

A grayscale photograph of a newsroom serves as the background. A bright yellow horizontal band is superimposed over the middle of the image. The text 'GRADY NEWSOURCE' is written in black, bold, sans-serif font within the yellow band. Below it, the words 'UX STUDY' are written in a much larger, white, bold, sans-serif font, also within the yellow band. At the bottom of the image, the text 'JRMC 8016 | UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. The names of the researchers, 'KATE DEVLIN, LEAH MOSS, ANDREA SKELLIE & ASHLEY PANTER', are written in a white, sans-serif font on the right side of the image, overlapping the yellow band and the grayscale background.

GRADY NEWSOURCE

UX STUDY

KATE DEVLIN, LEAH MOSS, ANDREA SKELLIE & ASHLEY PANTER

THE CLIENT

GRADY NEWSOURCE

Grady Newsource is a student production of the Grady College of Journalism & Mass Communication at UGA. It is both an undergraduate course and an independent news organization. The Grady Newsource website is a critical part of both its service to the community and the experiential learning process, but—as it currently stands—is not meeting the needs of *any* audience.



Nsenga Burton
Grady Faculty &
Grady Newsource Digital Editor

THE CLIENT

Dr. Burton recently joined the Grady faculty as Digital Editor of Grady Newsource and wants to redesign the current website. She understands there are significant problems with the site, but doesn't know exactly what these problems are and the extent to which these issues are affecting stakeholders.

RESEARCH QUESTION

**WHERE ARE THE PROBLEM AREAS OF GRADY
NEWSOURCE? WHAT IS THE EXTENT TO THESE
PROBLEMS?**

DATA COLLECTION

PHASE 1
OBSERVATION

PHASE 2
INTERVIEWS

PHASE 3
USABILITY TEST

PHASE 1

OBSERVATION

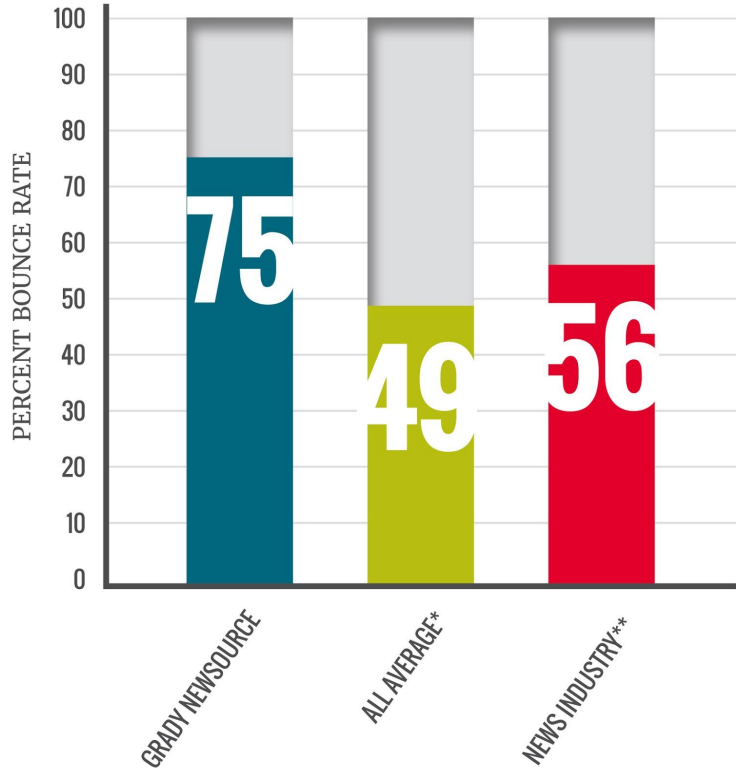
*What are users doing on the website? What are they clicking on?
How much time are users spending on the site?*

OBSERVATION

METHODS

We used data collected by Google Analytics during the Fall 2016 semester to determine how users were interacting with the website.

