

Heuristic Evaluation

Site: <https://arizona.aiga.org/>

Evaluation process

This heuristic evaluation was completed using [Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design](#).

1. [Visibility of system status](#)
2. [Match between system and the real world](#)
3. [User control and freedom](#)
4. [Consistency and standards](#)
5. [Error prevention](#)
6. [Recognition rather than recall](#)
7. [Flexibility and efficiency of use](#)
8. [Aesthetic and minimalist design](#)
9. [Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors](#)
10. [Help and documentation](#)

Rating scale

The Jakob Nielsen rating scale was chosen for the wider range of options including cosmetic, rather than functional issues.

- **0** = Not a usability problem
- **1** = **Cosmetic problem only**: need not be fixed unless extra time is available on project
- **2** = **Minor usability problem**: fixing this should be given low priority
- **3** = **Major usability problem**: important to fix, so should be given high priority
- **4** = **Usability catastrophe**: imperative to fix this before product can be released

Heuristic evaluation

#1 — Visibility of system status

Rating assigned: **3 — Major usability problem**

Though there are not many user interactions on the site that give a visibility of system status, some general cues do give users feedback. One area in which users get feedback is in the visual appearance of buttons. The example of the contact form in [Figure 1.1](#) shows how the “Submit” button changes color when a user mouses over it — the button changes from having an orange outline with black text to having an orange outline with orange text. Additionally, if form fields were missed, a message appears at the top of the form informing the user that “There was a problem with your submission. Errors have

been highlighted below” with form fields showing orange text stating “This field is required” for each field missed.

Visual cues also help the user identify which navigation menu item they have selected. When the user hovers over each navigation item, that text appears with an underline and a drop-down list of subpages, as seen in [Figure 1.2](#).

The visual cues work, but they could be stronger to give the user more immediate feedback, especially when filling out forms. I have seen forms that highlight missing content in red as the user is filling out the form. This immediate feedback is more beneficial to the user rather than waiting until the form is filled to see what was missed. Additionally, the small orange text is hard to read and can be difficult for some users to navigate. Because the first example is in relation to forms and feedback or inquiries to the chapter, this should be given a medium-high priority to make the user experience simpler for those wanting to reach out or get additional information.

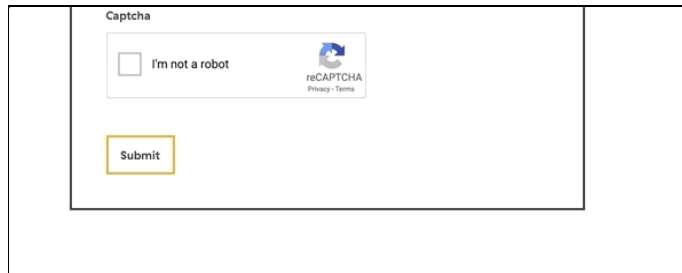


Figure 1.1 Contact form submission and error feedback

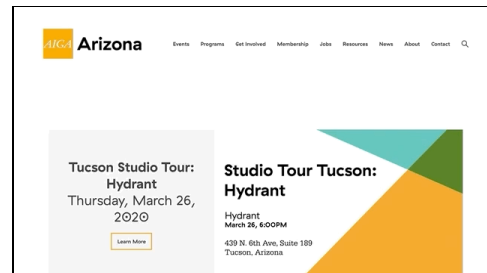


Figure 1.2 Menu items

#2 — Match between system and the real world

Rating assigned: **4 — Usability catastrophe**

The website uses a lot of common, understandable language. For an organization focused on a niche group, designers in a broad sense, the website is fairly approachable for any user coming in. However, this is not the case in the “Programs” section of the site. There is no general tab for “Programs” — clicking on this navigation menu item produces no results. There are several drop down items under this tab including “Business of Design,” “Collide Meetups,” “Design for Good,” “Education + Mentorship,” and “Phoenix Design Week” — all internal names for programming and events that would not be understandable by the general user ([Figure 2.1](#)). Additionally, because there is no page to describe the differences of the programs and events, the user must click into each subpage to read and learn about it. This may drive away users that are seeking general knowledge or an event to attend.

