Web Council - March 22, 2012

- **Announcements**
    - Next meeting, April 26 in OUGL 220
    - Two more meetings in OUGL
        - Meetings over the summer will be in other places
    - HuskyFest'12 (April 19-21) is coming http://uw.edu/huskyfest/
- **Cyrus Shepard - Search Engine Optimization**
    - Independent SEO & Web Strategist - http://cyrusshepard.com, twitter @cyrusshepard
    - Used to be lead on SEO at SEOmoz - http://www.seomoz.org/
    - Is search engine optimization evil?
        - Does it let you manipulate search results?
        - We hate when we land on a Web site that is not what we intended
            - Google hates irevelevant results too
            - Google's job is to deliver the best results
            - Our job as a content producer is to give them pages that will help them give users the best results
    - Example: Host Wine Aerator Web site http://hoststudios.com/
        - No information on the page
        - Great graphics
        - Not much Google can use to rank it
    - Google wants to organize all the information there is and make it readily available
        - Problem
            - Google is not that smart yet
        - We have to work with and format our information so Google can understand it
    - Golden Rules
        - Use Your Words
            - Wikipedia pages are pretty good
                - They give so much content
                - If you have less than 200 words on a page, it is hard for Google to figure out how to rank you page
            - 500 words on a page gives Google much more to work with
        - One URL Per Page
            - http://www.seomoz.org/blog/duplicate-content-in-a-post-panda-world
            - A page with many URLs really confuses the search engine
                - Its rank tends to get divided up among its various URLs
            - Multiple URLs result in "duplicate content problem"
            - If you break the 1 URL rule use...
                - SEO plug-in is available for Wordpress (http://yoast.com/wordpress/seo/)
                - Specify a canonical link for each version of a page using the "rel=canonical" attribute (http://support.google.com/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=139066)
            - You want one authoritative page for each subject
            - Best way is to publish sites as a subdirectory
                - uw.edu/husky is better than husky.uw.edu
        - Unique Title Tags for Each Page
            - Very important for determining relevancy
            - Many social media sites use title tags
            - Put important words near front of your titles
            - Google will display 65-75 characters of your title tag
            - Do not repeat titles on many pages
        - Robots do not Fill Out Forms
            - Content that requires authentication for access will not be found; search engines will not go there
        - Not All Links Are Equal
            - http://www.seomoz.org/blog/10-illustrations-on-search-engines-valuation-of-links
            - Search engines look at content page and then at what pages link to the pages
                - Links to a page can be seen as votes for the page
            - Navigation links are considered computer generated links - do not carry much value
                - Links that occur in conent are called editorial links - count much more
                - Links near top of page count for more
                - Pages with big drop-down menus have fallen in their ranking
            - Links within a paragraph have more weight; text around them is used to understand what the link is about
            - Within the content of a page, link to yourself (link to your own pages in intelligent, aproropriate ways)
            - Encouraged to have more of a pyramid organization - reduce number of links on a page so each link has more importance
                - Make architecture more "pointy"
            - Links at the bottom are almost worthless for ranking
                - Use footer links sparingly and only for content you do not care much about
        - Publish Often
            - Google looks at freshness
            - http://www.seomoz.org/blog/google-fresh-factor
            - Update content regularly
            - Update links going to the page. New links to a page which may not be fresh suggest that it must be relevant
            - Content from feeds does not count much, even if it constantly updates
            - Google will judge entire Web site on its freshness
                - Publish new content regularly
                - New pages need to earn links; others need to link to them or they are considered not important
        - Reduce Your Footprint
            - Sites that have a lot of template delivered content delivered from elsewhere and little original content get low ranks
        - Keep It Above the Fold
            - Pages that have too much stuff at the top such as ads (users have to scroll down to meat of the page) get lower scores

- Remember that the further down the page something is, the less it is considered relevant
- Slide shows & Carousels at the top
  - Google does not have much of an idea what they are
  - Accompanying text helps give the images a ranking
  - Provide transcripts and captions for your slide shows and carousels
- Google has the ability to render CSS - actually considers how big your page is and what text will be above the fold
- Embrace Structured Data
  - http://schema.org/
  - You can tag your content (microdata)
  - Google is moving toward an entity based system
    - Bing has been doing entity search for a long time
    - Google trying to structure all the data on your Web site
  - Schema is very complicated to implement
    - Practical limits to how much schema is going to be used
    - Not clear what the long term viability of structured data is.
- Favorite Tools
  - Google Cache
    - Search results always have a link to cached version of the page
    - Shows how Google is storing your page and how it is seeing your page
    - Can view the text version, which is really what they are judging
  - SEO Toolbars
    - MozBar: http://www.seomoz.org/seo-toolbar
    - SEOBook Toolbar: http://tools.seobook.com/seo-toolbar/
  - Screaming Frog
    - http://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider/
  - SEOmoz
    - http://www.seomoz.org/freetrial
      - A non-profit discount is available for UW; just ask
- Localization and Personalization
  - You can set location of search; just set it to United States. Otherwise it will localize to Seattle
  - To get rid of personalization, go through Google UK - http://www.google.co.uk/
- Site Reviews
  - Computer Science & Engineering - http://www.cs.washington.edu/
    - Title tag: Computer Science & Engineering
      - Is this informative text?
      - Could be any similar department anywhere in the world
      - Still, UW CSE comes up at the top of the world search.
  - IT Connect - http://uw.edu/itconnect/
    - Many UW Web sites are portals of information trying to deliver many kinds of information to everybody; IT Connect is a good example
      - Smorgasboard of information
        - How do you deliver all this information
    - Reduce architecture menus to fewer choices so that users are led; you are making decisions for users
      - People do not want to spend a lot of time searching
      - Use smart ways to reduce architecture, giving people fewer choices but smarter choices
    - Title: Every page on the site has a page title that starts with "IT Connect"
      - Put topic at beginning of the title
      - Put the brand at end of title tag
  - Department of Global Health - http://globalhealth.washington.edu/
    - Looking at Google text cache
      - Does not include all of the menu nav links, probably written in scripting; Google does not see them
  - UW News - http://uw.edu/news
    - Stores can end up on other sites, with the other site getting the credit
    - Create Google news sitemap - http://support.google.com/news/publisher/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=74288
    - Add digits to URL, such as date
    - See http://support.google.com/news/publisher/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=68323
  - UWTV - http://www.uwtv.org
    - Google does not understand video at all
    - Have to use some tricks
      - Anytime you have video content, you should have transcripts; just a paragraph or two would help
      - If your video is on YouTube, they get the credit for the video
      - Use video site maps (http://support.google.com/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=80472)
      - When you have multiple videos on a page, have each video living on its own URL
        - Otherwise someone searching for a particular video will not find it. Consider having each video as a separate blog posts
  - Bothell - http://www.uwb.edu
    - Looking at Google cache text view
      - For slides, have the same alt text on each graphic, so Google cannot differentiate between graphics or guess what their content is.
    - Content is pushed down below the fold
      - You can check where Google thinks the fold is on http://browsersize.googlelabs.com/ - shows you how much your page will render on different browser sizes
- **Greg Koester - UW Event Calendar Scoping Study**
  - Looking at calendar products on the market
  - Doing costing study
  - Just finished demos
  - Will do evaluation
  - Will be conducting focus groups
  - Greg will be saying more next month