



With a full-time staff of creative and technology resources and over ten years experience, AKQA has provided clients such as PBS and The Discovery Channel inspiring digital solutions that go beyond client and user expectations.

Located in Georgetown, AKQA enjoys a unique proximity to the Smithsonian. We look forward to fostering this nascent relationship beyond the scope of the current SCEMS project, and for several years to come.

The Challenge

In 2002, the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies teamed with AKQA to redesign, restructure, and create the web site formerly known as "Field Trips and Learning Resources."

Innovative. Smart. Collaborative. Passionate.

The mission was to create a clean, sophisticated web site representative of Smithsonian Education's brand, reputation, and intellect. To complement the new design a content management system would be needed to simplify and support the task of publishing to the web site.

Core objectives for the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies web site were to serve as the gateway to Smithsonian educational resources, promote the understanding of museums, and emphasize inquiry-based learning using primary sources and museum collections.

The Solution

Navigation.

To creatively satisfy a mixture of audiences, interests, attitudes, and objectives, the navigation for the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies web site first breaks down into three distinct audiences: Educators, Students, and Families.

By acknowledging and addressing the unique needs of these different user groups, this approach also supports the shift in museums moving from being "about something" to being "for somebody".

Structure.

A core requirement for the redesigned SCEMS web site was to consolidate and develop an exemplary new framework reflective of the office's pledge to foster educational initiatives, cultivate critical thinking skills, promote Smithsonian publications, and encourage visits to museums.

A clear navigation makes it easy to access content and motivates visitors to explore the site—and, hopefully, eventually visit the museum.

The new navigation facilitated easy access to:

- Information about educational programs, products, publications, and events in the Smithsonian community.
 - Educational resources such as field trip guides, lesson plans, and original content.
 - Online product ordering and workshop registration.
-

Design.

Intelligence, sophistication, integrity.

These are a few of the attributes of the Smithsonian brand the design team aimed to reflect in the final web design strategy.

One of the challenges the design team faced was to create an aesthetic that appeals to three audiences, but makes use of the same framework. The answer took shape of a flexible, modular structure enabling content and visual elements to be featured in a combination of creative ways. This results in a original look for each section, but keeps maintenance and publishing to the site simple.

Photography was chosen over illustration to bring to life online the magic of Smithsonian museums. Images were selected that visually express the excitement of visiting a museum, the wonder that comes with each experience, and the breadth of the Smithsonian resources.

The design solution respects Smithsonian brand guidelines and complements the design of Smithsonian.org, while still brandishing a signature look and feel unique to the department.

The Solution

Content.

Simple, intuitive, direct.

Naming is active and clear, with an emphasis on inquiry-based learning. Navigational components are short, simple, and straight to the point. The style is sophisticated and succinct, yet unassuming and easy to understand.

The content and tone are tailored accordingly to the audience. Each section delivers only the appropriate tools and resources that user group requires in its own a distinct voice.

Technology.

Competent, compliant, smart.

The programming team put technology to work by creating a powerful content management system that simplifies the task of updating and building new online components. Using Interwoven's TeamSite content management product, AKQA created a flexible system that enables SI staff to develop information and content for the web site, regardless of technical expertise.

A number of TeamSite templates were created that extend a consistent, polished, and cohesive appearance to all areas of the site. These templates were defined, designed, and developed according to SCEMS requirements and business needs. AKQA then populated the site content using these templates and delivered a finished product to the SCEMS team.

The Web Site

Smithsonian Education: Home Page

Smithsonian Education
The gateway to Smithsonian educational resources

Educators

Students

Families

APOLLO 11
MAKE IT YOUR MISSION
Experience the thrill of the race to space

Educators, Families, Students

Welcome to Smithsonian Education, the central education website of the Smithsonian Institution. Click above to access information and resources for educators, families, and students.

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Educate, encourage, expand.

The Smithsonian Education home page reflects the breadth of content and diverse audiences that the Education department addresses. It serves as a simple splash page that visitors can easily navigate and quickly choose their direction. The clean, uncluttered design invites and motivates visitors to explore Smithsonian Education resources through one of three perspectives: Educators, Students, or Families.

The Web Site

Smithsonian for Educators

EDUCATORS | Smithsonian Education | Educators | Families | Students

For Educators | Field Trips | Professional Development | Lesson Plans | Resource Library | Educational Services

Educators
Prepare, Plan, Teach

Smithsonian
in Your Classroom
Puts the keys to learning in your hands.

