

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

FOR ANNE MORRIS
DESIGN & PHOTOGRAPHY

*A report detailing the SEO and refinement for
the portfolio site of Anne Morris*

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INTRODUCTION

As a designer, it is important to have a place that showcases your work, lets people know about the type of person you are, and what you are capable of creating. In the modern age, this place is a portfolio website. Today's designer is not really ready for the career world until they have a well-organized, clear, informative website.

Having a site that looks good and functions informationally is not all that matters, however. There is a concept called *findability* that is extremely important for any kind of designer building a clientele base. However, a large majority of people don't know about this concept and have no idea how to effectively realize it.

Because of this lack of knowledge, *search engine optimization* is an incredibly treasured and valuable skill set. This is the way to achieve findability, yet not enough artists and graphic designers are learning it.

I am an Interactive Designer, and have recently created a portfolio site that I implemented SEO tactics into as I was building it. As my SEO professor told me once, "It is much simpler to bake things in than to bolt them on." Adding things into the code of a website to increase findability and SEO as the site is being created is practical and advantageous to the designer. This playbook follows the story of my initial website with a complete lack of SEO tactics all the way up to my current site, and how I implemented practices for findability through this process.



SECTION 1

STARTING POINT

WHERE I BEGAN

NO KNOWLEDGE, NO PLAN, NO SITE

In the fall semester of 2016, I took my first web development class and by the end of the year had started thinking about pulling together a portfolio site. I did not have anything serving this purpose at the time, and was drawn to the process of actually making it on my own with HTML and CSS.

I quickly learned that with no plan of action, it is a needlessly difficult and frustrating process. Simultaneously attempting to pull examples of my design, drawing and photography and deciding how the site should be visually laid out and arranged, I gave absolutely no thought to my audience or potential customer base at all.

Discouraged, I gave up trying to code my site on my own and instead went to Weebly and Wix, but was still met with the roadblock of not knowing simply what I wanted the site to look like.

This cycle of becoming disheartened with my site and starting my attempts all over continued over the next year and by the time the fall of 2017 rolled around and I began taking a class in SEO & Analytics, I had not worked on anything for my site in a long time.

I was constantly trying only to shallowly determine what I wanted my site to look like and what I wanted it to convey to people who visited it. I wasted time looking at dozens of templates for site layouts, only concerned with the general look. This was my problematic thinking—only considering the simple factor of what the design of my site would say to users left me with no thought for the content.

I had not considered who my audience, actual and desired, was or truly defined myself as a designer. My only reason for having a site was so my friends and colleagues could

see the art I've produced. Looking back, it now makes sense that with no clear strategy my site never came along successfully.

WHAT IS SEO?

This is why I think it was highly important that I, as an Interactive Design major, took a class slightly out of my sphere. SEO & Analytics is a class for Technical Communication, and it was recommended for me to take it. I had absolutely no idea what SEO was, outside of the actual words “search engine optimization: making things findable by Google”, which was said to me when signing up for the class. I didn't even know it meant working with HTML.

I had not really given that much thought to actually making my site findable on the Internet by implementing things within the code itself. If I had been asked, “How will you make your website findable?”, I'm not sure what I would have answered. I would have likely said to myself, “I learn how to do that before I graduate, it doesn't matter right now!”

Sometimes as a designer, I find myself tempted to fall into the habit of only considering aesthetic importance and forgetting the necessity for practicality and functionality. I believe that this is why the possibility never even entered my head of needing aspects in my code and my content to ensure my site was successfully drawing in the people I wanted to find it. I knew that I had no plan for my site and that I needed one, but had no idea that learning practices and tactics of SEO would help move that process along for me.

Since I was unaware of the existence of SEO and I did not have a functional, fully-built site, I had not worked with any features that assist in integrating SEO into HTML. I didn't know Google Analytics existed. Since my site wasn't up on any hosting service, my SERP status didn't exist.

Sitting down in the class the first day, as an Interactive Designer in a room full of Technical Communicators, I felt intimidated about all the terms and concepts I was

SECTION 1 | STARTING POINT

hearing about. Despite my hesitation about the world of SEO, I have found learning about it incredibly beneficial. It has helped ground me in becoming a more practical designer.

As a student of Interactive Design, many subjects, concepts and skills are being taught and explained to me. Professors in my department are keen that my classmates and I learn practical, job market-ready skills, and I have no doubt that search engine optimization fits into this category.

SECTION 2

MOVING FORWARD

OPTIMIZING FOR FINDABILITY IN 3...2...

Beginning my SEO & Analytics class, I started learning concepts and theories, practices and tactics, and skills to prepare myself for properly optimizing my site for findability.

A BEACON IN A SEA OF CONTENT

With the overwhelming amount of information that is readily available to us in the 21st century, the term *findability* is incredibly important. Findability is what allows one individual to be seen among the billions of people creating online content. In order to be found in a sea of content, one needs a beacon to shine and make them stand out. This is where *search engine optimization* comes into play.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): making a site more visible to search engines by implementing practices within the site's code and content.

In layman's terms, it's knowing how to add things to a website to help it show up in search results. SEO combines information technology and marketing, and not enough people know what it is or how to use it. This is why it is incredibly valued by corporations who understand that they need to increase findability; seeing "*search engine optimization*" on someone's resume means that a corporation has just found a rare individual and they must hold onto them.

Findability ties into all forms of content. Words stand out to search engines like nothing else. Crawlers, the bots search engines use to add sites to their index and provide sites for a user's search query, appreciate a website with SEO-friendly content.

What does SEO-friendly content mean, though? Crawlers like a site that they determine has earned relevance, importance, trust, and authority with its content.

RELEVANCE: the content (words, images, links) on your site should relate to what your site is actually about. That way, if people search for what you write about, your chances of being found are increased.

IMPORTANCE: the more your site is referenced or linked to by other reputable sites, the more important it will be viewed as by search engines. Reputable sites include higher education institutions and established corporations.

TRUST & AUTHORITY: crawlers will view your site as having trust and authority if they deem it relevant and important. (*Stricchiola, 2012*).

Crawlers use these factors to decide whether or not to show your site in a SERP.

SERP: Search Engine Result Page. The page a user sees after searching something through a search engine. You want your site to be on the first few SERPs, and not on the 41st page.

Search engine crawlers aren't like a person looking at your site and saying to themselves, "Yes, I like this site! The writing isn't perfect, but I think they deserve to be found." They work with algorithms, sorting through millions of sites impossibly quickly to determine what results a user should get for their search. If your content isn't up to their standards, they are going to pass you by.

ACCESSIBILITY

Crawlers like a site that implements proper accessibility features as well.

Accessibility is something that the 21st century designer should think about and implement as much as any other feature in what they create, but regrettably it is not usually foremost in one's mind. This is an unfortunate aspect of human nature: when we personally do not have to utilize accessibility features, we may temporarily lose sight of them in all of the work surrounding design.