To better understand user behavior, we reviewed bounce rate, session duration, and pageviews per session. We also looked at a heatmap of the homepage to identify which sections were more engaging than others.



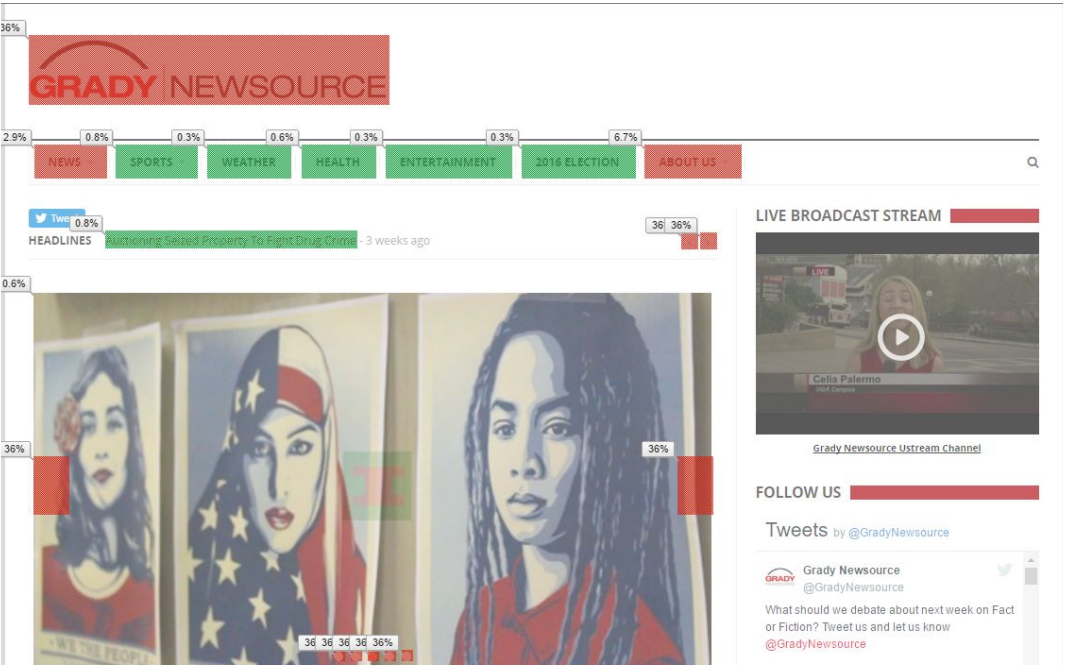
FINDINGS

BOUNCE RATE

According to www.RocketFuel.com, the average bounce rate for all websites ranges from 41% to 55% (49% on average).

The average bounce rate for websites in the news industry is 56%, according to www.ConversionVooDoo.com.

Grady NewsSource had an average bounce rate of 75%, which is higher than both the average for all websites and specifically news sites .



FINDINGS

HEATMAP

According to the heatmap, users are only selecting a few main areas of the homepage (such as the Grady News source logo, news, about us, and featured sections) and ignoring the rest. This heatmap shows a major problem and we seek to understand why through future research.

INSIGHT

**BOTH BOUNCE RATE & HEATMAP DATA
INDICATE THAT USERS CAN'T FIND THE
INFORMATION THEY NEED.**

PHASE 2

INTERVIEWS

Why do users currently visit the site? What do users currently like and dislike about the site and why? What information are users hoping to find?



We recruited five key stakeholders for one-on-one interviews. These were Grady faculty and students who were currently or previously involved with Grady Newsource. We created separate questionnaires for faculty and students that addressed website usage, features, navigation and potential problems.

USAGE

While you were a part of the Grady Newsource staff, how did you primarily use the website?

FEATURES & NAVIGATION

Which features do you use most on the website?

PROBLEMS

What is your greatest challenge when using the website?



