HEURISTIC EVALUATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Visibility of system status

The site uses standard system status techniques including a breadcrumb trail in navigation, progress indicators and preloaders on the videos and highlighted slideshow buttons on the homepage to show which slide is currently active. FIG. 1

Fig. 1   http://www.whitehouse.gov

2. Match between system and real world

Some terms in the main navigation must be clicked to understand the meaning. For example: what does Briefing Room mean? According to the page description it's a place for information, videos, photos and blogs. If that is the case then what are the categories "Blog" and "Photos & Video" for? FIG. 2
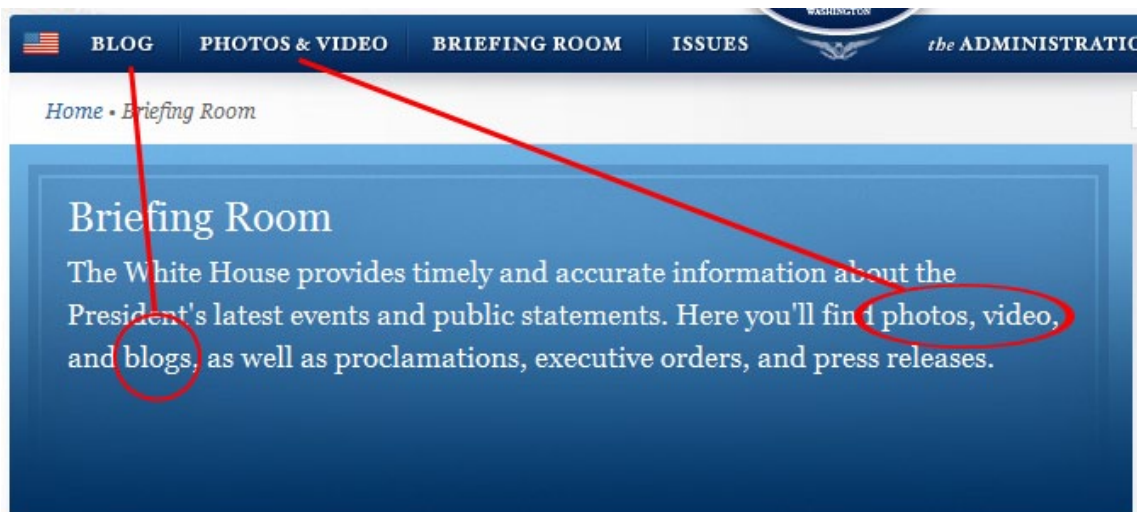

Fig. 2   http://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room

The Contact form has a confusing label for a set of radio buttons. What is "Type" referring to? Is it asking what type of phone number you have or what type of address you have? Do people think about what type either one is? FIG. 3

Fig. 3   http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact

The footer contains a link called En Español. Does this translate the page or link to a Spanish version of the site? It actually links to a quasi-Spanish version of the Briefing Room page. However, all but the content links return the user to English pages and the article dates are still in English. FIG. 4

Fig. 4   http://www.whitehouse.gov/espanol

3. User control and freedom

A .pdf link in a blog post causes the user to exit the site. There is a warning before leaving, but it would be more useful to have the document open in a new window. FIG. 5

Fig. 5   http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/

4. Consistency and standards

Page title inconsistent with category name. The Main navigation refers to the "Blog" but elsewhere the page is called "The White House Blog". This could potentially cause problems because there are eleven other blogs on the site. FIG. 6