SECTION 2 | MOVING FORWARD

Accessibility applies to building and creating websites, too.

“Millions of people have disabilities that affect their use of the Web. Currently most Web sites and Web software have accessibility barriers that make it difficult or impossible for many people with disabilities to use the Web. As more accessible Web sites and software become available, people with disabilities are able to use and contribute to the Web more effectively.” (W3.org)

Everyone should be able to access the content on the Internet, regardless of physiological features.

There are different features designers can utilize to make sure everyone is being included, including alt text for images, keyboard control, and transcripts for audio and video (*fig. 1*). All Federal content that is online has to meet accessibility standards as well, according to **Section 508** of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Accessibility is something that designers should be taught; it is just as important as the other concepts and skills they will learn. I believe this is a particularly valuable skill for Interactive Designers, given that our job is to create products and services for everyone to be able to use. I briefly studied accessibility features in theory when taking a User Interface Design class but had not implemented them in a hands-on way prior to taking the SEO & Analytics class, where I first learned what accessibility means in a Microsoft Word document. Taking this knowledge, I was then able to format my website for accessibility.

What: Examples of Web Accessibility

Properly designed websites and tools can be used by people with disabilities. However, currently many sites and tools are developed with accessibility barriers that make it difficult or impossible for some people to use them. Below are just a few examples.

Alternative Text for Images

Images should include *equivalent alternative text* (alt text) in the markup/code.

```
<img alt="Web Accessibility Initiative logo" data-bbox="748 211 948 246"/>
```

If alt text isn't provided for images, the image information is inaccessible, for example, to people who cannot see and use a screen reader that reads aloud the information on a page, including the alt text for the visual image.

When equivalent alt text is provided, the information is available to people who are blind, as well as to people who turn off images (for example, in areas with expensive or low bandwidth). It's also available to technologies that cannot see images, such as search engines.

Keyboard Input

Some people cannot use a mouse, including many older users with limited fine motor control. An accessible website does not rely on the mouse; it makes all functionality available from a keyboard. Then people with disabilities can use *assistive technologies* that mimic the keyboard, such as speech input.

Transcripts for Audio

Just as images aren't available to people who can't see, audio files aren't available to people who can't hear. Providing a text transcript makes the audio information accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as to search engines and other technologies that can't hear.

Podcast: Interview on WCAG
Shawn Henry discussed WCAG 2.0 with UK UPA. Audio files of a series of interviews are available file.
Transcript

Figure 1: Examples of Web Accessibility

Accessibility features for a document and a website are quite similar. In Microsoft Word, I employed elements like alt text (*fig. 2*) and captions for images and tables. Alt text provides information about an image in the case of a user not being able to see the image. I learned that these same techniques, utilized in website building, serve two purposes: they make visual content more accessible to users who cannot see images on sites, and insert more keyword text to make my site more findable.

KEYWORDS

A great practice to making your site findable is by utilizing *keywords and phrases* in your content. This can be tricky to do effectively, however. If paragraphs of text on your site are nothing more than strings of keywords that don't make any sense, it's not just crawlers that are going to turn away, it's real people as well!

My SEO & Analytics class provided opportunities to practice keyword building for sites. In the course midterm, we were assigned a department of Kennesaw State University's College of Humanities and Social Sciences and wrote an SEO analysis and recommendation report for the department. In this document, we looked through the code of the department's site, determined what was and was not effective for SEO, recommended better keywords and phrases, and gave constructive criticism on what could be fixed in their code to better leverage SEO.

Keyword creation (*fig. 3*) is not simply thinking of words about a certain concept or item—it's imagining what a user might be searching for and what search results you want to show up in.

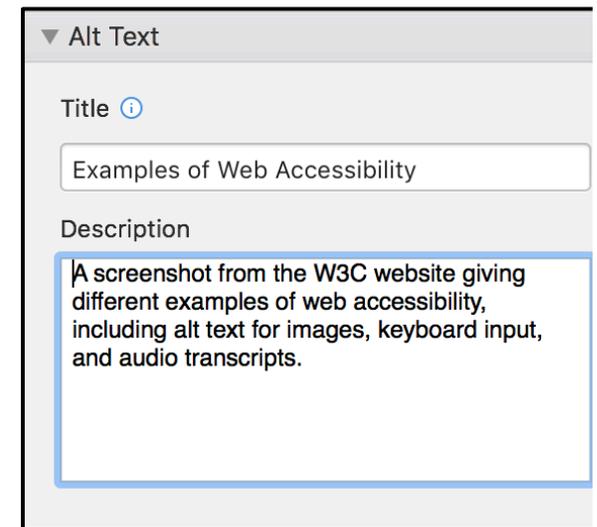


Figure 2: Alt Text Example

	<meta keywords>	<meta description>	<title>
	Atlanta, Georgia, degree, language studies	learn the languages and cultures of other nations.	
ABOUT	Foreign languages, experiences, cultures, linguistics, literature, international	The Department of Foreign Languages provides beneficial opportunities for authentic experiences with other cultures.	"About - Department of Foreign Languages"
PROGRAMS	Bachelor of arts, modern language and culture, Asian studies, Chinese, Classical, European, French, German, Italian, Lusophone, Spanish, minor, major, undergraduate	The Department of Foreign Languages offers a bachelor of arts and many minor programs educating students in the cultures of foreign nations.	"Programs - Department of Foreign Languages"

Figure 3: Keyword & Description Recommendations

This project was also instructive regarding writing about SEO practices. We had to assume the people we wrote to knew nothing about SEO, and thus had to write in a clear and informative manner. It matters as a designer to be able to write about what you know and do so that people can understand it.

GOOGLE TRENDS

While learning the basics of keyword importance, my classmates and I looked at Google Trends. Google provides several different tools to assist with content-building and SEO that I had never known existed. Google Trends is self-explanatory: it shows the trends associated with a term or phrase the user types in. If you type in "flower shop

