# Content and Beyond

In the Planning stage of our web project we have developed a site strategy and structure. This is the blueprint for our website and is an essential part to ensure that we create an effective website that does what we want it to do and is appropriate for the target market. The first steps in developing a site strategy is establishing the

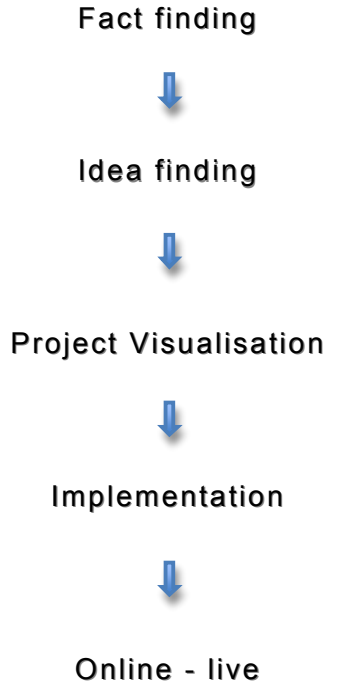
- goal and purpose
- target market

Without a specific plan or strategy to accomplish the given objectives you waste valuable resources and time on a product that misses the target. Objectives or goals help you to stay focused on the purpose of your project, providing clear paths in a specific direction.

You also need to create a user profile of your intended audience/audiences. Because we are designing a 3rd and 4th Generation website, we are taking the user-centred approach - designing with the user in mind. The design approach is a user-centred approach meaning that the website has been developed from a user oriented rather than a technology oriented method.

Lisa Graham outlines the steps in the design process:

## The Design Process



At this point in the Design Process you should be in the Idea Finding phase in preparation to move into the Project Visualisation stage. This means:

- You have determined your audience/audiences
- You are clear about the goals
- You have done your homework

Remember

The most effective web designer is an informed web designer

The **Idea Finding** phase is where you:

- start searching for a visual layout
- start searching for ideas on navigation
- start collecting and creating content
- start creating thumbnails and roughs

(Graham, 1999:2-17)

The **Project Visualisation** (design) and **Implementation** (building) could also be called the Production phase.

The **Project Visualisation** phase is where you:

- develop your design
- gather critical evaluation of roughs
- start to develop and formalise structure (content areas)
- start to refine designs and navigation

## Design

The content of your website is what keeps viewers there and returning in the future. You must provide content that the person visiting your website is seeking. It is also important for your website to be visually interesting for your visitors.

Think about the different media types you could potentially have as content in your website?

- Text
- Images
- Animation
- Sound
- Video

Whatever media types you choose to have as content in your site must be appropriate to your intended audience.

## Text

Text is one of the main media types that you will use (can you communicate your message successfully without using text?). Three rules that Jakob Nielsen (Nielsen 1996) offers for writing for the web - it is important to:

- be succinct - get right to the point
- write for scannability - use short paragraphs, subheadings and bulleted lists instead of long blocks of text
- use hypertext to split up long blocks of information into multiple pages

Remember, you are writing for a non-linear medium. Your users can choose to move to different sections of your website at any time and so the information has to make sense on its own.

In the readings for this week, Barfield suggests using the inverse pyramid structure. Have your conclusion, or the most important information at the beginning, or the top levels of your site. If people want more information they can choose to move further into the website. (Barfield, 2004:46)

### Writing style

Choose a writing style that is appropriate for your audience and one that they will understand.

Be consistent, in the tone of 'voice', and level of knowledge. Is a formal and business-like tone of voice appropriate for your audience and the overall 'feel' of your site, or a more trendy and casual approach? What level of experience does the audience have of the topic? Is it appropriate to use jargon – does the audience understand certain terminology or language? Use a style that your audience will relate to and understand. Use simple, short, and unambiguous terms for navigation. (Barfield, 2004)

### Visual/Graphic Design

Graphic design is visual information design, using the tools of layout, typography, and images to lead the reader's eye through the page. Without the visual impact of shape, colour, and contrast, pages are graphically uninteresting and will not motivate the viewer.