I have rated this as a 4 — usability catastrophe — because this is an area in which the chapter should clearly share and showcase the different events and programs it is offering in a way that any user could understand. The organization's primary goal, according to the mission statement, is “to bring programming to the local design community.” If the average user cannot figure out what this programming is, the chapter has failed in its current implementation of this area of the website.

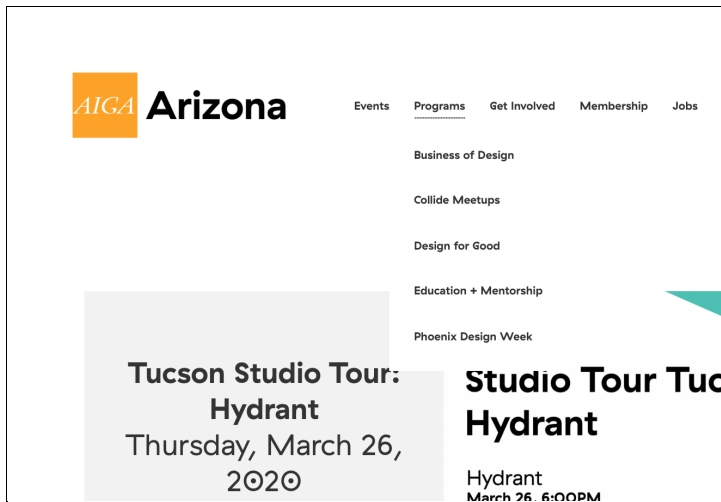


Figure 2.1 Internal naming for programs

#3 — User control and freedom

Rating assigned: **2 — Minor usability problem**

Problems with the navigation are described in more detail under [#4 — Consistency and standards](#). However, as a whole, the site does fairly well in giving the user control and freedom. The logo at the top left corner of the page leads the user back to the homepage ([Figure 3.1](#)). Users can see what page they are on because of the underline under the top page navigation highlighting the item they have selected. The page topic is repeated on the left side (where there is sometimes a secondary navigation showing drop-down menu items, depending on the page), see [Figure 3.2](#).

Because of some issues with the navigation in general, I've assigned this a 2 for minor usability problem as the visual cues could be improved by improving the navigation as a whole.

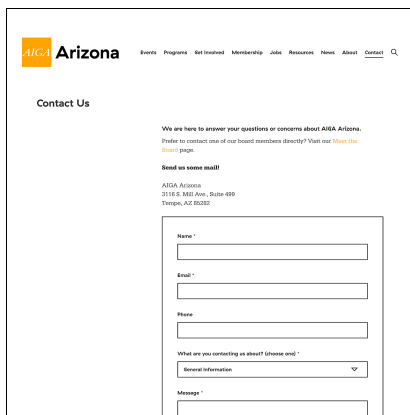


Figure 3.1 Logo in top corner leads user to homepage

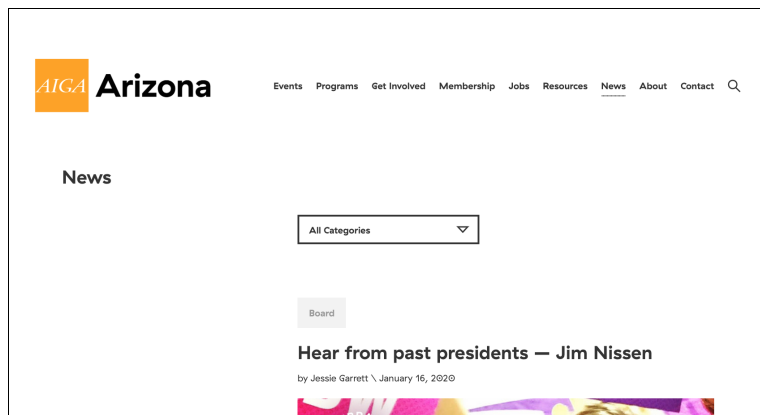


Figure 3.2 Navigation

#4 — Consistency and standards

Rating assigned: **4 — Usability catastrophe**

The website has a clean design with consistent use of fonts and visual cues. One area that can be improved is the navigation as well as the side navigation that appears on some, but not all, pages. For example, the “[About](#)” page includes a side menu ([Figure 4.1](#)), but the “[Jobs](#)” page does not ([Figure 4.2](#)).