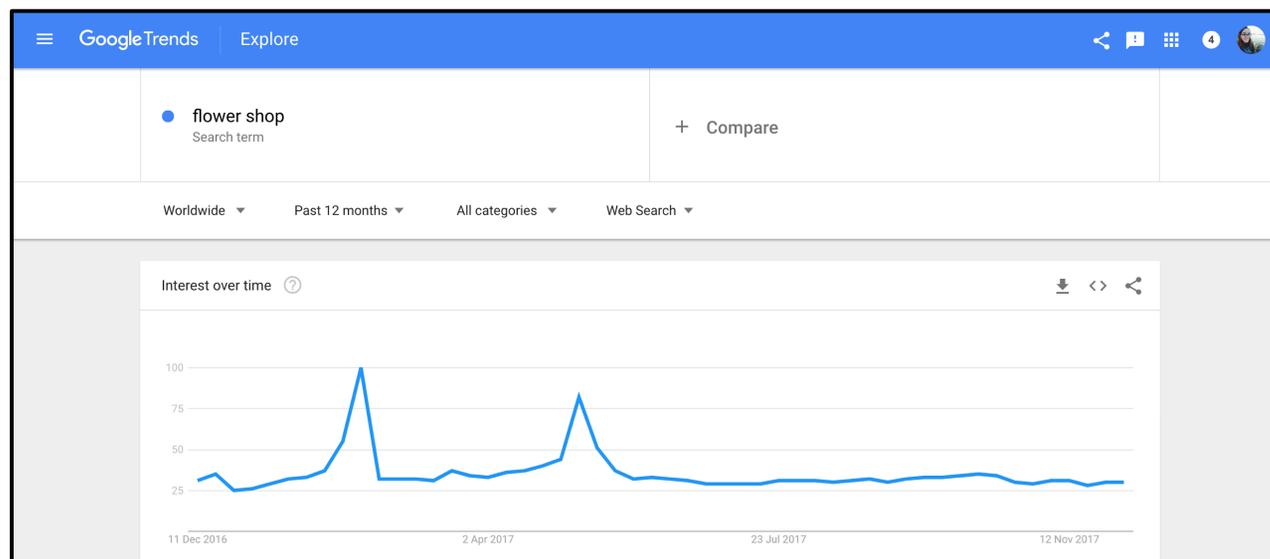


Figure 4: Google Trends

Marietta”, you can see that the term gets very popular around Valentine’s Day, Mother’s Day, and Christmas (*fig. 4*). You are also able to view the locations a term is popular in.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Another tool that Google provides is Google Analytics. Analytics is a service that offers helpful data and insight into a designer’s site and helps them move forward with SEO decisions and practices.

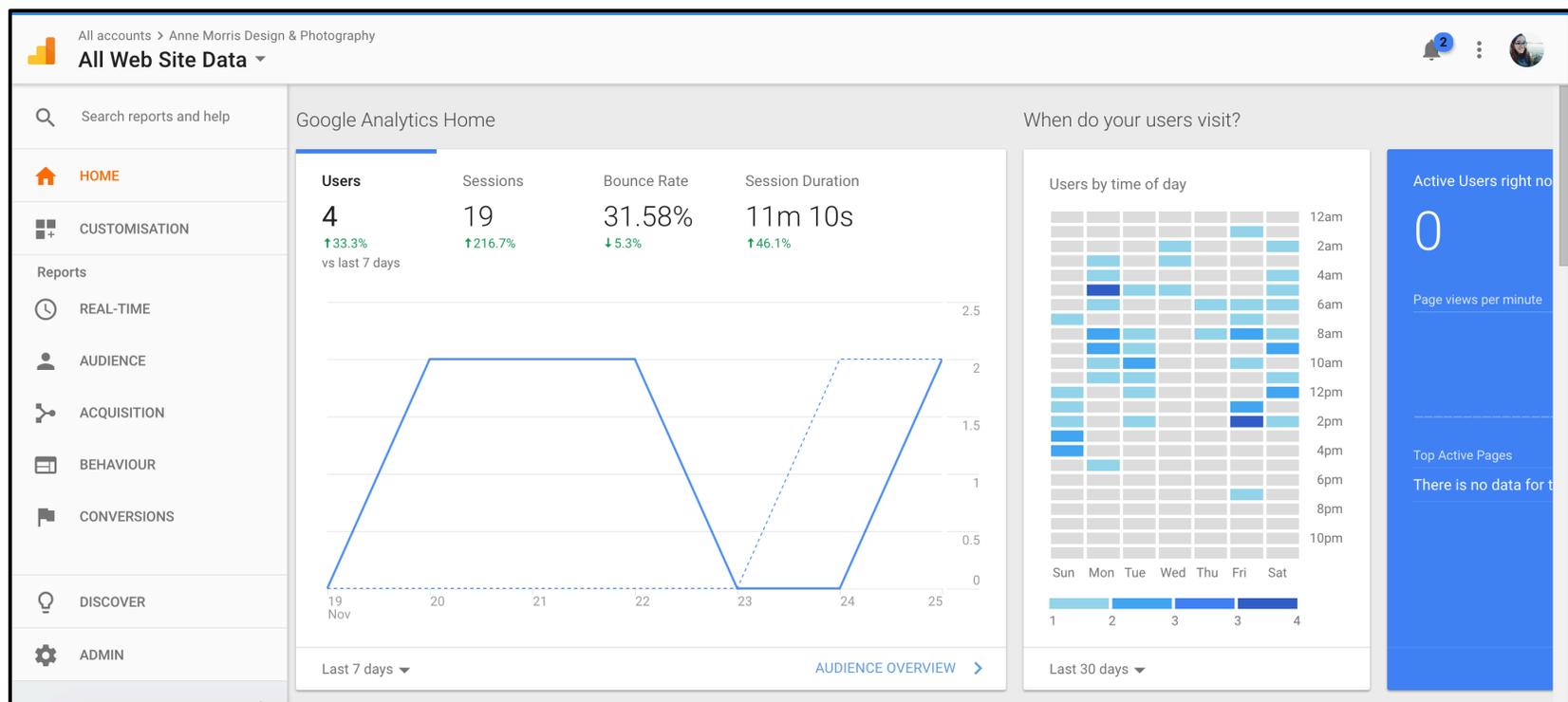


Figure 5: Google Analytics

This tool provides data such as user interaction time, bounce rates (how long a user stays on a page), which page is most popular, if there are more male or female users, how many people are on the site currently, and much more.

I submitted my URL to make an Analytics account, added code to my webpages so that Analytics could track and receive user data, and started learning how to read the data. Google Analytics is a difficult tool to use if you do not understand it, but understanding comes from practice using it. I feel much more competent in reading and utilizing the data in December of 2017 than I did when I was first introduced to it in September. I'll talk about Analytics more in Section 3.

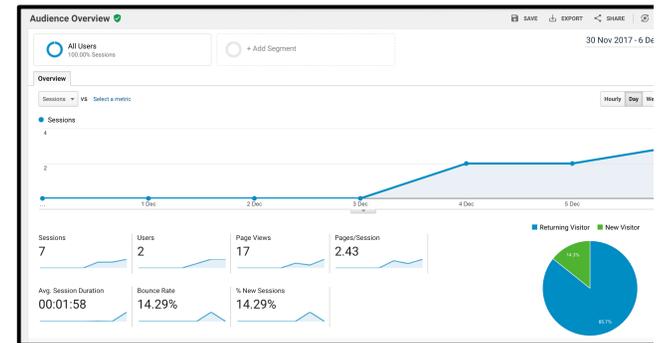


Figure 6: A Sample of Google Analytics Data

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING

SEO BUSINESS PLAN

Having a plan is an essential component to creating satisfactory content for a website. I didn't really understand the full importance of having a plan for my site when I started creating the site. I knew I needed something that loosely constituted a plan, since my efforts to make a site kept failing after I realized that I didn't know what I wanted. I did not know what *kind* of plan I needed, though, and therein lay my problem.

