

GGSS Website Redesign

Project overview

The GGSS website is a valuable resource where GGSS members, prospective members, alumni, and the theater-going audience can find information about current and past shows, buy tickets, and further engage with the group. However, the site's design is somewhat clunky, with some content repeated across pages, some content being outdated or several years old, and a confusing site architecture. Further, as the site was created in 2015, the visual design of the site feels somewhat outdated.

From June to September 2020, we conducted a website redesign, looking comprehensively at the site's architecture and aesthetic. Our redesign was guided by the following goals:

- Create a more user-oriented experience
- Streamline the site's navigation so that it is more intuitive to use
- Keep only the content that is applicable and useful to the user
- Modernize the site with a more contemporary design aesthetic
- Increase traffic and engagement with the site, especially in light of COVID-19

Our process

Identified organizational goals. In addition to the website-specific goals listed above, we wanted to learn if there were any broader organizational goals we should take into account when designing the website. We had several phone calls with GGSS stakeholders, and learned of the following goals that the original site was not supporting:

- Building community online. Given the stay-at-home orders caused by COVID-19, the GGSS website will become a hub of activity for the organization during the 2020-2021 academic year, and the site should be able to support and encourage that.
- Facilitating alumni support. Alumni are strong supporters of both GGSS as an organization and individual GGSS members through networking. The original site did not provide for substantial alumni engagement; accordingly, we sought to build out this part of the site.

Established organizational identity. A website is not only an informational resource, but a representation of an organization. When choosing a Wix template, it was important for us to find one that fit the personality of GGSS. We identified several template options, and ultimately, in consultation with GGSS stakeholders, selected a site that was sleek and updated, yet classic.

Conducted a content audit. Once we had a firm understanding of the goals and direction of the new site, we conducted a content audit of the original site wherein we reviewed and summarized the function of each page on the site. This allowed us to see how all the information was structured, as well as identify where content was repeated or missing.

Major updates

Streamlined content and navigation. The biggest change was a result of our content audit, which found both duplicative and unnecessary information on the site. When we reviewed content, we continually asked: what purpose is this serving? Why does a user need this content? If the content is highly technical or detailed, is the website the most appropriate way to deliver this content? The following are examples of content that was on the old site that was *not* answering a user need:

- GGSS Constitution and bylaws: this is highly detailed information that most users would never read or use. It would be more appropriate to share this information with members once they join as part of an orientation. We did leave them as hyperlinked PDFs for the audition section on show directors, since it is asked that directors read them before auditioning. But there is no need to have a whole site page dedicated to them.
- Past boards of directors: again, this is specialized information that very few users would require. If they did, they could easily reach out to the current board for those records.

Streamlining this content resulted in a streamlined navigation as well, transforming a cluttered and overwhelming site architecture from one that was straightforward and user-oriented:

OLD SITE STRUCTURE		NEW SITE STRUCTURE	
0.0	HOME	0.0	HOME
1.0	ABOUT US	1.0	ABOUT
1.1	FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS		Board of Directors
1.2	BOARD OF DIRECTORS	2.0	SHOWS
1.3	THE GGSS CONSTITUTION		Past Shows
1.4	NEWS	3.0	TICKETS
2.0	GET INVOLVED	4.0	JOIN US
2.1	AUDITIONS (cast)		Events
2.2	DIRECT A SHOW	5.0	ALUMNI
2.3	ALUMNI FOUNDATION		Events
2.4	JOIN OUR MAILING LIST		Spotlights
3.0	OUR SHOWS	6.0	CONTACT
3.1	2019 - 2020 Season		
3.2	PAST SHOWS		
4.0	TICKETS		
5.0	CONTACT		
6.0	Facebook icon		

Revised homepage. While all of the pages look different, the homepage has a substantially different function from the homepage of the old website. The homepage is prime real estate, and as such can work significantly towards increasing engagement. Whereas the original homepage had general information about GGSS, the revised homepage features upcoming shows and events, moving static general information to the “About” section.