The “Jobs” page would benefit from a side menu because it is unclear which page showcases nationally-posted jobs, which are locked for member-only access, versus local jobs, which are accessible by anyone. This should be more consistent for a more streamlined user experience.

Additionally, sometimes the side menu leads to new pages, as it does with the “Mission” link on the “Meet the Board” page whereas other times it leads to an external site (and not always in a new tab, sometimes it navigates away from the AIGA page), as seen in [Figure 4.3](#). The use of the backslash (\) is a confusing visual cue to users that the page goes to an external site, and not immediately understandable. Not all pages that link out to an external site are marked in this way, including the “Find a Designer” option. Overall, this area should be greatly improved with clearly understandable navigation for the user. Because this is so confusing and unclear, I have rated this as a catastrophic usability issue.

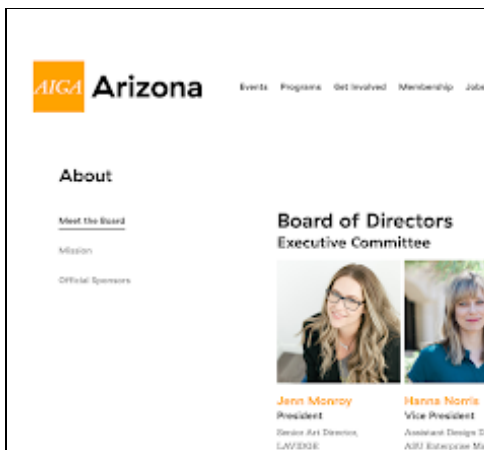


Figure 4.1 About page side navigation

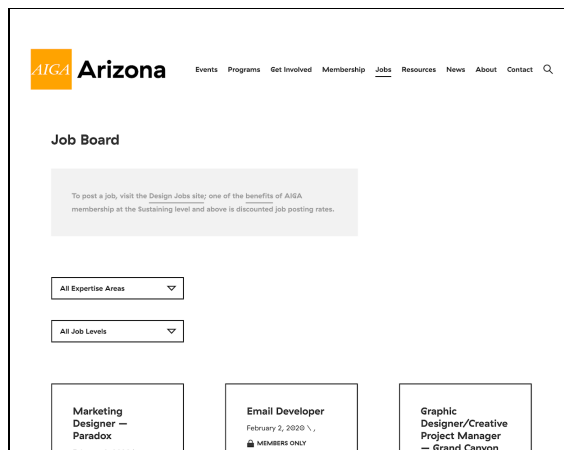


Figure 4.2 Job page missing side navigation

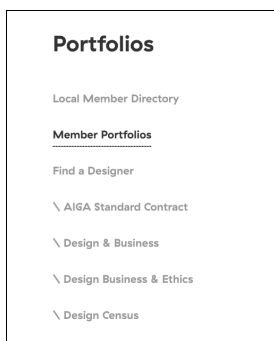


Figure 4.3 Side navigation to external pages

#5 — Error prevention

Rating assigned: **3 — Major usability problem**

As discussed in [#1 — Visibility of system status](#), as well as [#9 — Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors](#), there is not a clear error prevention process incorporated into forms on the site. I have suggested using a form that gives users feedback as they fill out the form, rather than after they have completed submission. The form does inform users if their form was not submitted and what errors should be addressed, but as discussed previously, this could be stronger visually and resolved during form fill out rather than after submission. Users are able to correct errors and try resubmitting the form. Due to the importance of the form content, I have rated this as a major usability issue.

#6 — Recognition rather than recall

Rating assigned: **0 — Not a usability problem**

There is not an area of the website that requires user recall. Though some content is behind a membership paywall, the login experience is done through the AIGA National site, see [Figure 6.1](#). This is mostly isolated to the job postings, as seen in [Figure 6.1](#). As this is not an area of the site that is controllable by the chapter, this will be rated as not a usability problem.