My SEO & Analytics class stressed the importance of creating a SEO business plan and learning how to define myself and my audience and how to utilize those definitions. I was pleased to find that after making my business plan, it was then much easier to know what basic aspects I wanted to have on my site.

To form my plan, I brought together several different aspects to learn from as a whole. I defined myself as a designer, and the people I think I would want to work with. I have a passion for creating beautiful things that both the client and I are happy with, and want to work with people who are trying to send a message to the world of what they are about.

I want people to be drawn to interact with what I have created. This could either be a full-time or a part-time project with a business or non-profit. I like the idea of working with a team on long-term projects.

I also performed a SWOT analysis on myself (fig. 7).

SWOT Analysis: analyzing my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

This was an enlightening look at myself, how I work, where I could improve, what chances I might be missing, and who I am competing with.

I specifically searched people and companies who would be potential threats to my work in the Atlanta area. I wrote what would be my ideal job position. These left me

SWOT ANALYSIS	
STRENGTHS	My strengths lie in how much I care about my work. I like to put integrity into my work and create the best thing that I can.
WEAKNESSES	My weaknesses relate to how I work with deadlines and time for the most part. I am still determining how best to work under deadlines and pressure. I also need to improve my abilities regarding working with aesthetics outside of my comfort zone. I'm currently doing this, actually; working for the Sports and Recreation department at KSU is a little challenging for someone who isn't interested in sports, so it takes some thinking outside of the box to create something that is both well designed and appropriate for Sports and Rec.
OPPORTUNITIES	Being in college and interacting with a lot of people, right now I have the opportunities to meet individuals who might need my skills. My classes are also pushing me to improve my skills constantly.
THREATS	My hometown of Atlanta is a very creative city, filled with artists and designers of all kinds. I am not exactly in a rare field here. I'm also very young, and still getting through school to my degree.

Figure 7: My SWOT Analysis

MY SEO GOALS

With the assistance of my SEO, I would like individuals and businesses that find my site to be pleased with both the work they see and the way it is presented. For fear of sounding prideful, I want to be found by people who are looking for designers who are not in the field simply to make money or beat competitors. I want to convey that I love my work. I would also like a convenient placement on the SERP.

Technically speaking, my goals are as following:

- Traffic on my site
- A good bounce rate (by users other than spammers)
- Local users finding and staying on my site
- Users going to other pages outside the homepage

Figure 8: My SEO Goals

with a better definition of who I am as a designer and what consumers I wanted to find me. and I defined my goals for SEO (*fig. 8*).

Having goals to aim for was another step to strategizing for an SEO plan. My professor taught me to keep S.M.A.R.T. in mind.

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound.

The SEO practices and tactics carried out need something to be measured against to determine if they are effective or not. *“As with any other marketing function, it is important to set specific goals and objectives—if a goal is not measurable, it is not useful.”* SEO is like a high-maintenance machine. It takes suitable care and intentional work, and you’re never finished making it run properly. It is more of an ongoing process than a one-time project (*Stricchiola, 2012*).

Every business needs an SEO plan, and I would argue that every designer does as well. My plan left me with a better understanding of who I wanted to draw to my site, and what content I should place on it to draw them there. It also gave me practical goals, like increasing users’ time on my site and ensuring I was found by search engine crawlers.

CONTENT STRATEGY

After learning the concepts, tools, and practices I’ve written about my classmates and I started creating SEO-friendly content for our websites. Content strategies are another way guide SEO planning. My content strategy included keywords, link-building, <META> tags, writing, and social signals.

KEYWORDS: We can plentifully fill our public-facing content with keywords in such a way that it’s not just poorly-written paragraphs full of random words. It can be done tastefully. Our code can have keywords in it as well. Keywords mean findability, and findability means you’re doing your job correctly as an SEO practitioner.

When planning what I would write for my public-facing content, I made sure to include terms and phrases that related to what I am interested in and the type of work I do.

Besides design, marketing and photography, I'm also interested in classic literature, but as I was not seeking to bring people to my site for that reason, I chose not to write about it. I also picked phrases and descriptions for the alt text, image captions, and image file names that fit what they were about (*fig. 9*).

```

<article>
<p>Featured here are some examples of my photography, graphic design, and branding work.</p>
<p> - PHOTOGRAPHY -</p>
<figure>  <figcaption>a senior photo of Maddy Kor in downtown Dallas, GA.</figcaption> </figure>

<figure>  <figcaption>the "Tree Room", Athens</figcaption> </figure>
<figure> 
<figcaption>Christmas lights.</figcaption> </figure>
<figure>  <figcaption>a cosplay photo of Mary Kathryn Turner as Link from Legend of Zelda.</figcaption> </figure>

```

Figure 9: Image File Names and Alt Text

LINK-BUILDING: Search engine crawlers are much more likely to rank your site well if it links out to reputable sites it is connected to somehow. I have the opportunity to link to a very trustworthy source: the university I attend and work for. Students have a fantastic advantage when it comes to link-building because they are in close proximity to many reputable establishments.

“Interaction Designers strive to create meaningful relationships between people and the products and services they use, from computers to mobile devices to appliances and beyond.” This definition given by the **Interaction Design Association** pertains to how designers create effective user interfaces. I am learning how to design this way while studying in the **Department of Technical Communication and Interactive Design** at **Kennesaw State University**. However, I believe that the practice of interaction design can apply to more than digital products.



Design exists in every aspect of our lives, and that is something that fascinates me. I work for Kennesaw State University's **Department of Sports and Recreation** as a marketing assistant, and it is a job I truly love. My primary role is that of a problem solver: I start out with only a blank canvas

Figure 10: My Link-Building Opportunities

I provided links to my **school**, the **department** I am in, the site for my **major**, and the **department** I work for (*fig. 10*). I also was able to link out to the Interaction Design Association when defining my field, and I hope to link to other Interactive Design groups and establishments as I get more connected to them.

<META> TAGS: <Meta> tags were another feature of SEO I had not had any experience with or knowledge of prior to taking my SEO class. These tags are a way to tell search engine crawlers what your page is about. <Meta> tags can be automatically generated by different websites, but they are not too difficult of a feature to add in yourself (*fig. 11*).

```

1  gtag( config , UA-100748053-1 );
2  </script>
3  <!-- made by www.metatags.org -->
4  <meta name="description" content="The Portfolio Site of Anne Morris, featuring some of her graphic design, photography, and ink
drawings." />
5  <meta name="keywords" content="gallery, portfolio, anne morris, design, photography, ink, ink drawings, photo, graphic design,
photos, gallery site," />
6  <meta name="author" content="metatags generator">
7  <meta name="robots" content="index, follow">
8  <meta name="revisit-after" content="3 month">
9  <meta name="geo.placename" content="Atlanta, Georgia">
0  <title>AM Design and Photography</title>
1  <!-- -->
2  <meta charset="utf-8">

```

Figure 11: Some of my <Meta> Tags

- The **<meta name="description">** tag allows you to write a sharp, succinct statement of what your site is about. Here is an example of Google Analytics' description, as shown in the SERP (*fig. 12*).