Increased alumni content. In our initial calls with GGSS stakeholders, we learned that the organization wanted to better support alumni engagement. Accordingly, the new site has more space for alumni, including an events page that could feature alumni events and a “Spotlights” page where GGSS could feature short bios (aka “spotlights”) about an alumnus, their experience with GGSS, and what they are doing now. Both pages would appeal to alumni interested in GGSS and current/prospective GGSS members interested in networking. In fact, many student groups have mentorship programs, in which alumni are matched with current members, which GGSS could consider implementing as well. Within the site, we have left these pages blank as the content still needs to be created by GGSS.

Next steps

Update content. We did our best to fill in content where possible. However, some of this content hasn’t been created. All text, links, and photos should be reviewed and updated accordingly.

Review photos. Where possible, we chose photos from [this album](#). For prominent photos like the homepage, it may be best to confirm consent with the subjects of the photos, to maintain healthy alumni relationships by ensuring all people are comfortable with the use.

Update the URL. We would recommend updating the URL (ggssonline.org), as the presence of “online” dates the site. Best practice is to maintain consistency across all channels (web, Instagram, Facebook, Vimeo).

Maintain the website. Once the site is set up and running, it is important to responsibly maintain and upkeep the site. This involves:

- *Following the style guide.* Inconsistent fonts/colors or unattractive graphics can discredit the credibility and professionalism of the site, and thus the organization.
- *Only posting useful content.* Before posting content, ask yourself: what questions or needs is this content fulfilling? Do enough people need this information for it to live on the website, or is there a more appropriate way to distribute this content?
- *Conducting regular clean-ups.* We would recommend that someone review the site twice a year, to confirm that all content is up-to-date and to delete anything that isn’t.

The original site was created 5 years ago, which is an indicator of how quickly web design aesthetics can change, and how important it is to actively maintain and steward the site.

GGSS Website Style Guide

Homepage sliders

The homepage slider is the main real estate of the site. It should feature what GGSS is most excited about, and what GGSS wants to boost engagement with.

As a rule of thumb, the sliders should be organized as:

- 1st slider: current show
- 2nd and 3rd sliders: time-sensitive items—when it's audition season, auditions; social events; alumni events; major announcements (like COVID-19 practices)
- 4th slider: evergreen content like the archive and alumni foundation

Fonts and colors

As a student group, GGSS is not required to follow the [Georgetown University style guide](#). However, it is good practice to understand the visual brand and make sure GGSS aligns.

For fonts, the site uses:

- Header: Avenir
- Subheader: Brandon Grotesque
- Body: Avenir Light

For colors, the site uses navy, grey, and black. All fonts and colors are saved in the Wix template.

Images

It is best practice to use photos when possible, as they are the most visually engaging.

When photos are not available, you can use artwork. [Canva](#) is a free and incredibly easy-to-use tool for creating artwork. See the “Shakespeare & Shots” artwork as an example; this was created in Canva using [free clipart](#) in under 10 minutes.

When making artwork, it is important to ensure that it complements the site's aesthetic. Think of colors, fonts, and copy.

Redesign

Home

Original site:



Redesign:



About

Original site:



Our History



In February of 1973, a group of students, staff, spouses, community members, and three professors, brought together by founding student Jack Marshall, sat backstage in the Moot Courtroom, waiting to perform Gilbert and Sullivan's courtroom farce, "Trial by Jury". The show had been rehearsed sporadically, amid warnings by professors and students that it was a grievous waste of precious study time. No tickets had been sold; admission was free. Nervously, they waited to see if anyone would bother to come to their show. Six hundred people turned out to watch the performance. They sat in the aisles, on the stage, and on each other. By the finale, nobody believed that "Trial by Jury" had been a waste of time. Thus was born the Georgetown Gilbert & Sullivan Society.