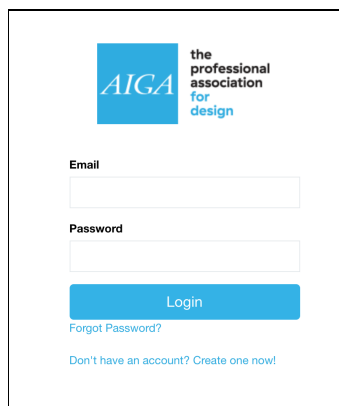


Figure 6.1 AIGA National login screen

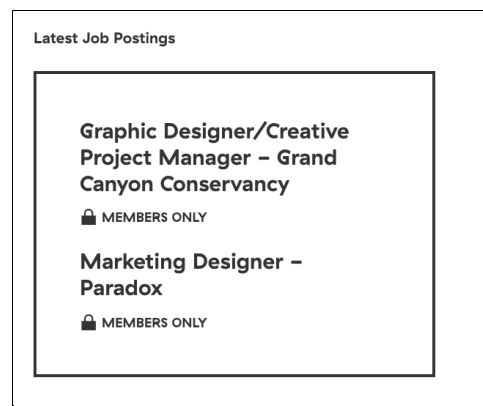


Figure 6.2 Member-only content

#7 — Flexibility and efficiency of use

Rating assigned: **0 — Not a usability problem**

There are no repeat actions that users would be taking on the website that would require additional efficiency. For users that visit the website to see upcoming events, this is already resolved with the rotating homepage slider that cycles through upcoming events, as seen in [Figure 7.1](#).

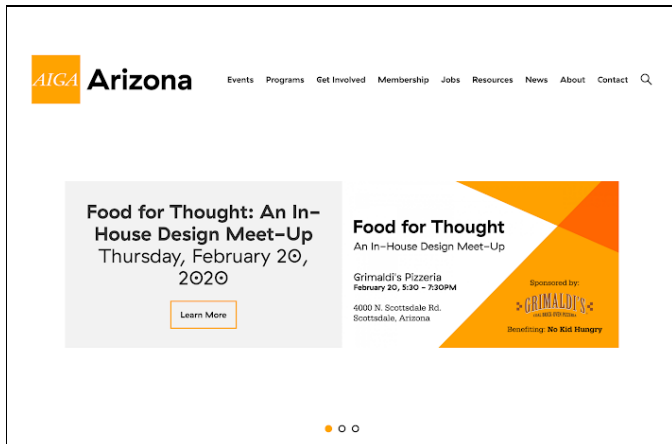


Figure 7.1 Event homepage slider

#8 — Aesthetic and minimalist design

Rating assigned: **0 — Not a usability problem**

The website utilizes a lot of white space with simple text navigation and drop down menus as seen in [Figure 8.1](#). Text has a hierarchy that makes sense with headings being larger in scale to other text elements. Forms are clean with a simple text design, as seen in [Figure 8.2](#). Event information is displayed in a way that clearly identifies the name of the event, the time and location in a consistent format ([Figure 8.3](#)). As such, this is not rated as a usability problem.

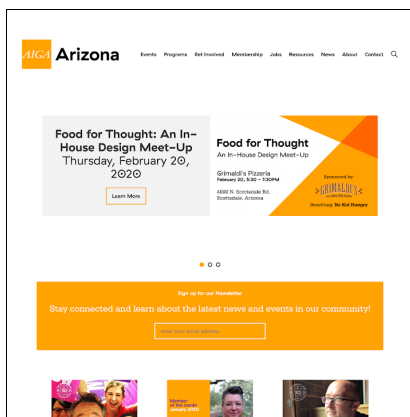


Figure 8.1 Homepage

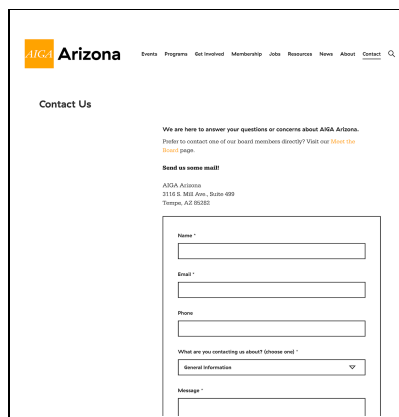


Figure 8.2 Contact form



Figure 8.3 Upcoming event information

#9 — Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

Rating assigned: **3 — Major usability problem**

Though there is some user feedback when there are errors during form submission, the feedback does not rise to the modern guideline of having errors “visible and highly noticeable, both in terms of the

