

1 – *Recommended IA Strategies* – IA strategy must be developed with the project’s particular information ecology in mind. The major aspects affecting the particular content, context, and users of the website for the Department of Liquor Control (DOLC) must be considered. e must consider the users, who may rely on the operability of the website for their livelihoods.

This report does not represent a final decision regarding the recommendations. Rather, it is important that these recommendations be somewhat flexible. Going forward, these recommendations are subject to revision; some may even be discarded. The point of providing these strategy recommendations at this time is to make explicit the priorities of the redesign project and to provide a unifying plan of actionable steps forward and into the design and implementation stages.

2 – *IA Administration* – One of the IA strategies is forecasting the tasks required to maintain the website. Part of website administration requires verifying that content and documents offered by the website comport with the rules and regulations of the parent enterprise. This is particularly important in the government realm. In order to ensure the success of the redesigned DOLC website, it will need to adhere to the appropriate government regulations. That entails cutting through the red-tape to discern rules and collect permissions. These tasks could take a long time to complete. Therefore, appropriate amounts of time must be budgeted and contingency plans should be developed.

Administration of the website will also involve coordination with other government entities. For example, the DOLC website administrator will have to collaborate with the graphic design team of the domain sponsor, Ohio.gov, to re-design the interface. A generalized interface is currently common across the department and agency websites subsumed under Ohio.gov. This interface is not suited to the needs of the DOLC, though. Therefore, a new version of the interface must be tailored to the DOLC main page. Adjusting the interface should not be a long task in itself, but collecting the correct permissions and ensuring the redesigned interface conforms to any Ohio.gov rules has the potential to extend an inordinate amount of time. It is best to treat such tasks as long-run tasks in order to allow for sufficient time to recover from any bureaucratic set backs. Any aspects of the redesign project that will be held up if government administrators fail to grant permission or any aspects that must conform to rules of the Ohio Code should fall under long-term planning.

3 – *Technology Integration* – At this time, strategy requires no additional technology for the website. Many websites laden with PDF forms attempt to make these forms fillable online. But, for the DOLC, it is advisable to leave the PDF documents as they are, viz. they must be printed, completed by hand, and then mailed, or otherwise delivered, to the office. The reason for this is that the liquor business can be enticing to many, including some who may be impulsive in their actions. Much like a waiting period for purchasing a gun, the fairly involved process of submitting a license application will serve to dampen impulses or quiet unjustified enthusiasm. The current process of submitting documents for liquor licenses or special event dispensing of alcohol sets the barrier to entry appropriately high such that the applications received by the DOLC are from serious applicants only.

4 – *Document Type Identification* – Document type identification strategy entails identifying suites of objects and documents held by an information system and outlining the authoring and management systems therein. A problem with the current page is the amount of unnecessary dynamic content. Along with the dynamic content on the main page are systems for searching and navigating in specified zones. However, the dynamic content detracts from these zone

searching or navigation boxes. The searching and navigation boxes actually add to the time-on-task of a user because they generally require the user to re-enter a search query or re-click a the same option.

The suite of objects that are the dynamic content on the main page will greatly diminished. Thus creators of dynamic content will have less to author and manage. The dynamic content to be removed has been overwhelming for users and the medium is an inefficient, aesthetically-displeasing way to present information. Generally, users arrive at the site with a specified task is before them and they would rather spend as little time on the site as they can. Thus they will not watch the main page as the content cycles through. Of course, the DOLC still needs to apprise users of new information. Therefore, by directing all incoming traffic to the main page and making the news frame the focus of the page will be sufficient to catch users attention. The news frame will be mostly text (with appropriate amounts of whitespace) and some images. The news frame will not be dynamic but should be regularly updated.

The current dynamic content on the main page will be replaced by a small frame to the right of the screen that will feature a scrolling list of the new liquors purchased by the DOLC. Many users—both consumers and licensees—visit the site just to discover what new inventory, if any, the DOLC has to offer. With the current set-up, users must venture at least three clicks into the website to find a document with the information. The location of this document is far too embedded in the site for such a regularly checked item. By adding a scrolling list to the main page, users save time by not having to unnecessarily enter the website. Also, by featuring a bit of movement on the main page, users are more likely to spend an extra second or two on the main page which will help focus them on the news frame. The hope is that users will be more likely to pay attention to the news on a simplified, comparatively sparse main page and so will be more informed about events and developments at the DOLC. Adding a scrolling frame of new liquors to the main page, eliminates the time and energy of creating a document listing the new liquors. The bother of creating an extra document, and re-creating it when revisions are necessary will be stamped out and the overall work load is reduced. Less authoring of content will eliminate future managerial work for them as well. Finally, the scrolling frame of new liquor allows for incremental addition and subtraction of items. This set-up encourages timely, up-to-the-minute changes to inventory, which is a hallmark of good customer service.

5 – Organization and Labeling Systems – This section focuses mainly on IA strategies for the organization system. However, it is important to specifically address a point about the DOLC's labeling system. Currently, a number of synonymous words are in use, the most obvious being *license* and *permit*. The interchangeable use of these terms on a site like this is undesirable. The current usage leaves the user confused as to whether there is a technical difference between the two. Therefore, one must be chosen for use over the other and consistently implemented.

