All group members give permission for this report to be distributed to the iSchool website development team.

# **Group Project: Website Reorganization Report of the iSchool Website**

https://ischool.sjsu.edu/

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INFO 202: Information Retrieval System Design

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# Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Figure 1: Existing Site Map.	5
Figure 2: Existing Site Map.	6
Existing Site & Discussion.	6
Figure 3: Redesigned Site Map.	8
Proposed Redesigned Site & Discussion.	8
Figure 4: Bifurcation Detail	9
Career Development.	10
Navigation1	11
Quicklinks1	12
Recommendations	12
Figure 2: Existing Site Map (Large)	15
Figure 3: Redesigned Site Map (Large)	16

#### **Part 1: Executive Summary**

This report analyzes the current iSchool website at San Jose State University and provides recommendations to improve its usability towards current students.

The advantages of the current layout of the iSchool website are: 1) vast amounts of information for multiple target audiences (prospective students, admitted and enrolled students, alumni, staff, and faculty); and 2) the main page of the website has multiple entry points for exploration. The disadvantages of the current website are: 1) difficulty in differentiating information for current students and prospective students; 2) difficulty in keeping track of one's location in the website; and 3) some information is misplaced in different categories, making it hard to find.

The goal of this report is to recommend possible improvements that can be made to the usability and organization of the iSchool website by dividing its content by user. Currently, the iSchool website serves as a source of information for several user groups, and our plan suggests a clearer distinction of information that will help students currently enrolled in the program versus information that is more relevant for prospective students.

#### Part 2: Introduction

The iSchool website outlines comprehensive information for San Jose State University School of Information for various user groups: current students, faculty, staff, future students and alumni. Last month, the iSchool website had roughly an estimated 152.7K unique visits (desktop and mobile)<sup>1</sup>. A large portion of these individuals will never even step foot on campus grounds; therefore it is important that the website is able to handle all of these users' unique needs.

One of the challenges of the website's current configuration is the vast amount of information, partially due to the online nature of the program. Because current students attend classes remotely and asynchronously, it is necessary to include information about the program, such as class schedules and career pathway guides. In addition, the iSchool website features not just the Master of Library and Information Science program (where our group is enrolled), but also two other Master's degrees, two professional certificates, and a Bachelor's degree.

Two significant user groups that we will highlight are prospective students and currently enrolled students. For many of us, including members of this group, we have navigated the iSchool website for important information on how to apply, financial aid, and the potential benefits of receiving a Master of Library and Information Science degree from San Jose State University. The relevant information for prospective students is relatively superficial and broader in scope than the information that currently admitted and enrolled students may be interested in. We will provide suggestions for changes to the headers in the hamburger icon (Career Development, Faculty and Research), as well as how to incorporate "breadcrumbs" to indicate where the user is located in the website's hierarchy.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> https://www.similarweb.com/website/ischool.sjsu.edu/#overview

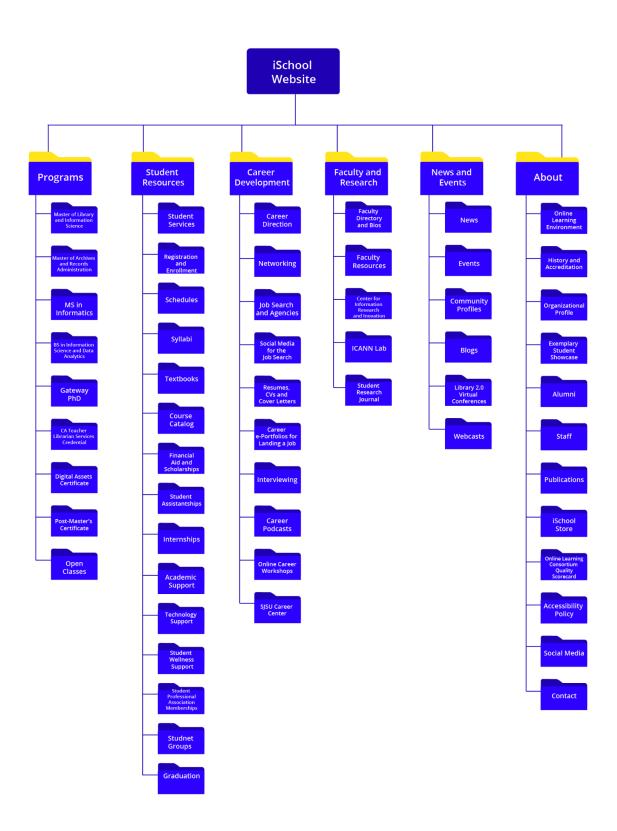


Figure 1: Original iSchool Site Map with primary categories & 1 level of subcategories