What is the visual style or theme of your website?

- colours
- graphics - illustrations, cartoons, photographs
- page layout – positioning of navigation, logos, text

### Page Layout

Your goal is to establish a consistent, logical screen layout that allows you to 'pour in' text and graphics without having to stop and rethink your basic design approach on each new page. A balanced and consistently implemented design scheme will increase readers' confidence in your site.

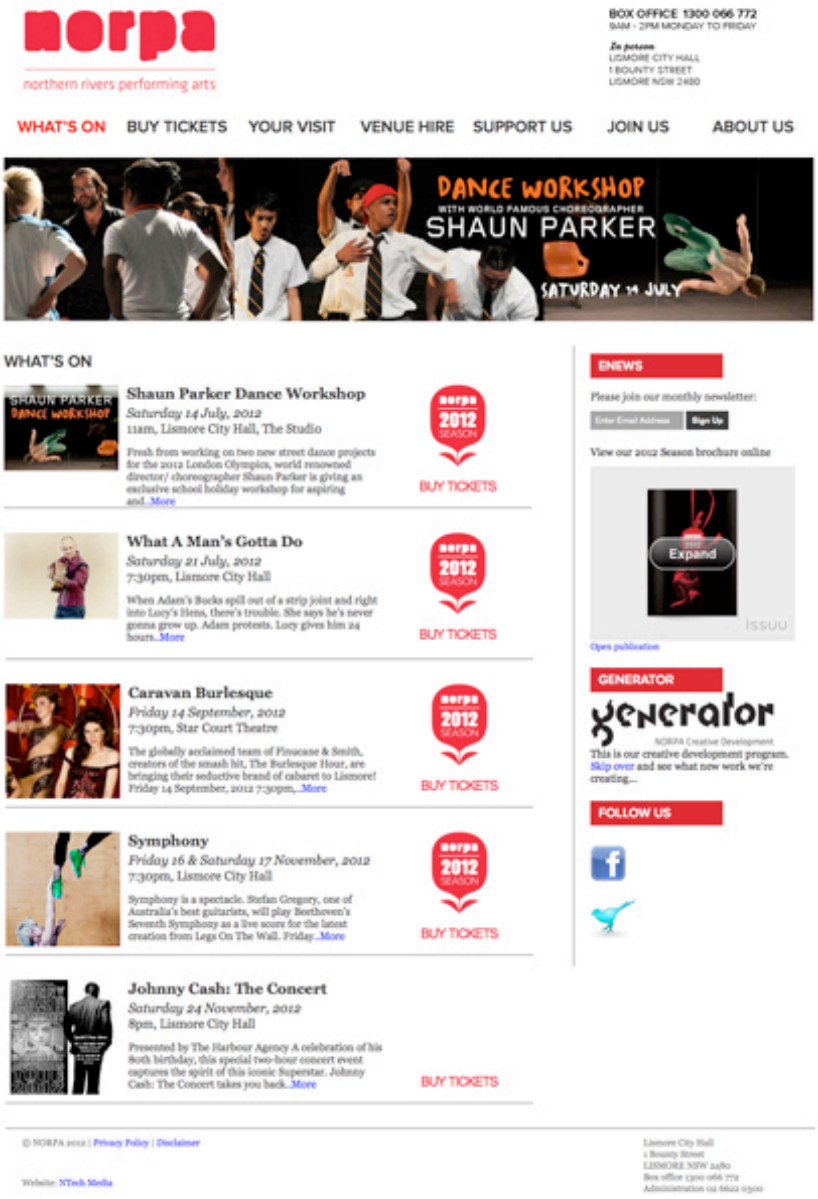
A good way to maintain consistency of page layout throughout your site is by using design grids. Without a firm underlying design 'grid' the overall design of your website will seem patchy and confusing. Grids help to maintain a design consistency, much the same as grids for print design, and stem from one of the basic design

principles: **alignment**. HTML does not allow the easy flexibility or control that graphic designers expect from page layout software.

