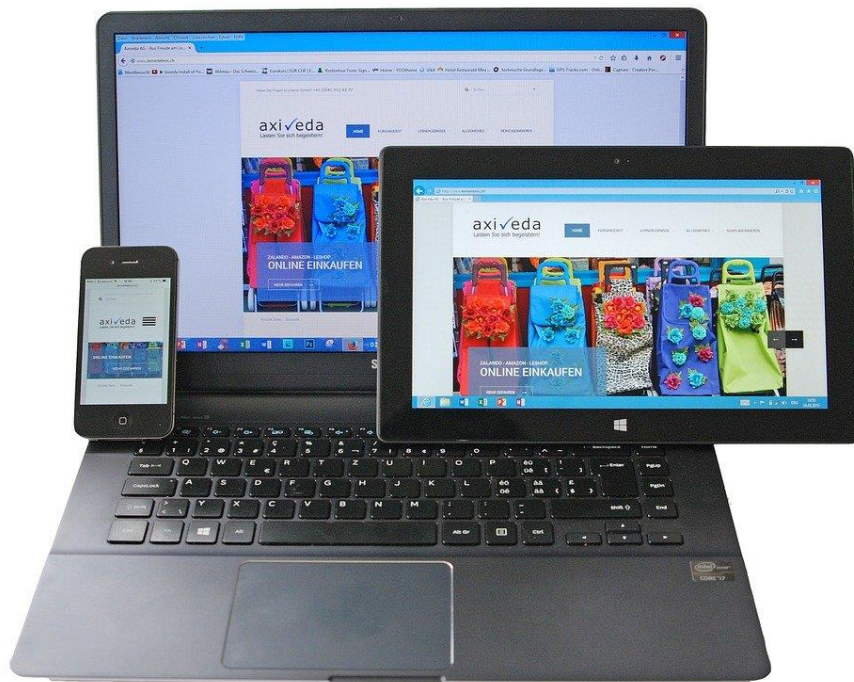# How I Proofread Websites

Image credit: Patrick Skrbinjek from Pixabay

Proofreading a website is more involved than working directly with text, be that in Word files, on PDF or hard copy. If a client only wants a check of content, then naturally that can be done in the form of a text file, usually a conversion of each webpage to PDF. When it comes to the actual layout of the website, however, there are other considerations to take into account.

As I see it, two main issues present themselves. Firstly, how will I actually do the mark up of my comments in a way which simultaneously tackles content issues and visual aspects? Secondly, how do I deal with the different modes of viewing a website? How does a website change when you view it on an iPhone as opposed to an iPad or a PC? What happens to the layout of the text and its relationship to accompanying visual materials?

My basic method is as follows: to begin with, I do an initial read of the whole website, addressing each tab in turn. I'll make notes as I go along of anything that leaps off the screen.

Next, I'll go through and analyse typographical elements, such as fonts, heading sizes, spaces, alignments and consistency of visual material in boxes. I'm effectively making a 'style sheet' as I go along, which will be crucial for comparing the consistency of layout between tabs. I will split the screen into two to make such comparisons, but that comes later.

I then set to work on the first in depth pass of each tab in turn, initially checking that all the links actually work. This involves things like hyperlinks, video and audio, and internal navigational links within the website itself. I check drop-down menus; it's here that you often find inconsistencies between the titles shown and those of the destination page or link.

I'm still making notes at this stage but I soon move on to the proofread of content. Where there are problems, I take screenshots of the area involved and convert them to PDF pages. There, I can apply the usual callout boxes to flag up any issues of content or layout. The beauty of screenshots is that I can compile a comparison between tabs if there is, say, an inconsistency of title size, colour or line spacing, just as I would for a normal text document.

It is possible, of course, to create a PDF of a webpage and to scale it down so that nothing is missed out. I discuss with each client beforehand what their preferences are with regard to this.

Website text that is clear and readable on a PC can appear blurred or too small on a mobile device. It's not within the scope of this blog to explain why that happens, but the job of a proofreader is to flag the problem up. Likewise, content may be missing and some images too large to be uploaded to the smaller screen of the phone.

Regarding the comparison of what the website looks like on different devices, I have a Samsung Galaxy A10 phone, so I will

inspect how the website appears on there. I'll compare it against the PC version to check that nothing has gone astray. The F12 Developer Tools Interface on my PC comes in handy here, which lets me view the webpage in iPad mode, as well as different sizes of iPhone – but those can take time and may not be absolutely necessary. They will break lines in different places, automatically introducing soft hyphen breaks. Again, I use the screenshot method to draw attention to any major issues that arise from the mysterious process of self-formatting that goes on!

As with all working methods, this one is constantly subject to modification, improvement and feedback, but my main aim is to cover as much as the client requires and convey the information back to them as clearly and as unambiguously as possible.

Ivor McGregor February 2021