Google Analytics

<https://analytics.google.com/> ▼

Google Analytics lets you measure your advertising ROI as well as track your Flash, video, and social networking sites and applications.

Figure 12: Google Analytics' "description"

- The **<meta name="keywords">** tag is a way to insert keywords into your code without having to form them into a logical sentence.

- The `<meta name="geo.placename">` tag allows you to target a specific location with your site. I chose Atlanta, Georgia as my location since that is where I am based out of.

The `<title>` tag (*seen at bottom left, fig. 11*) is not specifically part of the `<meta>` tags, but is worth mentioning here: Giving your webpage a good title is yet another way to make your site appear better to search engines and to users.

WRITING: I struggled to come up with concise paragraphs that accurately described myself and my work. While in the middle of this process, I came to the realization that I had not had to write about myself as a designer before. It's hard. It is a tough balance to not feel like you're bragging about yourself or selling yourself short, and attempting to paint an accurate picture of yourself through the content you write.

For my “**about**” page, I started out writing long, wordy paragraphs that were more of an autobiography of what led up to me being a designer and everything I like, rather than a short descriptor of myself. I knew this would probably dissuade people from staying on the page long enough to read everything, and therefore not an effective use of text (*fig. 13*).

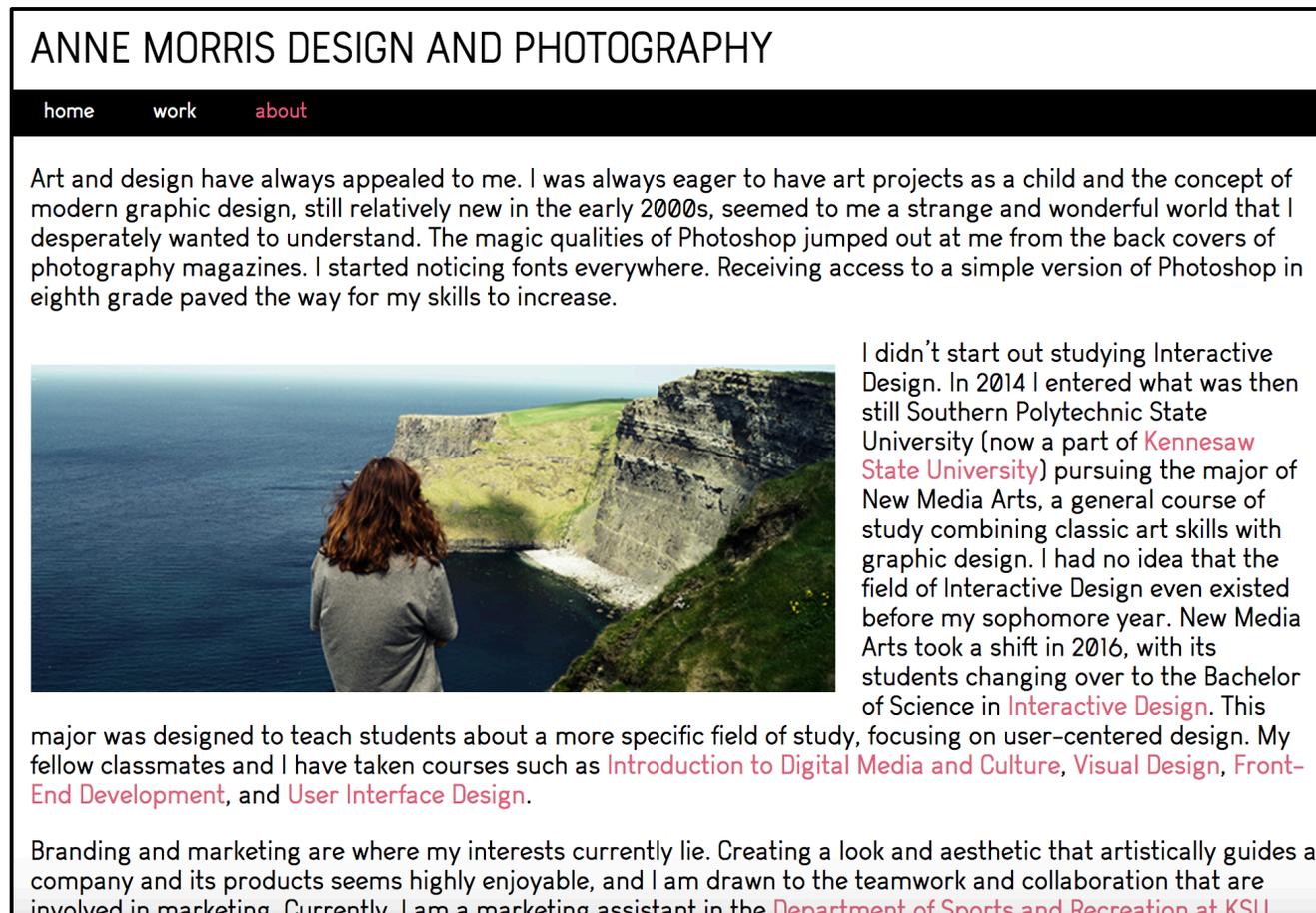


Figure 13: My Old About Page Content

I also sought to define my work and my field better—I was still learning what Interactive Design really is and what it means to me, and I was having difficulty accurately describing my work.

SOCIAL SIGNALS: I wanted to include LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram as my social media links on my site. I saw Pinterest on a fellow classmate's page and quite liked the idea of including that.

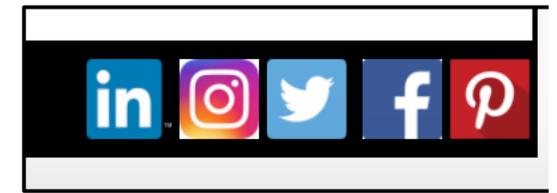


Figure 14: My Social Media Signals

I find it difficult to describe the types of design I like and enjoy creating, especially if I am directly asked about it, and the images I pin onto my boards show a bountiful amount of my creative process and inspirations (fig. 15).