## Using Grids for page layout

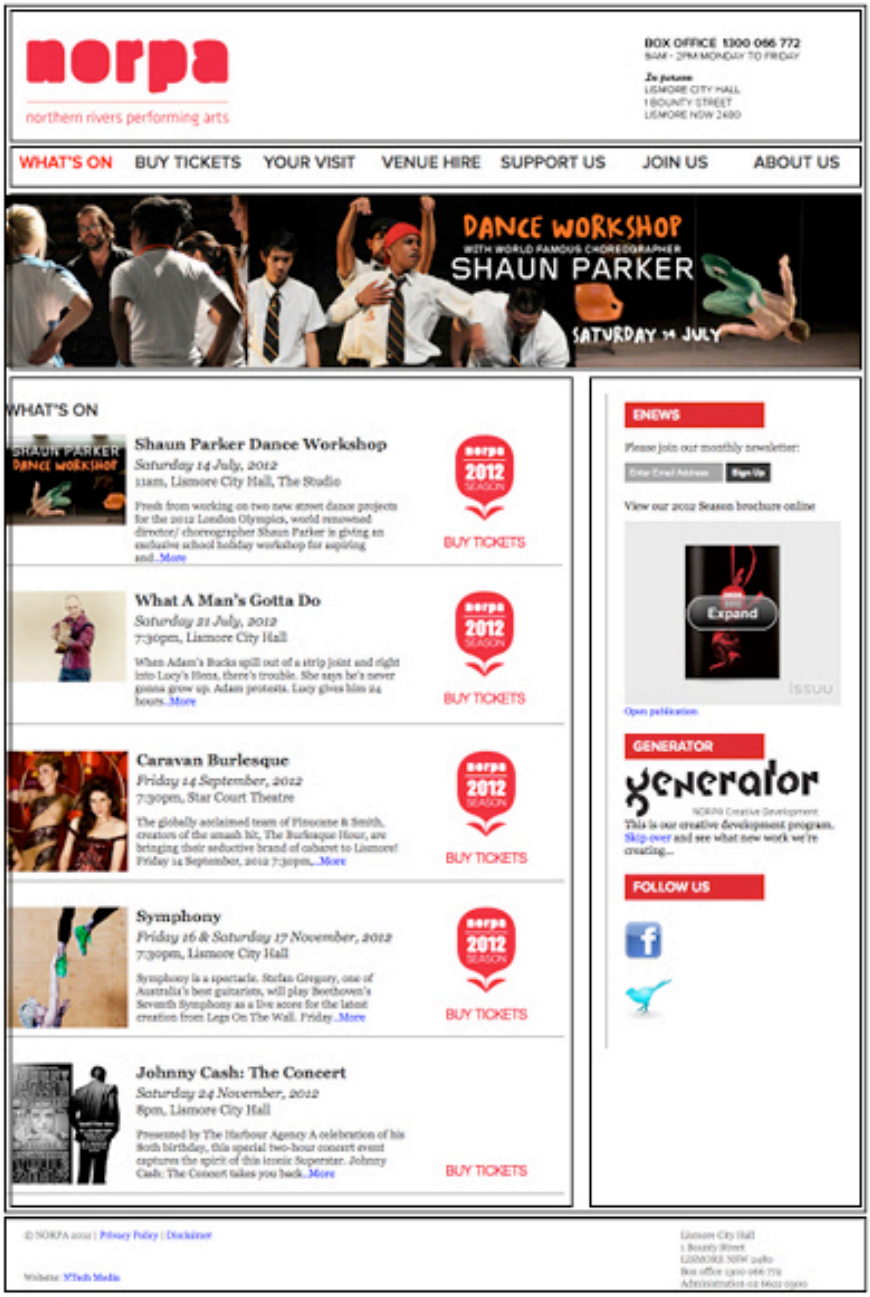
The following examples show how the simple grid structure underpins each screen layout.