Fig. 6   *http://www.whitehouse.com.blog/*

The most prominent section on the Briefing Room home page is "Latest News", but that is not a category in the "Briefing Room" drop down menu. However, there is a banner on the same page for "Latest News". Instead of linking back to this page, the banner is linked to "The White House Blog" page and the content is not the same as on "Latest News". FIG. 7
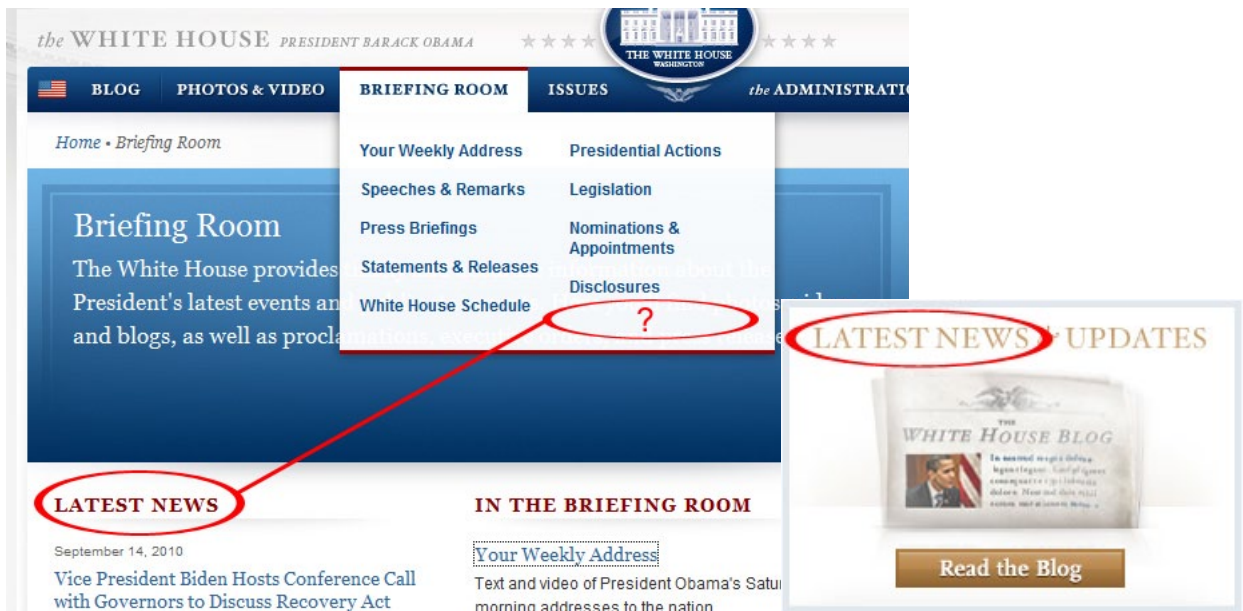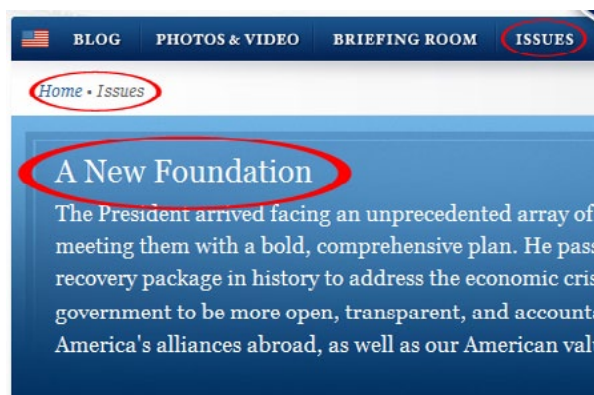

Fig. 7   *http://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room*

The "Issues" page name is called "A New Foundation" instead of "Issues". The page name does not match the category name or bread crumb trail like the other pages. FIG. 8

Fig. 8   *http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues*

Headings in the "Issues" content pages are used inconsistently. The heading will have a line break after it in one case and it won't have any space in another. Some paragraphs are titled and some are not.

Fig. 9 & 10   *http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/*   *http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/energy-and-environ/*

Inconsistent page title may make the user wonder if the "About the White House" page is the same as the main category page "the White House".

