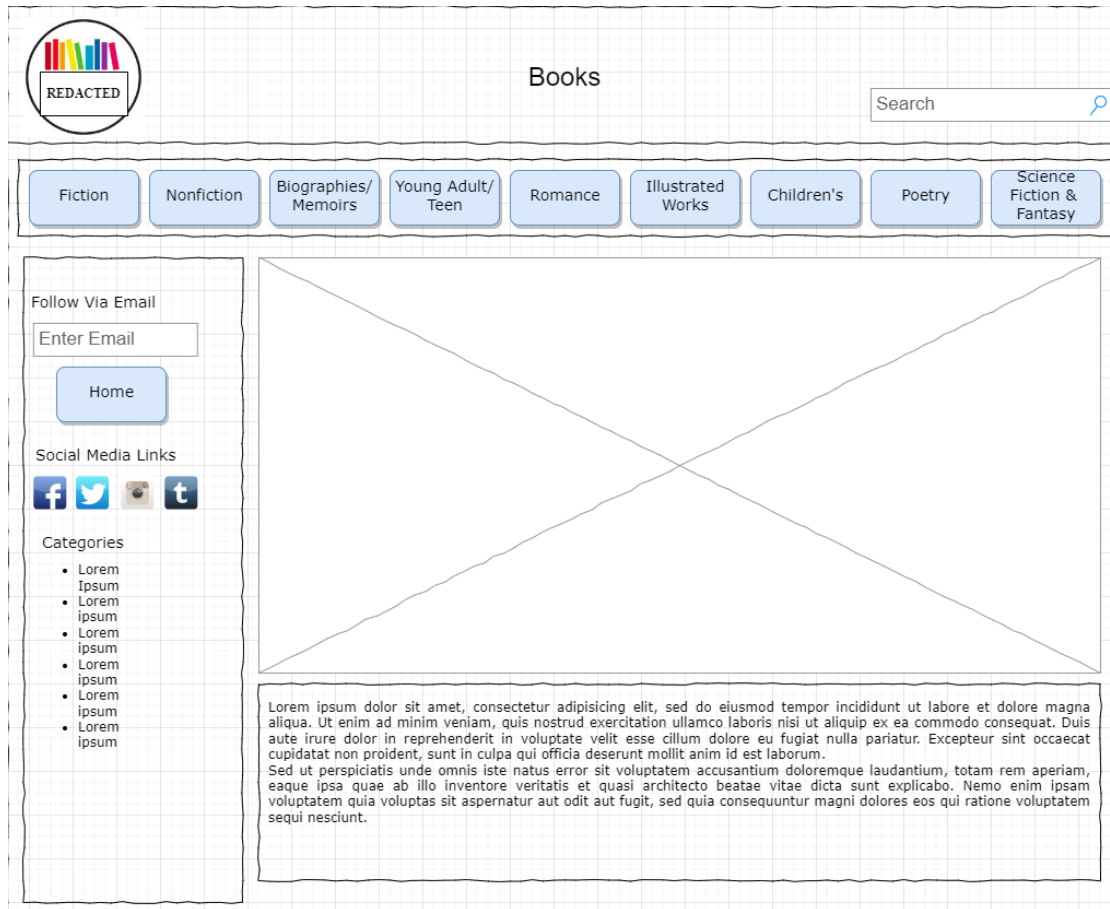


Wire Frames

Home page redesign with a condensed navigation menu for clarity. With a wireframe showing a drop down menu illustrating improved findability.



A wireframe focused on the books page showing the clarity of the purpose of the website, to find book recommendations eased by subject matter.



Recommendations

The main focus of this redesign is to give clarity to the purpose of this information rich website. BENS Consulting recommends adopting this concise redesign to allow users a more positive experience in navigating the copious and rich content of LGBTQ [REDACTED]. BENS Consulting experienced information overload in trying to determine and assess the purpose of LGBTQ [REDACTED]. User interviews confirmed BENS Consulting initial assessment. We were able to identify not only information overload as a problem, but also confusion and frustration were gleaned as obstacles from user interviews. User interviews coupled with BENS Consulting assessments provided clarity, findability, and delightfulness as target heuristics for the redesign of LGBTQ [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] approved of these targets.

Based on the initial interviews and assessment, in order to clarify the purpose of the site and provide convenient access to the site's content, BENS Consulting's formulated a research plan to guide the redesign. Along with the user interviews, the research plan consisted of a closed card sort, identifying existing and possible new users to formulate user personas and record journey maps. Through the research we were able to answer some basic questions of what, who, and how the website is used.

Card sort allowed us to look into what people are looking for. LGBTQ [REDACTED] is rich in content, therefore we used a closed card sort using existing categories [REDACTED] has on the existing website. We did add a features category as a catchall category. Using card sort we were able to

condense the home page navigation bar and migrate many categories from the side bar into navigation bar categories for findability.

User personas allowed us to explore and understand who uses LGBTQ [REDACTED]. The users are diverse and have different motivations for using the website. For example, the user personas found a wide range of motivators from serious social justice issues, to academia, and even the levity of pop culture in the form of drag culture. Individuals expressed a varying range of motivators just in their own lives for a wide range of topics.

User personas allowed to explore who uses the website and why. They also allowed us to identify and map how users use the website. We represented this experience in the form of journey maps. We were able to map the journey before and after the redesign. The user experience shows that the redesign allows users to navigate the site content in a more concise manner. Via user feedback we feel that we have decidedly tilted the user experience from information overload, confusion, and frustration to the targeted heuristic outcomes of clarity, findability, and delightfulness.

We created a simplified sitemap using the research and based upon that we built wireframes for feedback. We find that our desired outcomes of clarity, findability, and delightfulness of the website redesign prototype are expressed in the feedback we sought through presentations and follow-up interviews. BENS Consulting feels that the redesign informed by the research also expresses compliance with Hick's Law and Miller's Law. In summary, these laws basically state that the number of choices available need to be kept at a useful minimum. These laws basically address the initial information overload problem identified by our team and by the research subjects.

We will need to follow up with follow up surveys after the redesign goes live. While BENS Consulting is confident in the redesign meeting the objectives of this current project, we believe there are opportunities for enriching the website in future projects. We considered the main target audience of LGBTQ [REDACTED]. While the targeted demographics included the LGBTQIAP+ community, we found that there are those who would like help by being allies to the community and those who are exploring or discovering where they fit in. We also believe that further opportunities exist for [REDACTED] to address the experience of publisher's, author's, and book sellers' interaction and experience with the website. Finally, in reviewing the internet landscape of books and websites in general, we found that this website could possibly benefit from the convention of having advanced search filters in the left sidebar.

We at BENS Consulting are grateful for the opportunity to redesign LGBTQ [REDACTED], and look forward to further collaboration.