Example 1: Northern Rivers Performing Arts [www.norpa.org.au/](http://www.norpa.org.au/)

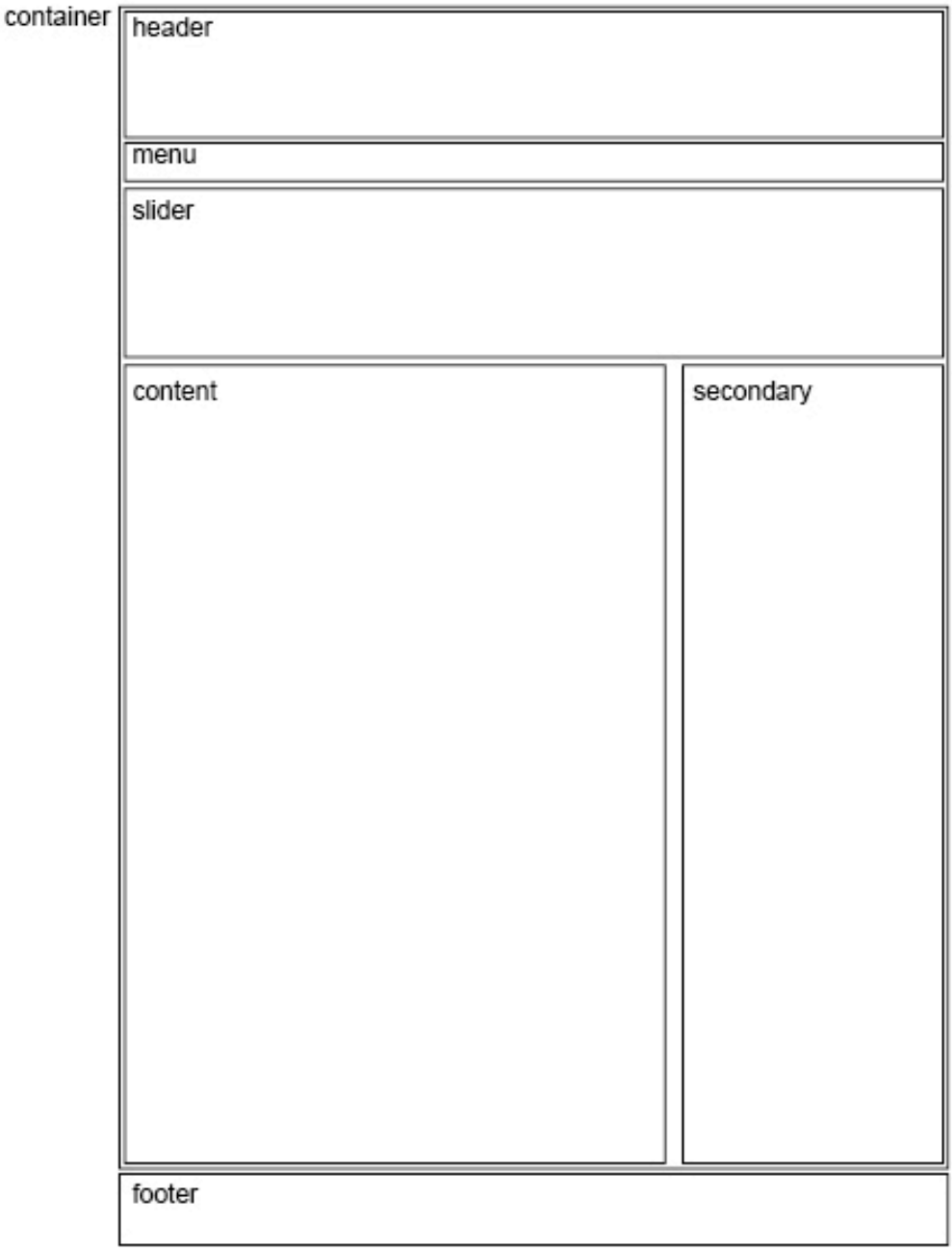


Showing a simple 3 column grid structure