message itself and how it indicates which dialogue element users must repair,” as described by the Nielsen Norman Group in the article, “[Error Message Guidelines](#).” This issue with the site was explored in Figure 1.1, duplicated here as [Figure 9.1](#).

When a user submits a form with missing fields a message appears at the top of the form informing the user that “There was a problem with your submission. Errors have been highlighted below” with form fields showing orange text stating “This field is required” for each field missed. However, the text is very small and easy to miss and is also a light orange color, which may be difficult for some users to view.

The error message could be stronger and more visible to the user through size and scale of text. Additionally, it would be better for the form to give the user more immediate feedback. I have seen forms that highlight missing content in red as the user is filling out the form. This immediate feedback is more beneficial to the user rather than waiting until the form is filled to see what was missed.

Users attempting to contact the chapter may be potential sponsors or collaborators. It is therefore a major useability issue if these users have problems in properly submitting forms. Work should be done to address the issue and make form submission a better, clearer process for the user.

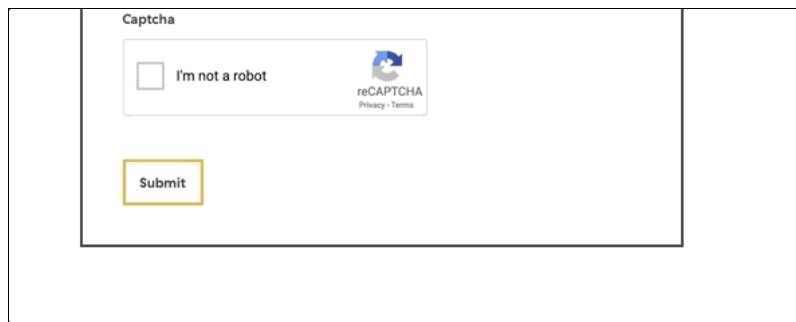


Figure 9.1 Contact form submission and error feedback

#10 — Help and documentation

Rating assigned: 2 — Minor usability problem

There is no help page or resource on the arizona.aiga.org site, as the page is used primarily to inform users on the chapter events, mission and news. However, there is a “[Contact](#)” page that includes a form for users to reach out to the board. The form includes a drop-down menu for users to direct their questions to the appropriate category. “General information” is a category that users could select for general issues with the website. The site could include an easier way for users to report specific website issues as well as an FAQ or help area for common questions users have about the organization.

The screenshot shows the AIGA Arizona website's contact page. At the top left is the AIGA Arizona logo. A navigation menu includes links for Events, Programs, Get Involved, Membership, Jobs, Resources, News, About, and Contact. The page title is "Contact Us". Below the title, there is a message: "We are here to answer your questions or concerns about AIGA Arizona. Please to contact one of our board members directly? Visit our [About the Board](#) page." Below this is a "Send us some mail!" section with the address: "AIGA Arizona, 2118 E. Sky Ave., Suite 950, Tempe, AZ 85282". A contact form follows, with fields for Name, Email, and Phone. Below these is a dropdown menu labeled "What are you contacting us about? (choose one) *" with "General Information" selected. A Message field is at the bottom.

Figure 10.1 Contact page

This is a close-up of the dropdown menu from the contact form. The title is "What are you contacting us about? (choose one) *". The dropdown is currently open, showing a list of options: "General Information", "Volunteering", "Events", "Sponsorships", "Memberships", "Phoenix Design Week", and "Media Relations". The "General Information" option is highlighted. A "Submit" button is located at the bottom of the form area.

Figure 10.2 Contact form drop-down