

Aimee Norris

Internet Fundamentals

2/6/2015

Best/Worst Websites

### The Good and the Scary: A Report on Website Usability

What makes a good website is: usability, accessibility, good design, versatility and adaptability. A website must address the needs of its users and regularly conform to new challenges as well as foresee demands that its users may need or desire in the future. For this report, I will examine two websites: Google Maps and Rudgwick Steam/Country Show. Google Maps has proven itself worthy as one of the best websites I have used. It regularly updates, adds new features, improves on old features, and incorporates accessibility functions such as voice-navigation, touch-screen adaptations, and dual street and map-view. Rudgwick Steam/Country Show's website, on the other hand, is a great example of many things you can do wrong in the creation of a website. Poor design, confusing links, and strange layout are only a few of the many things wrong with the site.

#### **The Best:**

Google Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps>

Google Maps is an online web mapping service that provides updated geographic and political maps, satellite and ground images, and information of the earth. Its use can vary from real-time GPS assistance, to checking on local traffic, to measuring distances, and to researching locations across the globe.

While Google Maps is not perfect, this is a website/app that I use often. Google regularly updates the site and incorporates real-time changes into its data--for instance, rush hour traffic and seasonal construction. When you ask Google Maps for directions, it will give you multiple options based on shortest travel time and whether or not you wish to walk, fly, bike, drive, or use public transit. It also provides an estimated time of arrival that changes when you or the environment changes (such as a road accident or street closure). The website sometimes goes through major updates in format and display. Nowadays, when you scroll to zoom in on the map, you no longer automatically jump into street-view. Instead, you must click "streetview" in the upper left menu or drag the little person icon at the bottom right. You can also toggle on Map-view or Satellite-view to get a better view of the environment, and this too, is regularly updated.

Google Chrome is the preferred browser to use with Google applications, but Google Maps also runs well on Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, and Opera. The app works on both Android and Mac iPads and iPhones. For best use, the app needs to be regularly updated and requires internet connection, whether through wifi or a subscription to a 3G/4G network.

The tablet and phone application is, by far, my favorite. The "homepage" on both desktop, laptop, and phone/tablet is typically the same: a close up of your current location. If your home desktop computer does not have cookies enabled or the option for google tracking is turned off, the homepage may only show a map of the United States. With the app, the interactive map allows for voice GPS, there is a built in compass, and you can make changes to your route manually and Google Maps will recalculate based on your decisions. On touch-screen devices, the program runs smoothly and allows for user input on the display--you can move or angle the map however you want. You can use voice commands on the phone/tablet to instruct Google Maps on where it is you want to go and what preferences you have, such as: no highways

or tollways. This allows accessibility for users who are unable to use their hands or those who are blind.

There are still bugs with the system. Some limitations include: simplistic design (some buttons on the app and the new update of Google Maps have symbols instead of words and may be confusing for users unfamiliar with the design) and advanced technology (Google Maps can be demanding on older phones and computers.) Overall, I've been very pleased with Google Maps.

### **The Worst:**

Rudgwick Steam/Country Show

<http://www.rudgwicksteamshow.co.uk/>

I chose this one because it is one of the most comically terrible websites I have ever seen. It has a ridiculously hyper homepage. The background is solid black and the central text, which includes an excessive amount of photos and brightly-colored and strangely-angled font, is bordered by thick neon-blue lines. The main links to other pages are very small and located at the extreme top of the page. For some reason these links are numbered 1, 4, 6, 8, 12, 15. Only when you hover over the links do you see the missing numbers (which even include half-numbers like 4a.) Many users would not even see these links and may not understand what they are or where they go. In the center of the page, a distracting gif animation of a moving dotted line, bracketed poorly by bright yellow lines, pointlessly separates the welcome message from the title of the site. Also, shoved in between random images is a ticker counter for visitors and a clock.