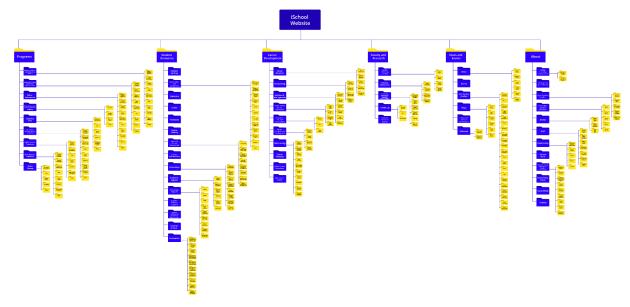


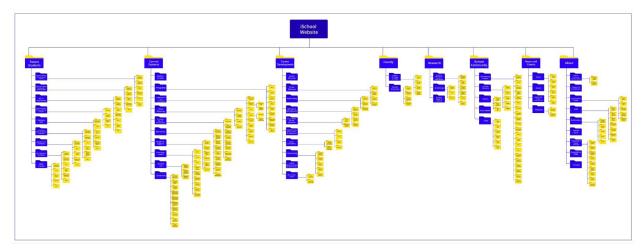
Figure 2: Original iSchool Site Map with primary categories & 2 levels of subcategories
\*Note: the expanded figures within the document are small, please see the larger versions at the bottom of
the document

# Part 3: Site Map of Existing Site & Discussion

The iSchool website contains a large amount of information that is relevant to prospective students, admitted and enrolled students, alumni, staff, and faculty. The current site, as illustrated in the site map above, is divided into six entry points: Programs, Student Resources, Career Development, Faculty and Research, News and Events, and About. Within each of these categories, there are additional subcategories. The site map includes the first level hierarchy of each primary level, but does not include additional levels.

The primary advantage of the iSchool website is the robust quantity of information that is provided for all intended audiences. Prospective students can access detailed information about the various programs offered by the university; admitted and enrolled students can plan their course of studies; alumni can keep abreast of news about their peers; and staff and faculty have access to useful resources to help them with their work. The homepage highlights many of these features with multiple entry points for exploration.

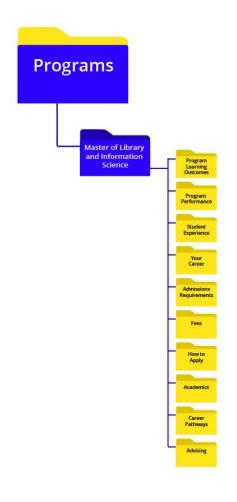
There are three primary disadvantages to the current structure of the iSchool website. First, it is difficult to navigate between information intended for prospective students and information intended for current students. Although some of this information is relevant to both audiences, multiple entry points can make it confusing for users to find information quickly. Second, it is sometimes difficult to keep track of one's location within the website. Clicking on some links within a primary level can lead to a sub-level with no clear path back to the original page. Third, some information is misplaced within subcategories, making it difficult to find without knowing where it might be hidden. For example, if a user wanted to learn about the work of students or alumni they would have to look in multiple sections: student work is highlighted in "News and Events > Community Profiles" and "About > Exemplary Student Showcase"; alumni news is highlighted in "News and Events > Community Profiles" and "About > Alumni".