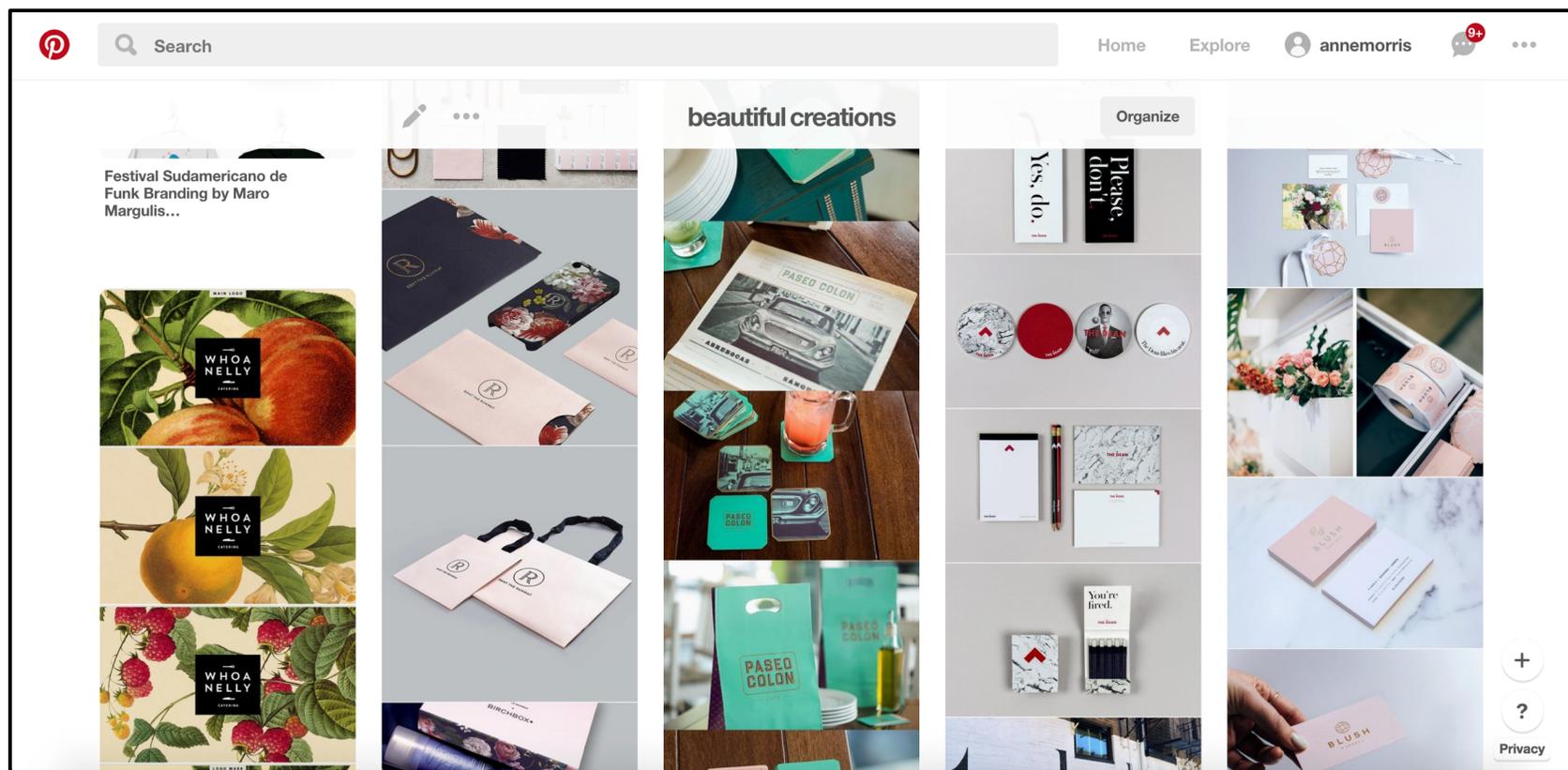


Figure 15: One of my Pinterest Boards

Having these social signals in place means more ways for users to follow me, and a few more key terms to add into my code. I do not use my designer Twitter or Facebook accounts very much, but am hoping to make them as active as my Instagram account so users will have something to see.

MY WEBSITE AT THIS TIME

Before I created this content, I had pulled together a very loose site with what remained of my HTML skills from a year prior. It was clear that I'd had no plan for content—I created the most basic site layout, with room for a few images and nothing more. Upon realizing what *content* truly meant (words, links, descriptors, and work examples), I quickly abandoned that site and started from scratch again, but this time with my content strategy.

My site was not as SEO-friendly as it could have been, but I was slowly improving. Presenting my first draft post-content strategy to my SEO & Analytics class and professor for a review and critique session, I was able to spot the issues with my site I needed to fix and improve upon.

- I needed to more effectively define Interactive Design, the type of work I have done in school and my job, and the type of work I would like to do in my future career.
- I needed to fix things like image loading times; the page displaying my work was taking a very long time to load due to the large size of my images, and pages that take more than 20 seconds to load are going to push people away.
- I had rambling, lengthy paragraphs on my about page and needed to produce a more concise biography of myself.

I took what I learned in the review session and began to build a better site.

SECTION 3

RESULTS

WHERE MY SITE IS NOW

I revised my site based on the feedback I had gotten from my classmates and professor, and the issues I knew my site still had. I know that the work on my site is far from over, but am satisfied with where it is now. It is pleasing to be able to look back and see that I have utilized what I learned and was taught.

WRITING

My site is now a well-organized investment. It has well-phrased paragraphs. The content on my “**about**” page is now a much better description of myself and my work (*fig. 16*). I am happy that I managed to convey how much design means to me and how much I love doing it. I want to be capable of getting jobs due to the quality of my site, but I also want it to be known that I am not in this simply for the money.

“Interaction Designers strive to create meaningful relationships between people and the products and services they use, from computers to mobile devices to appliances and beyond.” This definition given by the **Interaction Design Association** pertains to how designers create effective user interfaces. I am learning how to design this way while studying in the **Department of Technical Communication and Interactive Design** at **Kennesaw State University**. However, I believe that the practice of interaction design can apply to more than digital products.



Design exists in every aspect of our lives, and that is something that fascinates me. I work for Kennesaw State University’s **Department of Sports and Recreation** as a marketing assistant, and it is a job I truly love. My primary role is that of a problem-solver; I start out with only a blank canvas and the information or idea that needs to be conveyed, and determine how to best communicate that idea in an effective and aesthetically pleasing way.

I have experience in creating brands for small businesses, promotional graphic design, user interface design for apps and web and am proficient in Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, and Dreamweaver. Photography is something that I have a great amount of fun doing, and I am always open to cosplay and portrait shoots. My ideal design career would involve working with a consistent team on interesting and entertaining long-term projects. I love collaboration; from my experiences, I have seen it to be an effective machine that seeks to pull the skills and talents of everyone involved.

If you are interested in working with me, I would love to hear from you! Please email me at amorri79@students.kennesaw.edu.

Figure 16: My Current About Page Content

Design fills me with joy and I get a lot out of doing it, whether it's projects for myself or other people. I was also able to mention how much I love collaboration— “from my experiences, I have seen [collaboration] to be an effective machine that seeks to pull the skills and talents of everyone involved.”