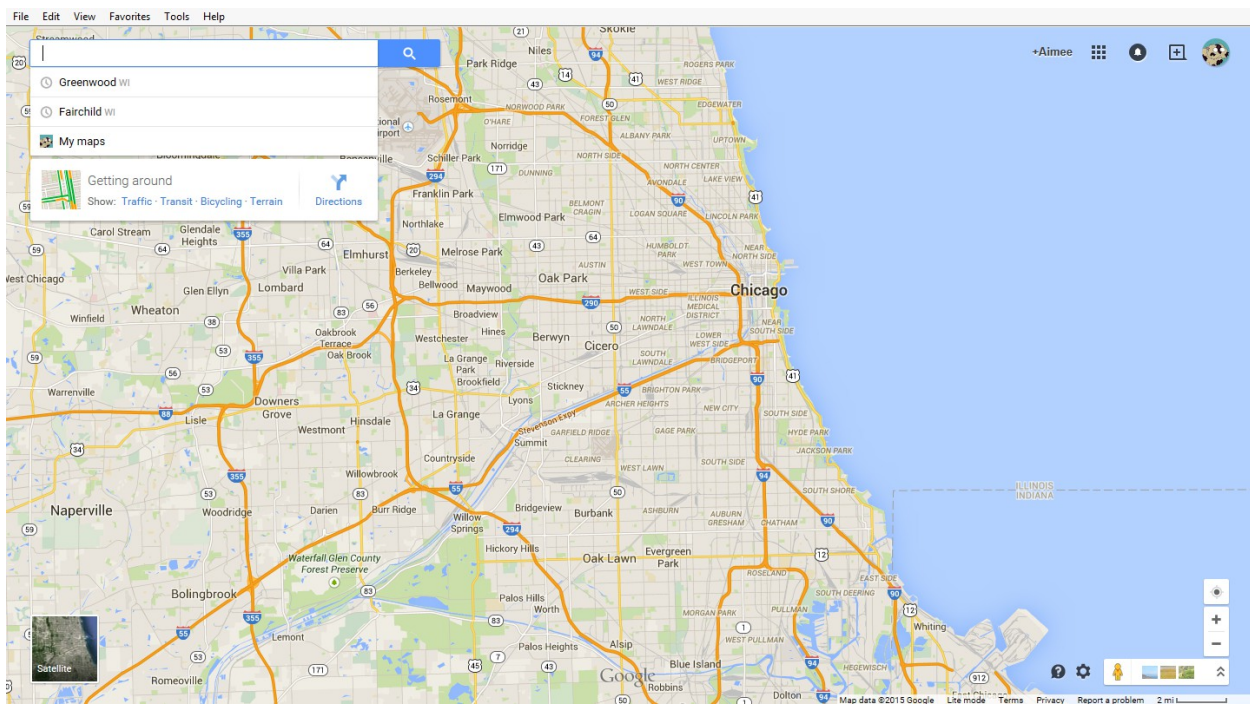
When you scroll down, most of the page is taken up by a giant collage of photos from past country shows. Pressed up against this collage is a Union Jack, an ad for a mini beer festival, instructions on how to find the list of attractions (but no link), and a banner declaring the

site's logos and graphics as copyrighted. As you scroll down further, there are more ads for the country show (none of which are links), a telephone number, a Furnace Lakes Fishery ad, and finally a link to the "next page" which is an image of a clown doll named "Mr. Punch." There are instructions to navigate the site via "logos" at the bottom of the page, but those images are not links.

The main audience of this website would be attendees, exhibitors and traders. Unfortunately, I don't think their audience would have an easier time trying to navigate the site than I did. The location of the links are confusing and frustrating. Where there could be links, there is only images and text without subtitles. If I were a user, I would sooner try to call them than attempt to find any proper forms or procedures on this site. Since this is a country show for, presumably, older country-folk who may not be as technologically literate, the website's terrible state may be due, primarily, to lack of use. The dreadful design definitely doesn't help matters.

There is no app for this site and the page looks identical on a smartphone as it does on a desktop.

## Appendix



Google Maps - Search Bar/Directions top left, Satellite View bottom left, viewing options and streetview bottom right, Google account options top right.

The image shows a screenshot of a website banner for the 29th Rudgwick Country Show. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links: 1. RUDGWICK STE, 4. ENTRIES/CAMP, 6. 2013 SHOW PIC, 8. 2011 SHOW PIC, 12. PICS RUDGWICK, and 15. SHOW PICTUR. The main banner features the text "PRESENTING OUR 28th ANNUAL SHOW" with a date of "12-27-22" and "386936 VISITORS". Below this is "WELCOME TO OUR WEBSITE...". The banner also includes the text "GREAT BRITISH ENGINEERING AT ITS BEST" and "A REAL FAMILY PACKED COUNTRY SHOW WITH SO MUCH TO SEE & DO!". The main title is "29th RUDGWICK COUNTRY SHOW" in a large, stylized font, with the subtitle "THE COUNTRY SHOW WITH A BIG DIFFERENCE". The dates are "SAT 29th SUN 30th & MON 31st AUGUST 2015". A yellow circle on the left says "44 ACRES OF SHOW". A blue box at the bottom right contains the email "email: chanaburi1@aol.com". The banner is decorated with images of a dog, chickens, a woman in traditional dress, and various agricultural machinery.

Rudgwick Country Show - links to other pages located far top left, link to e-mail located bottom right.





Rudgwick Country Show - middle of homepage - No links, only text and images



Rudgwick Steam/Country Show - bottom of homepage - link to next page is the clown doll - arrow is an animated gif - another link to e-mail located top right.