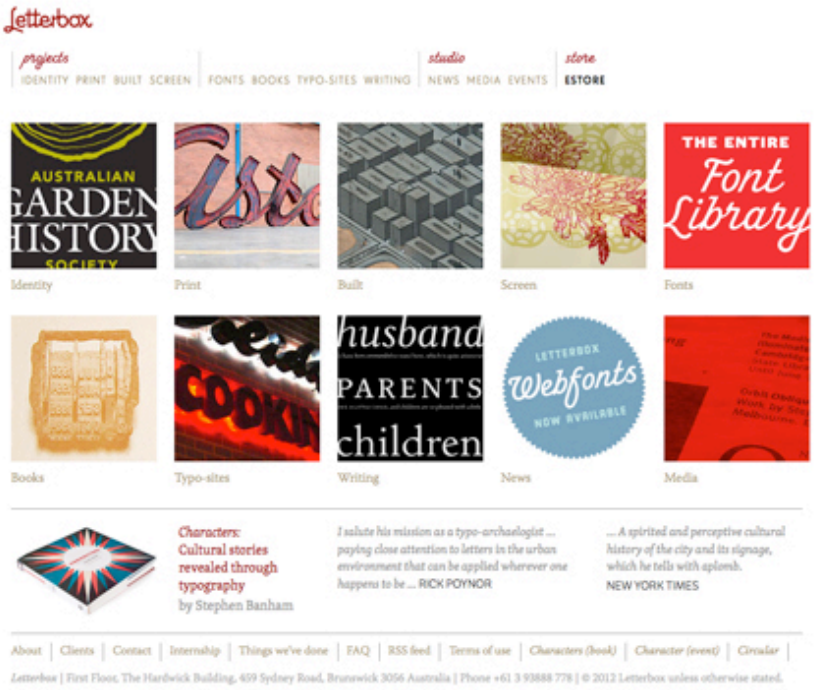
Creating the DIV structure for the CSS



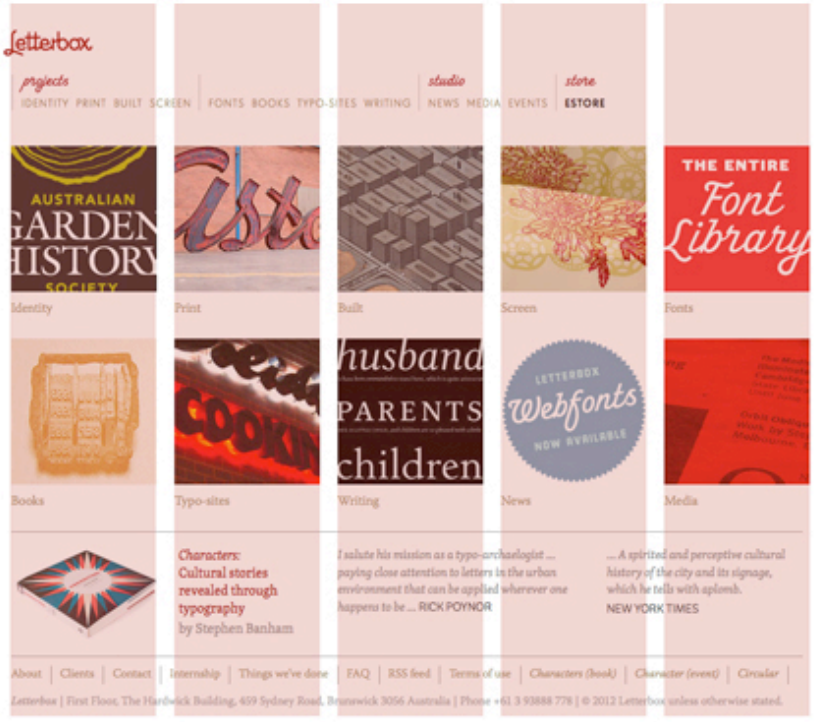
With ID names of DIV containers (as named for this website)