Janice Hume
Grady Faculty



Chris Shumway
Grady Faculty



Ivanka Pjesivac
Grady Faculty



LaPorsche Thomas
Grady Newsource Student



Miles Moraitis
Grady Newsource Student



Janice Hume

Grady Faculty

BALANCING DUAL PURPOSES

Site purpose is changing in the fall, and capstone courses will be featured in addition to the daily turnaround.

NEW USER FRIENDLY

“I want someone who doesn’t know what we’re doing to be able to kind of tell immediately.”

GRADUATE & TRAVEL ARTICLES

Dr. Hume liked the health and travel journalism sections.



Miles Moraitis

Grady Newsource Executive Producer

UNFRIENDLY DESIGN

“The design is unwelcoming.” Overall, Miles thought the site was unfriendly to both readers and to students in the class who worked on the site.

HIGHLIGHT THE BROADCAST

The livestream needs to be one of the first things you see.

RETAINING AUDIENCE

Newssource is run on a semester-by-semester basis, and there will always be breaks with no activity. Miles recommends making the website as up-to-date as possible.



LaPorsche Thomas

Grady Newsource Student

SHARING STORIES

“There’s so much going on with the website that people won’t be able to find my stories. I don’t know how to, so I don’t know if anyone else can...”

ABOUT US

She didn’t think there was enough information provided about the organization itself. The “About Us” page was so hidden that she had never accessed it.

NEWSOURCE LIVESTREAM

She’s never navigated to the livestream from the website, usually just googles it.



Chris Shumway

Grady Faculty

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

Photojournalism sections get lost because of poor placement.

FACULTY COMMUNICATION

He believes that the faculty involved have to be plugged into Newsource. There are so many classes that can showcase their work here.

NEEDS BETTER TAGGING

There are articles in the headlines section that are weeks old.



Ivanka Pjesivac

Grady Faculty

SITE PURPOSE

“In terms of a news organization, you have to think what you want to be.”

POOR DESIGN

The site is outdated.

TWITTER

A specific recommendation Dr. Pjesivac brought up was removing the Twitter bar and adding other social media accounts. “Why tweets?”

INSIGHT

**GRADY NEWSOURCE IS IN THE MIDST OF AN
ONLINE IDENTITY CRISIS.**

PHASE 3

USABILITY TEST

What is preventing people from accomplishing tasks? What are the habits, behaviors and expectations of new users? Where is the site navigation most confusing?



We created a list of 9 common tasks (two of which cannot be done) for participants to complete. For participants, we recruited ten students from the New Media Institute who had very little knowledge of the Grady Newsource website.

SCENARIOS: TYPICAL NEWS CONSUMER

Tasks 1-3 focused on how current students might use the website to consume news.

INTERESTED STUDENT

Tasks 4-6 focused on how current students find specific information on the website.