Fig. 11   *http://www.whitehouse.gov/about*
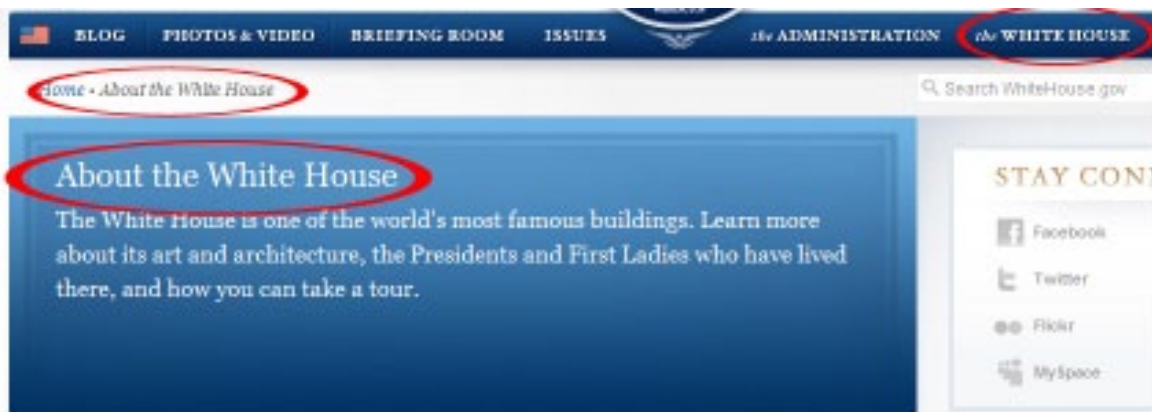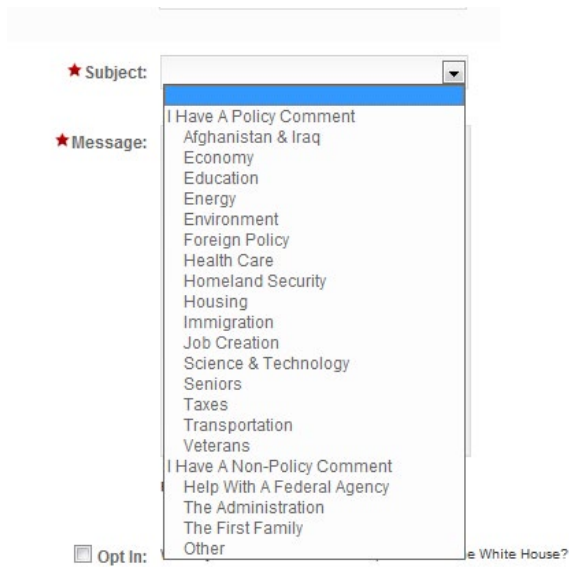
In the contact form there is a list of topics to choose from. The topics are similar but not identical to the list of topics in the "Issues" category. All the topics are related to "Policy", but why isn't there a category called "Policies"? FIG. 12

Fig. 12   *http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact*

There is a jarring switch in font and button style when the link "apply for a job" is clicked on the footer. It appears to be a different site, but no exit warning is given. FIG. 13

Fig. 13   *https://app2.whitehouse.gov/ppo/*

The 404 Page has a "contact" link goes to the main contact page for President Obama. Is the president answering these emails too? In fact, there is no email subject line for Tech Support. Fig. 14

Fig. 15

There are multiple blogs on the site, but most of there are not accessible in the "Blog" category. Most of them must be accessed through the "Briefing Room" category or in side banners.
HTTP://WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV/ADMINISTRATION/EOP/CWG/BLOG

All the blogs are part of whitehouse.gov except the US Trade Representative Blog. FIG. 15

The same navigation appears twice on the same page. FIG. 15

There is inconsistent naming of the various blogs. Most have Blog in the title, but one doesn't, and most include the full name of the department/council, but one is abbreviated. FIG. 16

Fig. 16   *http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/blog*
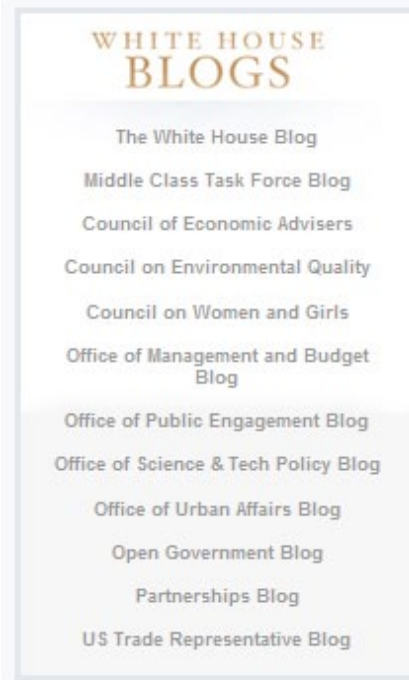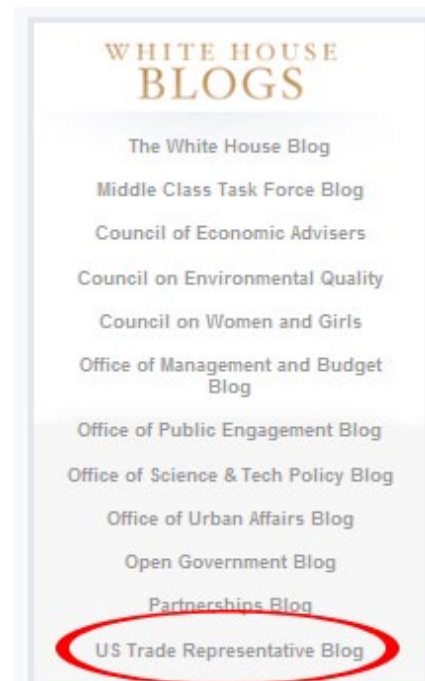