The organization system of the DOLC will not change the content structure too dramatically. The design entails a contracting and tightening of the current content schema. Currently the website's organization system relies too heavily on an improperly structured poly-hierarchy. Too often the same link is included in multiple categories, which (as has been mentioned) confuses users. Several items frustrate the current system of organization, viz. a semi-pyramidal hierarchical structure, which manifests to users as inconsistencies. The re-design retains poly-hierarchy as the primary scheme for the organization system. A redesign of the organization system is aimed, then, at properly classifying problematic items. For example, most items are exclusive to a specific licensee type. However, there are commonalities between the licensees such that a few items, i.e. documents span several licensee categories. Currently, the

items common to several licensee types have been repeated in the organization scheme rather than strategically placed to reflect the multiple parent classes. Thus, a new parent class may need to be created in order to contract the scattered, repeated items. It is important to note that only a few items straddle two or more categories making a faceted classification system unnecessary.

Regarding organization systems and mental models, research has shown that second-level categories advanced nascent mental models and may greatly increase findability. To exploit this research, the DOLC website must remove the crowded content of the global menu bar. The second-level categories should be displayed clearly on an entire sub-page in a useful layout. This will also allow the website to dispose of the overly-sensitive mouse-tracking mechanism which can exacerbate the frustration of an already overwhelmed user. The labeling system will benefit from an uncluttered menu that allows options to be more easily selected.

One aspect of the labeling system that is a recommended change is the final URL segment of the site's main page, which is */liqr*. The incorrect spelling of *liquor* here could be problematic for users trying to find the site. Users are likely to see the URL on a print copy, (such as a PDF they printed out). Moreover, there are likely to be few hyperlinks to the DOLC site. Thus, users will locate the page by typing the URL into the address bar. It is understandable that the agency initially chose this "spelling" because many users would transpose the placement of the "o" and the "u" in *liquor*. However, there are two reasons the URL should be changed. First, the current spelling of the URL creates problems for those who do enter *liquor* into the address bar. Second, the current "spelling" of *liqr* detracts from the professionalism of the DOLC, and in turn undermines its authority. The last segment of the URL should be changed because file names should "reflect the nature of the information space".¹

6 – *Navigation and Search Systems* – The strategy regarding the navigation and search system is to eliminate the latter and concentrate in improving the former. Foremost, to support the main tasks of users when accessing the site, the navigation system will streamline the task of locating documents. Although the process of submitting an application has remained the same (PDF applications will be printed, then mailed) locating the needed documents should not be a chore for serious contenders. Thus, the labeling system will facilitate more cogently layout hyperlinks to each document in the sub-pages.

The site-specific search engine will be eliminated. Currently, the search system is not productive. The results of most queries are to direct users to the Web Database Search (WDS) in which the search query must be re-entered, effectively doubling work for the user. A search system for the DOLC site is not necessary. The site doesn't hold massive amounts of content, and the largest category of content is composed of the various documents associated with license applications. The general "finding" function of the search system will be replaced with a navigation system. This will be useful also because the site doesn't have much depth. A sidebar to the left on the main page will accommodate those main page visitors that would have made use of a search to quickly find a specific document.

Moreover, the umbrella site of Ohio.gov maintains a search system that allows users to enter queries for specific documents required for license applications. Thus, the current site-specific search system is largely redundant. This allows the DOLC to have the best of both worlds: there is some provision for searching the site (which users expect²) but the DOLC is free

1 Nielsen, Jakob. 1996, May 1. "Original Top 10 Mistakes in Web Design." *NN/g*.
<http://www.nngroup.com/articles/original-top-ten-mistakes-in-web-design/>

2 Morville 2007, 147.

of the hassle of maintaining a search system.

7 – *Metadata Fields* – For the metadata schema, DOLC will utilize the three basic types of metadata: structural, descriptive and administrative. Structural metadata will include a category trail of where the document is located. For example, the structural metadata applied to an application for a non-profit that wants to have a ceremony where alcohol is served on a riverboat would look like so: Licensees > Special Event/Temporary > About Special Event/Temporary Licenses > Riverboat > [document]. If this permit were to have a “quick access” navigation button on the (redesigned) main page, the structural metadata will also include something like: DOLC Home > Forms & Publications (Quick Links) > [document]. This sort of metadata will include the items URL.

The descriptive metadata will obviously echo the structural data when upper-level categories are used as descriptions. Descriptive metadata will include format, title, type of document or brief description of item (application, bulletin, newsletter, etc), related license type (A1 or D5G, F3, etc) and/or related applicant type (retailer, distributor, etc) if such metadata is applicable and other tags of this nature.

Administrative metadata will include metadata such as creator, date created, access rights, contact alias (person responsible for the item), status (in-use or archived) etc. DOLC content creators (or those responsible for adding metadata items) will have to maintain good relations with the Ohio.gov search system administrator to ensure the metadata required by the search system is accurate and up-to-date.

These proposals for the new organization, labeling, navigation systems are aimed at distributing the content of the DOLC in a more predictable manner while also facilitating a centralized mental model for users before they move beyond the main page. In order to do this, the menus on the main page will be “slimmed down” to a few sub-categories and each main category will be allocated an entire sub-page. Such changes will enhance findability.

Finally, the most important thing for the DOLC to keep in mind during the IA design and implementation stages is that when users do not comprehend the structure of a site they will have trouble deciding what next to do. In these situations, many users will abandon the website for another that is less taxing to use. But for users of the DOLC there is no substitute; a user’s liquor business must be conducted through this site. Because users have no choice but to interact with the DOLC, their frustrating experiences can lead them to resent the site, and transfer those feelings to government at large. The general notion of “government” is under attack by various political parties, many who maintain that the government is self-interested rather than citizen-focused. Therefore, for the sake of DOLC users time and energy and also taking into account the larger environment of public relations, it is extremely important to minimize frustration and difficulties. For employees, the redesign of the DOLC site should streamline their tasks, minimize confusion, and present them with a cogent mental model reflecting not just the organization of the DOLC website, but will also integrate and map for them the inter-dependencies of their workplace.