KEYWORDS

Keywords are inserted where they can be, in the code and content. I wrote descriptions for my images in the alt text, named my JPEGs accordingly, and gave brief descriptive captions. I even made sure to write effective **alt text** for my social media icons (*fig. 17*).

```
<a title="Anne Morris | LinkedIn" href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/anne-morris-53437214a/"></a> |  
<a title="amorrisart | Instagram" href="instagram.com/amorrisart"></a>  
<a title="Anne Morris | Twitter" href="https://twitter.com/amorrisart"></a>&nbsp;  
<a title="AM Design and Photography | Facebook" href="https://www.facebook.com/amorrisart/"></a>  
<a title="Anne Morris on Pinterest" href="https://www.pinterest.com/annemorris13/"></a>
```

Figure 17: My Social Media Icons Keywords

DATA STORY

My work now mirrors the description of what I say I do, and this is thanks to my data story. I knew the example of work on my site prior to the class site review wasn't as well-rounded as I would have liked, but my **data story** helped me realize that what I wrote about myself on my site didn't match the work shown.

I had not worked with data stories up to this point, but I had dabbled in creating personas for user-centered design in a visual design class the previous spring, and both processes start in similar ways. A designer invents a person or persons that they believe would want to use their website or app.

SECTION 3 | RESULTS

The designer then simulates, through a story-telling narrative, the process of the character(s) going through the site/app and what they thought of it. In the case of data stories, data points from Google Analytics are used to provide the information of what the character did while visiting the website.

This process of data story-telling takes all the numbers and charts of Google Analytics and turns it into something much more engaging and comprehensible.

I used my data story character to determine who I wanted to come to my site and why I wanted them to come there, and looked at my Google Analytics data to understand what activity was occurring on my site (*fig. 18*).

I then wrote my data story and learned 2 very important things:

- **People weren't staying on my site long or returning to it.** This was most likely due to my unorganized, long paragraphs, and the unsustainable long loading times of my images.
- **I wanted to be found by people seeking a branding designer, and had nothing to show for the people that did show up.** I needed to make my work match my words. "My work includes designing user interfaces, creating promotional marketing materials, crafting brands, and photography."

My data story reminded me of the SEO Business Plan I had created before any of my content was made, and I like to think data stories are post-content versions of that plan. My data story helped alert me to what I really wanted for my site and that I was not achieving it, and pointed me in the right direction to take my site and how to modify it.

ANALYTICS

- More new than returning visitors
- Less sessions as time goes on
- Most sessions between 1 - 10 minutes
- Homepage landing page 71% of the time
- Workpage and homepage most common exiting pages

STORY INFO

- Siobhan, 28
- Small business of _____, trying to find someone in the Atlanta area, not a big business, an individual, to help her create her look and brand. Personal work.
- Anne Morris Design & Photography's site has good but small amounts of work quality on it.
 - Siobhan arrived on the homepage, and stayed on it X long and then went to the work page where she stayed X long.
 - Overall, she stayed on the site 4-9 minutes.
 - She left from the workpage.
 - Like many people who found the site and liked what they saw, she has not been back. Yes, the content on the site is nice, but not enough work or content to draw them in again.
 - The site needs to have more content related to branding and a better explanation to the user/customer what the artist wants to do for/with people.
 - The "about" page needs work
 - Main page has interesting enough info to draw in

Figure 18: My Data Story Process Work

SEARCH CONSOLE

About halfway through the fall semester, I added my site's URL to Google Search Console. Adding my site to Search Console gave Google access to it. Because I submitted it to their index, it's now visible to their crawlers and won't be hidden from the rest of the world.

Search Console is a tool that allows users to do as much as they can to ensure their site's URL is findable. It offers extremely helpful suggestions (*fig. 19*) to users who are new at search engine optimization, like myself.

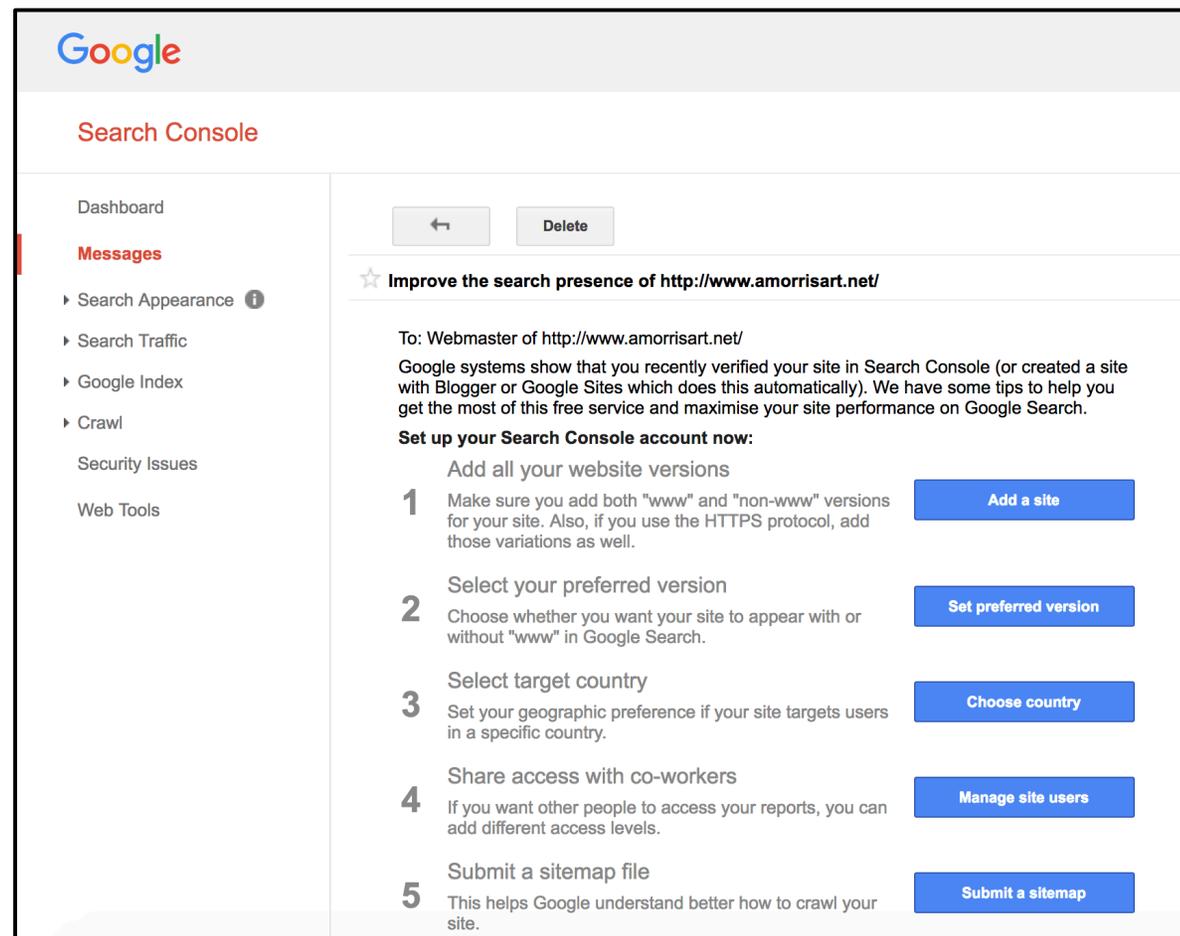


Figure 19: Google Search Console

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

It is very satisfying to look at something you at first did not understand and be able to gather information from it that means something to you. Google Analytics seemed to me very confusing at first, simply numbers and charts I could not do anything with. As I was doing the final revisions for my site at the end of the semester, I looked over some data to see if something had changed after my data story, and was pleased to see that it had! That reaction itself pleased me—that I was able to look at Analytics and understand it enough to be excited about what I saw.