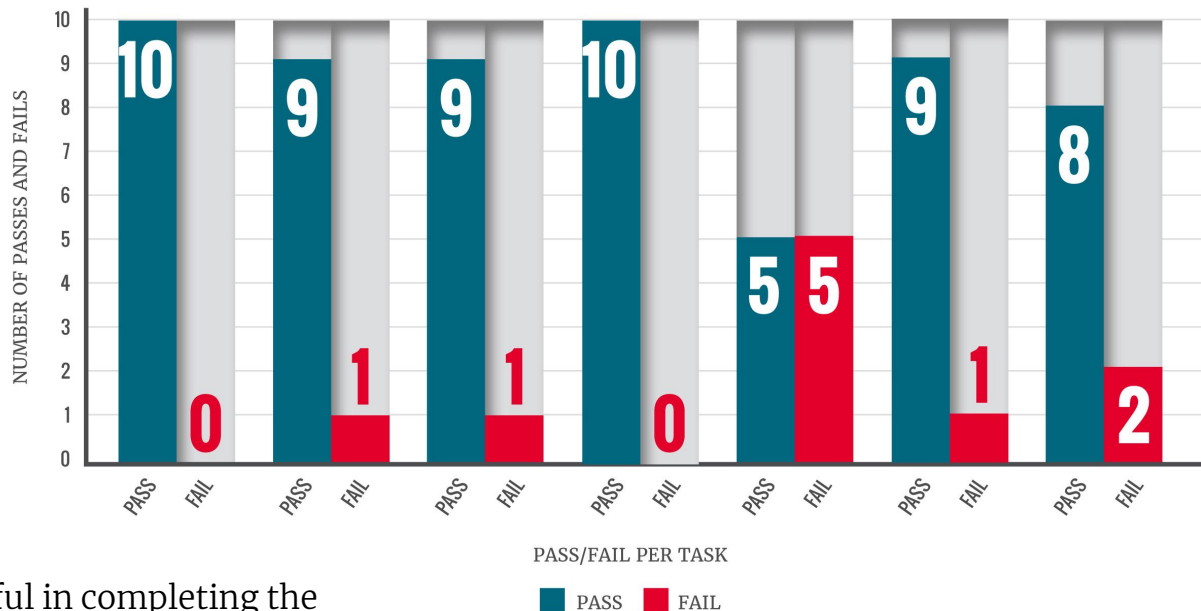
POTENTIAL EMPLOYER

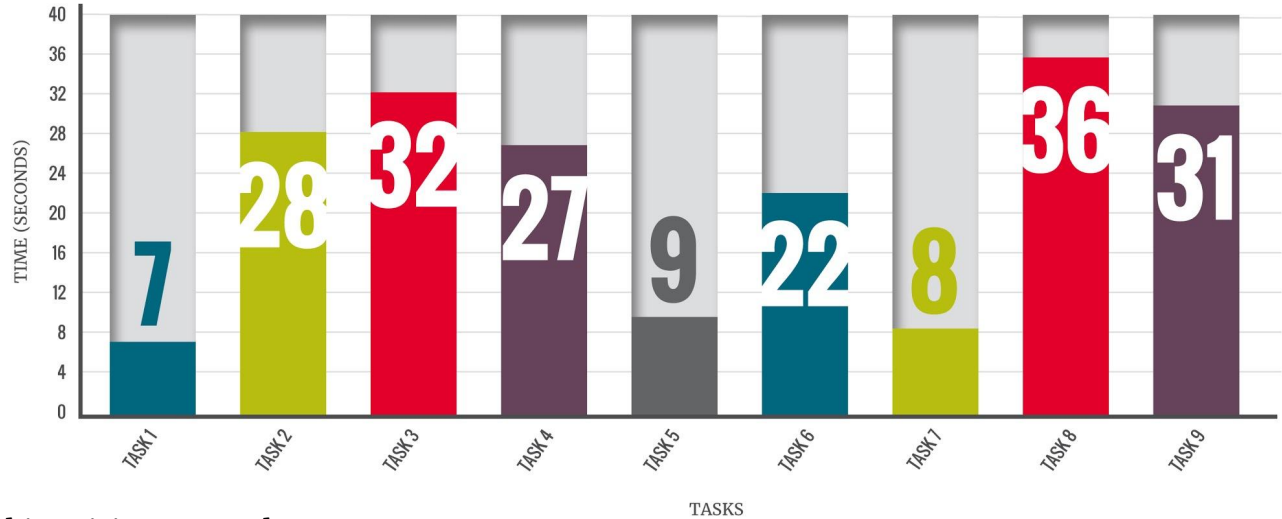
Tasks 7-9 targeted parts of the website that employers might be interested in.

FINDINGS

TASK SUCCESS

Nearly all participants were successful in completing the tasks. Despite this, they expressed frustration about the page layout and navigation. Tasks 3 and 8 were left out of the above graph because they were impossible.





FINDINGS

TASK TIME

Tasks that should be simple and intuitive proved complicated. Participants took longer than expected to complete these tasks due to poor site navigation and constantly having to search on the site. Many tasks could be completed on the frontpage, but users searched beyond it. The red bars indicate the impossible tasks.