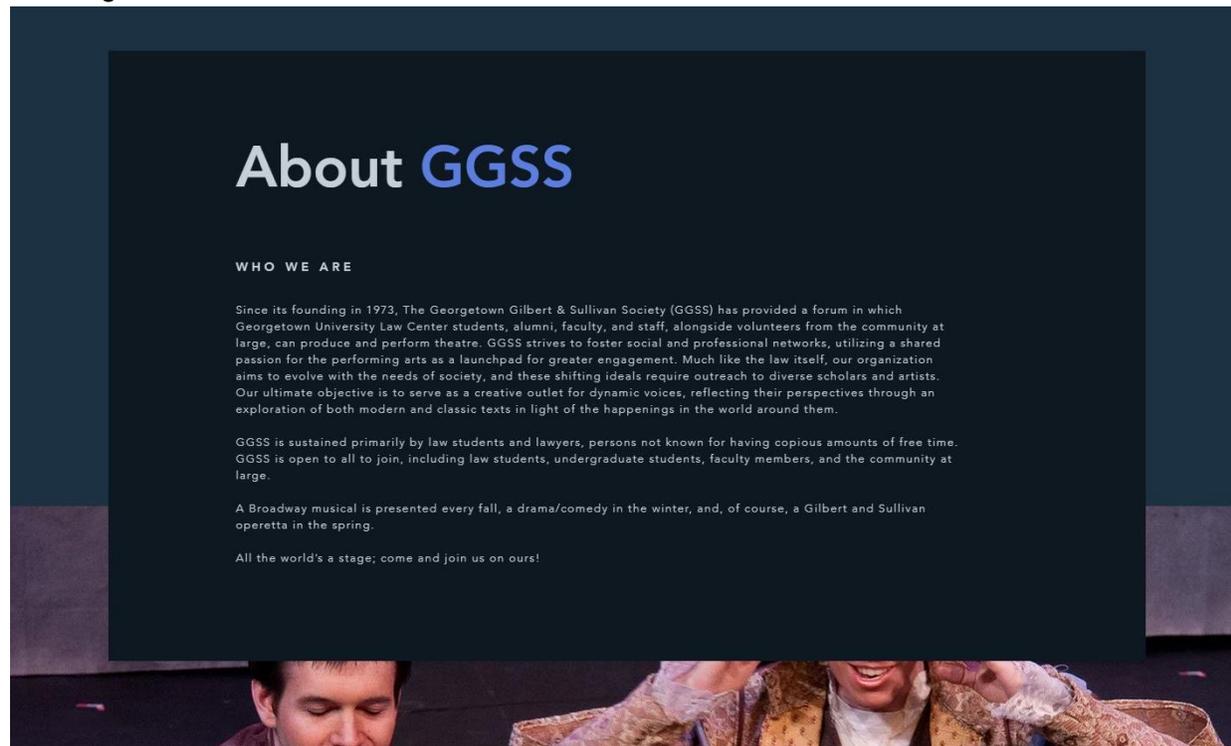
Along with an odd history, comes odd traditions. GGSS is home to several special traditions that only members will enjoy unveiling the more time they spend with the group.

GGSS is sustained primarily by law students and lawyers, persons not known for having copious amounts of free time. GGSS is open to all to join, including law students, undergraduate students, faculty members, and the community at large.

A Broadway musical is presented every fall, a drama/comedy in the winter, and, of course, a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta in the spring.

GGSS is headed by the Board of Directors, a group of law students and one alumni member who are elected each year.

Redesign:



Get Involved

Original site:



The screenshot shows the original website for The Georgetown Gilbert & Sullivan Society. The header is dark blue with the GGSS logo on the left, which features a scale of justice and the letters 'GGSS'. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'THE GEORGETOWN GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY' and 'America's only theater group with its own law school'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT US, GET INVOLVED, OUR SHOWS, TICKETS, CONTACT, and a Facebook icon. The main content area has a light blue background with the heading 'GET INVOLVED' in large, bold, grey letters, followed by a row of six dots. Below this are three small images: a rehearsal room, a group of performers, and a person in a white costume. The text below the images includes sections for Auditions, Tech & Backstage Crews, and Orchestra/Music, each with a brief description and a link for more information.

THE GEORGETOWN GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY

"America's only theater group with its own law school"

HOME | ABOUT US | GET INVOLVED | OUR SHOWS | TICKETS | CONTACT | f

GET INVOLVED

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Auditions

Open auditions are held for each show, usually in September (for the Fall musical), November (for the Winter drama), and February (for the Spring Gilbert and Sullivan operetta). For the Fall and Spring, we try to cast everyone who auditions, so there is no way you will be left out if you want to be on stage!