**Figure 3:** Redesigned iSchool website with primary categories & 2 levels of subcategories \*Note: the expanded figures within the document are small, please see the larger versions at the bottom of the document

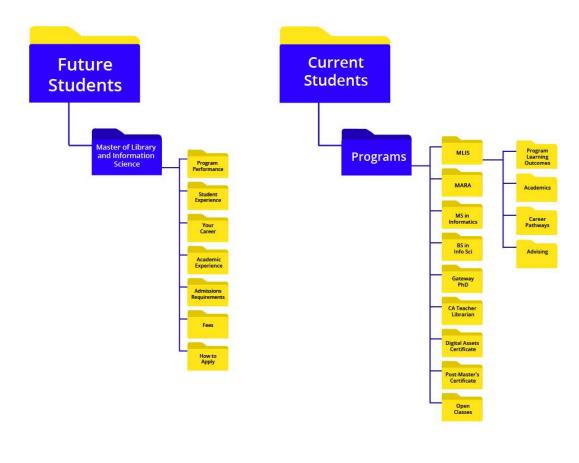
# Part 4: Proposed Redesigned Site & Discussion

As of Spring 2022, the SJSU iSchool website is currently undergoing consideration and testing for site wide reorganization. The following proposed redesign takes into consideration the idea of a larger restructuring centered on the primary category hierarchy based on audience, with subcategories focused on topics or tasks said audience may need. The primary categories will reflect this by changing to Future Students, Current Students, Career Development, Faculty, Research, News and Events, Community, and About. By changing Programs to Future Students this section can be fully utilized towards engaging users that are searching for a new academic program. The information current students need that is currently housed within the program's pages should be relocated to a programs specific subcategory under current students. This may create duplicate page names reflecting the different programs. Careful evaluation of the included information should be conducted to separate the categories that are most relevant to prospective and current students. For example, in Programs > Master of Library and Information Science, prospective students might only need access to the primary page, Program Performance, Student



Current Layout: Close up of Programs category

aggregated information: future and current students need to wade through all information to find what is specific to their needs



Redesigned Layout: Detailed view of Programs information

seperated for audiences information needs: correct ammount of data for

each user type

Figure 4: Proposed Bifurcation of "Future Students" and "Current Students"

Experience, Your Career, Admissions Requirements, Fees, and How to Apply with the addition of a new subcategory Academic Experience that gives an overview for potential students of what the academic workload entials. While a new Programs subpage would be put under Current Students, the subheader MLIS would hold the other sections of Program Learning Outcomes, Academics, Career Pathways, and Advising. (See Figure 4.) Revising the existing content will better reflect the two distinct audiences (prospective and current students) at an appropriate level of detail to enhance their understanding of the program.

This redesign affects the other primary level hierarchy categories as well. By separating the Faculty and Research section, this separation creates space for faculty needs while also highlighting other aspects of research that is occurring at the iSchool. Many prospective or current students may want to look up faculty without initially wanting to know what they are researching or what research topics are being studied. Adding the new iSchool Community page at the primary level provides an opportunity to highlight the work of iSchool students and alumni. The secondary level categories of Community Profiles, Student Showcase (previously Exemplary Student Showcase), Alumni, and Blogs from "News and Events" and "About" moved to the iSchool Community category, providing a clearer focus and an easier navigational path to locate these topics.

## **Career Development**

The recommended changes to the Career Development section of the website is to combine headers from three tiers to two tiers. For example, Career Development > Career Environments > Academic Libraries/Public Libraries/Special Libraries. Instead of making a third tier of Academic/Public/Special Libraries, we might suggest removing these links altogether because they are already addressed in the previous header, Career Environments. The actual page

has hyperlinks to each page on Academic Libraries, Public Libraries, etc., so it is unnecessary to put it in the left-side menu. Other subheadings can be combined, such as Choose a Platform, Important Social Media Tips, and Social Media Resources, which are originally separate third-level headings under Social Media for Job Search. Lastly, some headers would be more appropriate in different sections. For instance, SJSU Handshake and Career Fair Success Tips are under the header, Job Search and Agencies; however, it would be more logical to place them under the header, SJSU Career Center, because they are general SJSU resources, not specific to iSchool.

A group member observed that the iSchool website seemed like a blog, in which many pages were written independently and at different times. This makes the pages seem disjointed from each other, and similar information may be scattered in different locations (that are not necessarily logical or intuitive to find). It is possible that the current iSchool website tries to remedy this by creating branching directories and hyperlinks. However, the drawback is that it can become overwhelming for a user to figure out where certain information is located, especially if they have to click through branching directories or read text for hyperlinks.