Lesson Plans

- Art & Design
- Science & Technology
- History & Culture
- Language Arts

Find It
Research, browse, and buy quality educational resources

IdeaLabs Publications & Products

Lesson Plans Professional Development

Field Trips Websites

Select Grade: Select Media Type:

Select Subject: Enter Keyword:

Publications

- Educator's Guide to Smithsonian Publications**
- Guide to SI Publications**
Lesson plans, primary sources and more>>
- Guide to SI websites**
Lesson plans, and activities for educators and students>>
- Beyond the Frame**
Enhance your Art and Social studies curriculum>>

Analyze this!
Teaching students to ask new questions about history

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Prepare, plan, teach.

Smithsonian Educators provides teachers, librarians, and schools with content by centralizing and organizing all Smithsonian resources into primary sections.

Key Features

- * Prominent resource finder
- * Educators Exchange
- * Online ordering for products
- * Online registration for workshops
- * Consistent format for lesson plans

The Web Site

Smithsonian for Students

STUDENTS Smithsonian Education *Educators | Families | Students*

For Students | At the Smithsonian | Explore by Topic | IdeaLabs | Secrets of the Smithsonian

Students
Explore, Discover, Learn

America's Presidents
What do you know about ...
Get a glimpse of their amazing lives and careers.

Explore By Topic

- Everything Art
- Science & Nature
- History & Culture
- People & Places

Want to Play?
Explore the playful side of invention.

IdeaLabs & More

Walking On the Moon →
Journey back in time to the Space Race and walk with the first men on the Moon.

Amazing Collections →
Baseball cards, lunch boxes, rocks and stamps--what do you collect?

Secrets of the Smithsonian →
See what goes on behind the scenes at the world's largest museum complex.

Read All About It →
Check out these great books about museums, science, art, history, and adventure.

Know It All

“ The National Zoo is now home to 53 flamingos! Watch them on our live FlamingoCam. [Learn More >>](#) ”

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Explore, discover, learn.

Smithsonian For Students pushes curiosity, encourages discovery, and makes learning fun. Unique facts dynamically generate on the home page immediately communicating interesting ideas and tidbits.

Key Features

- * Central point for SI educational content
- * **Walking On the Moon**, a new Smithsonian IdeaLab
- * **Secrets of the Smithsonian**, a series of stories about the museums

The Web Site

Smithsonian for Families

FAMILIES Smithsonian Education *Educators | Families | Students*

For Families | At the Smithsonian | Point & Click | Time Together | Resource Library

Families
Connect, Relate, Appeal

STAMPS, STICKERS, SNOW GLOBES
Find out why kids are crazy for collecting!

In Focus	Features		What's New
<p>APOLLO 11 MAKE IT YOUR MISSION</p> <p>Experience the thrill of the race to space.</p>	<p>Visit</p> <p>Whatever the age, whatever the interest - there's something here for everyone! Start planning your visit now. Learn more. Learn More >></p>	<p>Time Together</p> <p>How to make a visit to the Smithsonian fun and educational for the whole family. Learn more. Learn More >></p>	<p>Discover! IdeaLabs, online activities, and more on our Students website</p> <p>Smithsonian Museums Find your way around the many Smithsonian museums. >></p>
<p>What do you know about ...</p> <p>America's Presidents Get a glimpse of their amazing lives and careers.</p>	<p>Make the Most of It</p> <p>What to do before, during, and after a museum visit. Learn more. Learn More >></p>	<p>Exhibition Spotlight</p> <p>New child-friendly exhibits in Washington, D.C., and beyond. Learn more. Learn More >></p>	<p>Tell a Teacher Visit Smithsonian Educators for classroom resources. >></p> <p>Wow, What a Story! Smithsonian reading recommendations. >></p>

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Connect, relate, appeal.

Smithsonian for Families addresses the needs of this distinct audience with new content that encourages inquiry-based learning, shares insight, and promotes museum education initiatives. It elevates and extends the awareness of Smithsonian Education resources to parents and families.

Key Features

- * All new section, featuring new content.
- * Family Exchange
- * Museums Galore!
- * Point & Click



The Outcome

Smithsonian Education looks to be a leader in online education and an example of innovative, instructional design. In early Spring 2003, Smithsonian will unveil a paradigm providing educators a central location for educational resources, searchable by subject and grade level. With its new approach to navigation, updated design, and new online capabilities, the Smithsonian Education web site will reach a broader audience and impact all levels of learning.

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Appendix

Multimedia Designs - Walking on the Moon

The AKQA and SI team retells the Apollo 11 story interactively, utilizing the latest Flash MX technologies.