Before my data story, there were some data points I observed on Analytics that I wanted to improve.

- **I wanted to have more returning than new visitors.** The ratio of New vs. Returning visitors was greatly in favor of new visitors, which at first hearing doesn't sound unfavorable. However, if the people that visit my site don't come back, a client base is never going to flourish. After checking my data after my data story, I was pleasantly surprised to see that that ratio had changed (*fig. 20*).

User Type ?	Acquisition			Behaviour			Conversions		
	Sessions ? ↓	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages/Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?	Goal Conversion Rate ?	Goal Completions ?	Goal Value ?
	19 % of Total: 100.00% (19)	21.05% Avg for View: 21.05% (0.00%)	4 % of Total: 100.00% (4)	31.58% Avg for View: 31.58% (0.00%)	17.95 Avg for View: 17.95 (0.00%)	00:11:11 Avg for View: 00:11:11 (0.00%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	0 % of Total: 0.00% (0)	US\$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% (US\$0.00)
1. Returning Visitor	15 (78.95%)	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	40.00%	18.60	00:10:39	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
2. New Visitor	4 (21.05%)	100.00%	4(100.00%)	0.00%	15.50	00:13:12	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	US\$0.00 (0.00%)

Figure 20: New vs. Returning Visitors Data

- **I wanted people to spend more time on the website.** My Analytics data showed my users' engagement and time on my site to be in diminutive amounts. This made sense to me prior to my revisions, because my text content was too lengthy and my pages loaded very slowly. My users' session time increased considerably (*fig. 21*) after my data story and the changes I made in my content.

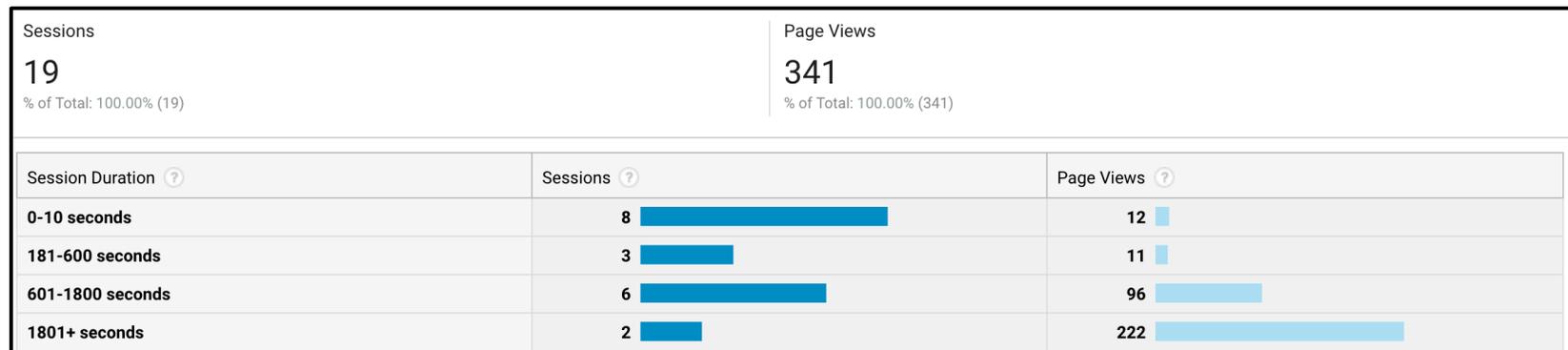


Figure 21: Session Length Data

- **I wanted people to not leave my “about” and “work” pages as quickly.** This goal is related to the one before it, but I wanted to focus specifically on users' activity on those pages. The time spent on these pages now has not increased by much, but I believe it will due to the work I have done on these pages. My images are now much smaller (faster loading time) and my descriptive text is much shorter and more succinct.

I am very satisfied by the results shown in Google Analytics' data, and am glad to have learned how to properly read sections of it.

SECTION 4

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

MY WORK ISN'T DONE

While it is true that I am satisfied with where my site is now, especially compared to where it was at the beginning of the semester, I know that my work is not done. It has only just been put up on a web server, and is very young in the world of webpages. I am still a long way from bringing in actual potential consumers, but am going to keep working on my site to move towards that goal.

FUTURE GOALS

I would like to see my users' time on my website increase. I would like that time to be spent well, too—I want my users to have an engaging experience on my site, and to be satisfied with what they read and observe about me and my work. I intend to create a more thorough collection of the work I have done over the past few years, and would like to incorporate some of my user interface design and mobile app project work into my portfolio.

I want to keep learning more about Google Analytics, and continue growing in my understanding of its data. I want to be able to take the data it provides and do everything I can with it to make my site as effective as can be.

I hope to keep with the SEO practices I have learned over the past few months. Some of the courses students take in school do not stick with them, and I hope this is not one of those cases. I have been taught extremely practical tactics, and I want to learn more about them so that I can continue implementing them to their full potential. I may even be able to instruct other young, aspiring designers about SEO one day.

SECTION 5

CONCLUSION

FINAL THOUGHTS

After learning about SEO through my class and utilizing it for my own site, I now feel capable that in a cursory glance of a site's content and code, I can judge whether or not it's a well-designed site and if proper SEO practices are being implemented. This knowledge will help me in my future career because of the value and rarity of understanding search engine optimization.

This playbook illustrated my journey through optimizing my site for findability. When one is learning something at the same time as carrying it out, the procedure can be somewhat non-linear and scattered. I feel confident that my process would be much more streamlined and organized the next time around.

It is very encouraging to now understand and be able to utilize the tactics and strategies that I was intimidated by at first. This should encourage other people, too; many technological processes that seem daunting are indeed much simpler, and things like search engine optimization in fact make things easier for a designer or business.

It would be edifying to apply SEO to a site that is not my own, and I hope to get the chance to do that someday. For now, I will continue the SEO for my own portfolio site and I hope to see positive results from that.

CITATIONS



CITATIONS

Stricchiola, et al. "Search Engine Basics." The Art of SEO, 2nd ed., O'Reilly, 2012.

"Introduction to Web Accessibility." W3C.Com, www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.