### **Navigation**

In this redesign addressing breadth and depth of categories and subcategories is of utmost importance as the iSchool site supports a large number of students. To this end, limiting the number of subcategories will help lessen the amount of possible overwhelm when traversing the navigation. While the current side menus do a tremendous job of guiding users there are a few issues that could be addressed. On each of the primary categories pages the side menu has the primary categories name at the top of the menu, while this currently acts as a hyperlink to bring the user back to that primary categories main page, it does not look or act as a link (it does not

change color, add an underline, or become boil when scrolled over). Furthermore there are several pages on the site where the side menu either disappears altogether or changes in appearance and functionality. An example of this can be found when using the Quicklinks.

#### **Ouicklinks**

A small note on incorporating the Quicklinks. While the intent behind the Quicklinks is great, the current implementation leaves users a bit lost as clicking on the links leads users to different types of pages. Some instances are to external pages, some to internal pages and the internal site pages have two different feels. One of them has the normal side bar menu found throughout the website, while one has the Quicklinks sidebar menu as mentioned above. Some of these pages are particularly hard to find on the website without the Quicklinks; a few of these pages don't seem to be located within the larger site-wide organization. Thus users may not be able to find their way back if they forget about the Quicklinks.

#### **Part 5: Recommendations**

The new suggested redesign of the iSchool website gives users more clarity in navigating the website. The current design of the website combines many primary categories by topic and provides additional resources once directed to that category. The recommendations put forth in this document will 1) eliminate difficulty searching for specific topics 2) give preview of available search topics 3) give different users specific pages to suit their needs, as well as different options for gathering information.

In reorienting the primary categories based on audience and redistributing combined topics more clarity is given to each category while providing separate spaces for each user to interact with information in the correct amount of depth.

Suggestions to reconsider main navigation at the top of the page may also allow for a better user experience. Within this suggestion ideas were presented to consider having a permanent menu at the top of the page, this may be to replace or while keeping the hamburger menu with consideration based on the decided page layout. A hover menu would allow for exploration of other pages the site has to offer in a fun interactive way, while a mega menu could allow users to instantly see available topics.

Another point of consideration was the idea of adding a login for current students and alumni on the main page, ultimately allowing them to see information and resources that are specific to them. This could also mean that excess information could be taken off of the landing and subsequent pages and connect students directly with their courses and grades through the iSchool website.

Final notes on usability, the importance of consistency, breadcrumbs and use of hyperlinks. Consistent use of breadcrumbs in the address field would provide the user with the understanding of where they are on the website. "Breadcrumbs should display the current location on the site's hierarchical structure," according to Page Laubheimer. <sup>2</sup> This redesign also found that users are possibly getting confused on where to look for things because there are so many hyperlinks on each page. While many of these pages are quite useful, if they can't be found again the user may just feel lost. Furthermore, the depth of subjects can get quite weedy in places, it could be useful to change pages that are "Handbooks," into downloadable PDFs for easy access to information that is pertinent to the users it is intended for.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Laubheimer, P. (2018, December 23). Breadcrumbs: 11 Design guidelines for desktops and mobile. www.nngroup.com/articles/breadcrumbs

While reorganizing the community tabs, it was noted that the Blogs and Community profiles didn't seem to be getting much interactivity based on lack of comments. It could be useful to connect these parts of the site to the larger active community at the iStudent blog.

User testing is recommended. This could include surveys and card sorting. Surveys allow for users to be anonymous and give their honest input on how something works. This is useful for the iSchool website changes because users would be able to express how much more or less complicated the website is to use. Card sorting on the other hand, gives users the chance to use their voice for the future website categorization. In the end, both ways of user testing would get users to express any change they may see fit in a newly designed website.

A reorganized and user-tested iSchool website will provide all intended audiences with improved access to the important array of resources currently available on the website. Users will be able to quickly locate relevant information, explore the opportunities available, and successfully navigate confidently within the website.

iSchool Website Career News and About Resources Financial Aid and Scholarships iSchool
New Student
School New Student
School Current Studnet
Scholarships

Diversity
Scholarships

Diversity
Scholarships

Scholarships

Awarded by
Other Agencies

INFO 294/
MARA 294
Internship
Overview

INFO 294
Student
Handbook

MARA 294 Professional
Experience,
Internship Option
Student Handbook

Grants
Awarded by
Other Agencies