USABILITY TEST

FINDINGS

During testing, we encouraged participants to think aloud. This helped us to realize why users were experiencing certain difficulties. Here a few examples:

- *When searching for Grady Newsource's email address, 50% of users expected this contact information to be in the website's footer when it was actually on another page.*
- *Participants were asked to find the Grady Newsource Facebook page, which was an impossible task. They felt that omitting the Facebook page was an oversight.*
- *The majority of participants wondered why the byline wasn't at the top of an article.*
- *When looking for the author's email address, 60% of participants clicked the author's name expecting it to be a link. In reality, the author's email was on a PDF linked from the "Our Staff" page.*
- *100 percent of participants expected this staff PDF to contain staff bios. It did not.*
- *50 percent of participants said they expected the sidebar to have advertisements—not content.*
- *When looking for a specific photogallery, 90% reported they expected to see "galleries" as a tab at the top of the page.*

INSIGHT

**EVEN SIMPLE TASKS BECOME COMPLICATED
WITH A SITE STRUCTURE THAT IS
COUNTER-INTUITIVE.**

PHASE 3

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our research, we have four major, overarching recommendations.

DEFINE

TARGET AUDIENCE

One of the major issues facing the functionality of the Grady Newsource website was less of a user experience problem and more of an organizational flaw. Each interviewed stakeholder defined the site's overall purpose differently. Before moving forward with a redesign, Grady Newsource needs to define its target audience and the site's main purpose.

IDENTIFY PURPOSE

Stakeholders need to agree on a primary purpose, whether that is to provide news to the local community or showcase student work. The new design must clearly and immediately reflect this purpose.

BALANCING ACT

Grady Newsource keeps its current purposes, the redesign should better balance weekly news, capstone work, and special projects, to serve as a dual portfolio and news site.

RETHINK

SITE STRUCTURE

All three types of research showed users were not able to locate specific information and did not understand current navigation. The information architecture on the site was not clear and not satisfying user needs.

NAVIGATION

The sections at the top are unclear, inefficient and not clicked. We suggest recategorizing these tabs, especially the “About” one.

SIDE BAR

Remove from homepage.

FOOTER

Create a footer that contains social media icons and contact information; many users expected to find this in a footer.

REFRESH

OVERALL AESTHETIC

The visual appearance of the site was mentioned by 100% of participants in all research phases. Users thought the website aesthetic did not reflect the prestige of Grady as one of the nation's top journalism schools. Users mentioned the desire to see modern design trends incorporated throughout the website.

MODERN HEADER

Replace the current contained slider with an embedded full width video slider similar to Grady's new website.

UTILIZE WHITE SPACE

The site is too cluttered and information is presented without hierarchy.

CREATE VISUAL FLOW

Place important content on the left side of the page. Content should be arranged in a standard layout such as a Z-Pattern or F-Pattern.

CREATE

CONNECTION

One of the main purposes of this site is to showcase student work and connect students with potential employers. As the site currently stands, reaching out to students is nearly impossible.

STAFF PROFILE

Create a prominent page for staff profiles that contains bios & contact information. Users expected to find this information on a page, not a PDF.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Although the organization has social media, the only account linked to the site is Twitter. We recommend updating the site to include all relevant and up-to-date social media accounts.

LIMITATIONS

Expand Participants

Interviews: Our one-on-one interviews focused on internal users. We may be missing external audiences, such as community members who use the site to read local news or potential employers who visit hoping to recruit students. Further research should be conducted to target these audiences.

Usability testing: Our usability study was also narrow in scale. Participants were recruited from one New Media Institute class. These students, while representing a wide variety of majors, are all fairly young and tech-savvy. We recommend future research be conducted with a more representative sample of the target audience.

LOOKING AHEAD

GRADY NEWSOURCE

With our recommendations, we are confident that the Grady Newsource website will see an increase in engagement and unique visitors. We are also excited to begin the next phase of development: redesigning the Grady Newsource webpage. We look forward to putting our insights into action and redesigning with purpose. This gives us a unique opportunity to not only learn UX research, but to experience implementing it as designers.