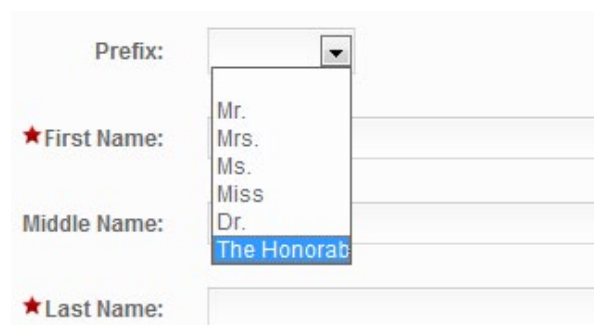*Fig. 15   http://www.whitehouse.gov/*

5. ERROR PREVENTION

The site is relatively simple and shows no problems in the category except for the well-known problem with the domain. While whitehouse.com is no longer an adult site, it would be better if the site redirected to whitehouse.gov.

6. RECOGNITION RATHER THAN RECALL

No evident problems in this category.

7. FLEXIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY OF USE

Fig. 17   http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact

There appear to be no accelerators or user features on the site except perhaps the RSS system for the various blogs.

The "Prefix" box in the "Contact Us" form is too small for one of the terms. Although minor, the user may stumble over the term "The Honorab". FIG. 17

8. AESTHETIC AND MINIMALIST DESIGN

Fig. 18   http://www.whitehouse.gov/

There is a page banner on the home page asking the user to Send a Salute to the Troops. This page takes a brief moment to load and has a main area showing how other people have offered a Salute. This section is fills the entire area above the fold, has its own footer and even its own scroll bar. If the user hasn't already forgotten the purpose of the page there is no indication that below there fold there is more on the page including the area to send a salute of your own. FIGS. 18 & 19
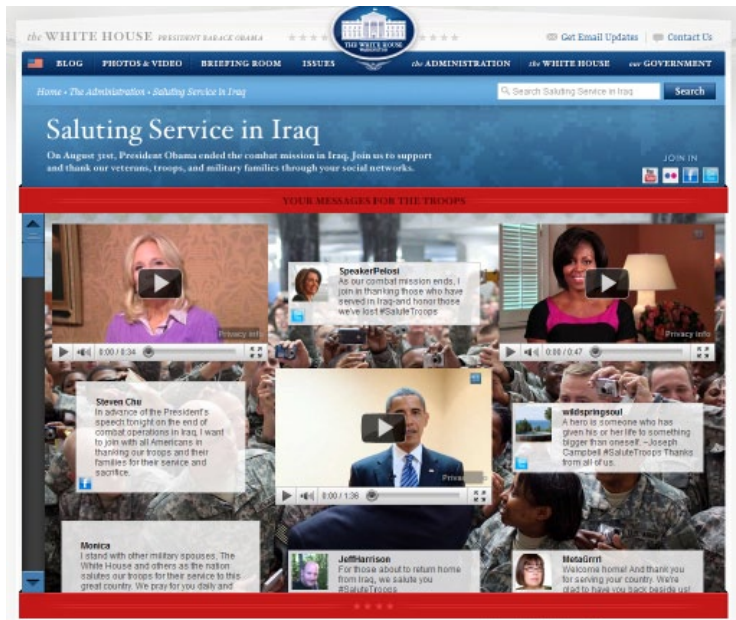
Fig. 19   http://www.whitehouse.gov/salute

9. HELP USERS, RECOGNIZE, DIAGNOSE, AND RECOVER FROM ERRORS

If a word is misspelled, no alternate suggestions are given. However, the user is given the option to quickly search for that exact term again. FIG. 20

Fig. 20   http://www.whitehouse.gov/search/site/oobama

There is a broken link on the main navigation bar. Clicking on "Photos & Videos" returns a 404 error with an explanation that an error has occured. FIG. 21

Fig. 21   http://www.whitehouse.gov/node/20798

10. HELP AND DOCUMENTATION

There is no documentation or help page for the site.

SUMMARY

The site is well designed and free of major usability problems. It is simple in scope, made up primarily of blogs, articles, videos, and photos. It's main deficiencies are in the formatting consistency of its content and some illogically placed content.