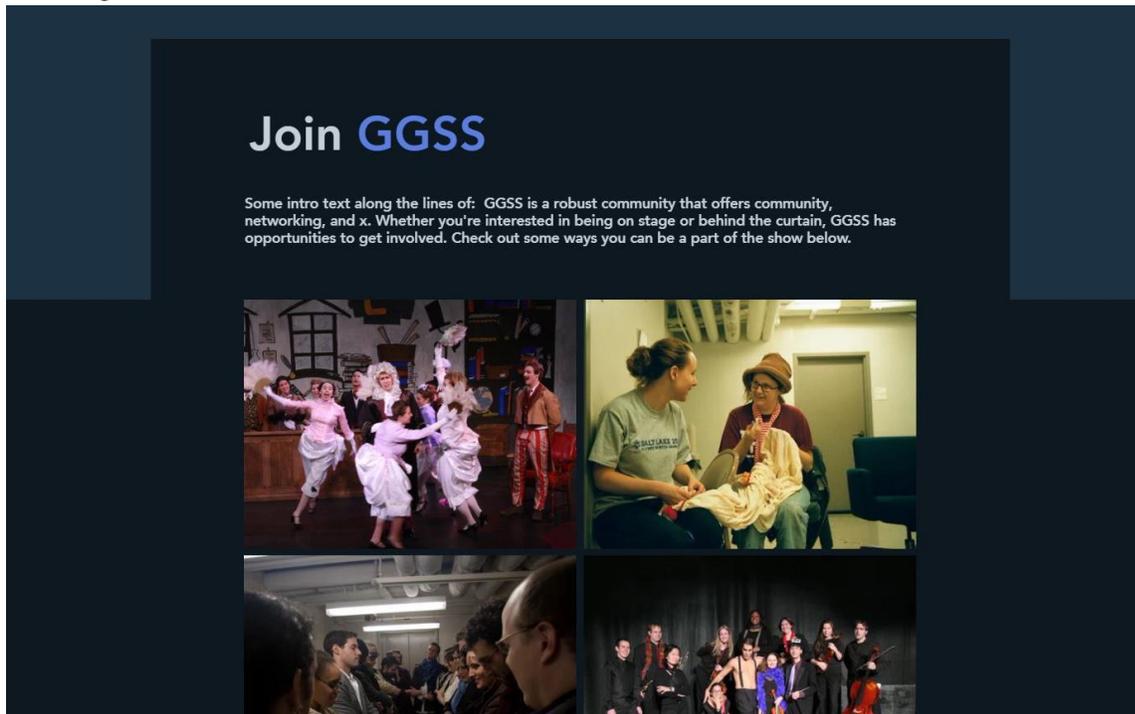
For more information about the next auditions check out our [Auditions page](#).

Tech & Backstage Crews

Love to hammer things, paint, sew, play with electricity, go on prop scavenger hunts, or generally just get messy? Come help us backstage! This is a great way to get involved if you don't have the time to devote to rehearsals on weeknights or don't want to be on stage. Drop us an e-mail at techdirector@ggssonline.org to let us know what you're interested in. Tech crew members are, of course, happily welcomed to any and all cast parties! Tech crews usually meet up every weekend.

Orchestra/Music

Redesign:



The screenshot shows the redesigned website for The Georgetown Gilbert & Sullivan Society. The background is a dark blue gradient. The main heading 'Join GGSS' is in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below the heading is a paragraph of introductory text. At the bottom of the page, there are four images arranged in a 2x2 grid, showing various theater activities: a group of performers in white costumes, a person in a green shirt and a person in a red shirt, a group of people in a rehearsal room, and a group of performers on stage.

Join GGSS

Some intro text along the lines of: GGSS is a robust community that offers community, networking, and x. Whether you're interested in being on stage or behind the curtain, GGSS has opportunities to get involved. Check out some ways you can be a part of the show below.

