Aspects of a Website’s Design that I Like/Dislike

Simplicity is a wonderful thing for the first impression. An effective site provides a simple but memorable first impression, with some extra secondary content if a person wants to linger on the page and scroll down. Squeezing too much on the front page can be overwhelming and is unnecessary. The front page should have something featured that catches the attention, and then just a few smaller extra touches that allow the user to explore once the initial page has made its impression. A website that does this well is the site for the Milkboy recording studio: <http://milkboythestudio.com/>. You’ll notice no distracting “LATEST NEWS:” on the front page and there is actually minimal type upon first view. If the user wants more, they can click the links or scroll down. I think that <http://www.brynathyn.edu/> does this well as well; simple slide-show banner, with major topics of the site visible, but much smaller and not cluttering the page.

A strong, unified, cohesive style is essential to creating a good impression on a site visitor. This means that background, fonts, colors, should mesh together and all be of one aesthetic feel. If possible, this theme ought to go along with the site’s main logo or banner or title. <http://www.cairnwood.org/> does this well, especially on the front page. The background, fonts, logo, pictures, even down to the facebook tab on the bottom colored brown all complement the theme of the page and the logo for Cairnwood Estate. <http://whiteelephantrestaurant.com/> has a big logo on their page and uses the colors of their logo in the rest of the site design. (Though I have many other issues with the design of this site—even with how the color scheme is used, especially with the different colored fonts—I still think that they are on the right track with having a theme based on their logo.)

I don’t like it when a website requires unnecessary scrolling. Sometimes, it is an aesthetic issue. Not only should every website have a clear title visible upon first arriving at the site, but any major identifying images or photographs should be completely visible at normal browser zoom settings—without having to scroll down. If the image is important but does not fit well at the top of the page, then it should probably be placed further down the front page, or up where it is clearly visible; it ought not to be partially visible. While one could argue that a partially visible photo might entice visitors to scroll down, I think that it creates a poor first visual for the site and could jeopardize a first-impression of professionalism. Here is an example: <http://www.npr.org/2014/03/23/291138709/first-listen-nickel-creek-a-dotted-line>. Additionally, if a site has a central interactive element or piece of main content, this should be visible upon visiting the site without having to scroll down. For instance, a page that solely features a comic, game, or video should not require the visitor to scroll down in order to engage with this element properly. I understand that maybe more ads can be seen if you a user has to scroll, but again, I think it creates a poor first impression and makes the site that much less convenient. Wimp.com, a video site, is a culprit of this (<http://www.wimp.com/kittensleep/> , for example) as is teagames.com sometimes.

I don’t like when pages have clumps of text and pictures spread out about a single page with no apparent system of organization. It makes the content of the page appear like a newspaper ads section. This sort of willy-nilly, imprecise presentation gives me the impression that this is not important material and that it is just filling space. Any material I came to the site to use is hopefully in one of the more organized sections where I can easily find where it is and pick it out. <http://www.millersalehouse.com/> is a great example. This page looks neat, straightforward and easy to navigate at first but upon scrolling down appears more like a digital scrap-book. And this brings down the professional, concise feel of the site. This site, <https://www.aamc.org/>, has slightly more organization, but still has a bit of a scattered feeling.