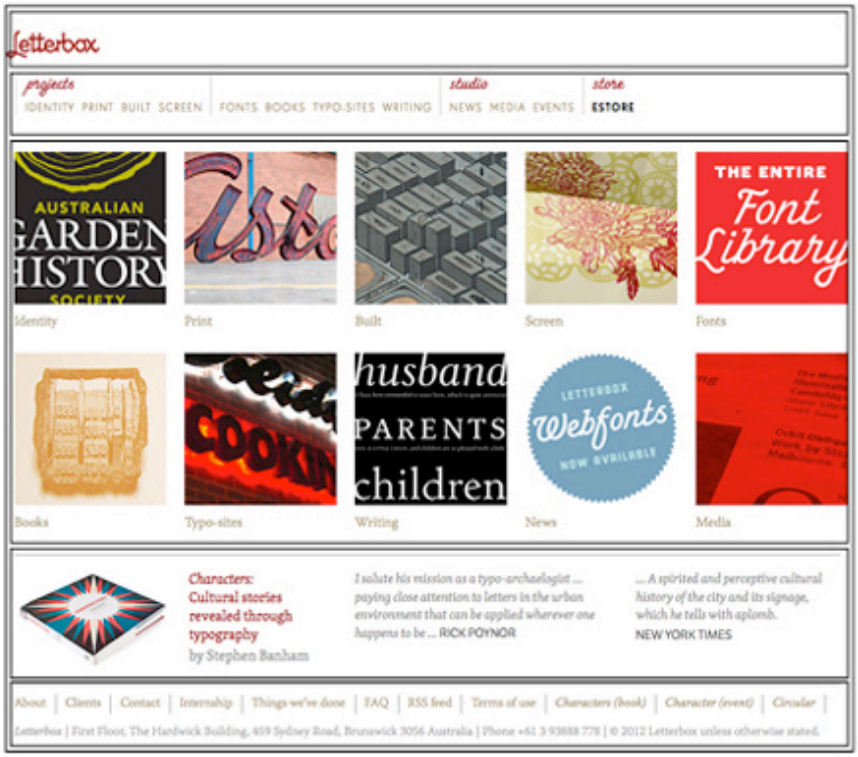
Example 2: Letterbox website [www.letterbox.net.au](http://www.letterbox.net.au)




Showing a simple 5 column grid structure



Creating the DIV structure for the CSS




With ID names of DIV containers (as named for this website)

wrapper

home

menu

frames

charactersbook

footer

A commonly used grid system for web design is the 960 grid system, which allows web designers to develop complex layouts. It is based on either 12 or 16 column grid layouts to fit into the width of 960 pixels. If you would like to find out more about the 960 grid system this is a very good article which explains the very complex system.

http://sixrevisions.com/web_design/the-960-grid-system-made-easy/

and also http://960.gs/ for more information.

## References

Barfield, L (2004) *Design for New Media*, Pearson Education Limited, Essex England

Braukmuller, C (2010) Grid-Based Web Design, Simplified, *Smashing Magazine* http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/04/29/grid-based-web-design-simplified/, accessed 15/7/2012

Graham, L (1999) "Interactive Design and the Design Process", *The Principles of Interactive Design*; Delmar

Johnson, J (2012) The 960 Grid System Made Easy, *Six Revisions*, http://sixrevisions.com/web_design/the-960-grid-system-made-easy/, accessed 15/7/2012

Nielsen, J, (1996), http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9703b.html, last accessed 15/7/2012

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