

Web Development in Agricultural Communications Undergraduate Courses

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Introduction

Agricultural communications students have a low technical ability to execute web design and use web design software (Leal et al., 2020). The literature is mixed regarding the importance of web design skills in the profession (Corder & Irlbeck, 2018; Leal et al., 2020).

There is a need to explore how technical skills, including website development, are integrated into agricultural communications curriculum (Leal et al., 2020).

The purpose of this study is to explore if and how website development is taught in undergraduate agriculture communications program coursework.

Conceptual Framework

There is no standard website design process (Karmokar et al., 2016), so the website development process detailed by Lynch and Horton (2016) provides a framework to guide this study.

“Every significant web project poses unique challenges, but the overall process of developing a complex web site generally follows seven major stages,”

(Lynch & Horton, 2016, p. 88) which are listed on the right.

Methodology

This study utilized quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). The sample was limited to the top ten agricultural communications programs determined by Miller et al. (2015). All the programs responded to an inquiry requesting syllabi of web development-related coursework, seven ($N = 7$) provided a syllabus.

To determine the stages of the website development process being taught, category classifications for each stage were added to researcher-developed codebook with descriptions based on the definitions of each stage (Krippendorff, 2013; Lynch & Horton, 2016).

The entire syllabus was reviewed by comparing the document content to the definitions in the codebook.

Findings

RQ1: Which programs teach website development courses? Of the 10 agricultural communications programs included in the study, seven reported offering a course that includes website development. Three programs do not teach the topic.

RQ2: Which steps in the website development process are included in agricultural communications courses? Table 1 displays the frequencies of each stage across all reviewed courses. None of the courses included in analysis teach all stages of the website development process. Of the remaining courses, two include six of the stages, two cover four stages, two include three stages, and one course does not teach to any of the stages in the website development process

Conclusions/Recommendations

Some stages of the website development process are being taught in some agricultural communications coursework, but not in a complete or wholistic fashion as defined by Lynch and Horton (2016). There is an emphasis on website design in the curriculum. Future research should include a more rigorous review of the need for and inclusion of teaching website development in agricultural communications program curriculum.

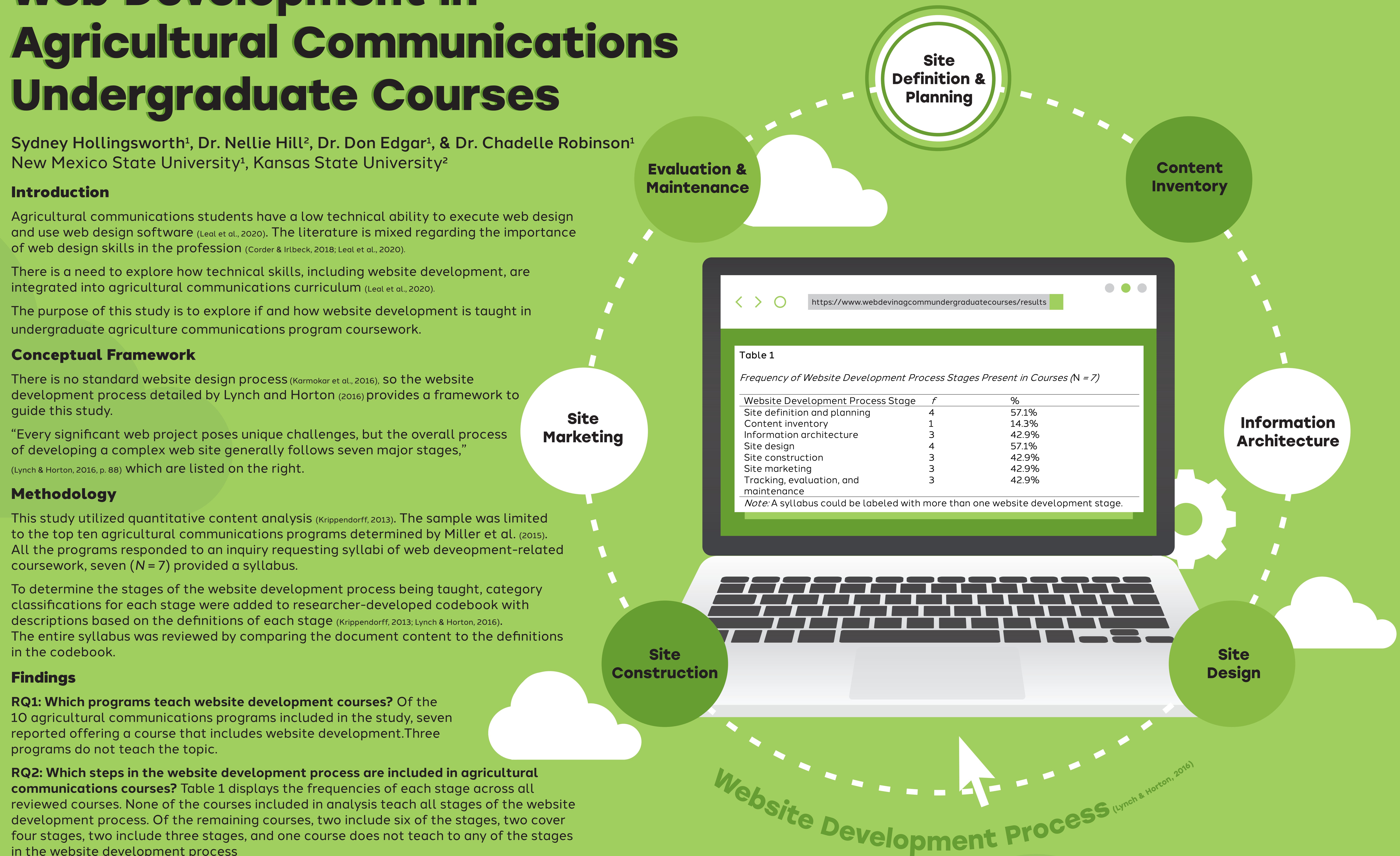


Table 1
Frequency of Website Development Process Stages Present in Courses (N = 7)

Website Development Process Stage	f	%
Site definition and planning	4	57.1%
Content inventory	1	14.3%
Information architecture	3	42.9%
Site design	4	57.1%
Site construction	3	42.9%
Site marketing	3	42.9%
Tracking, evaluation, and maintenance	3	42.9%

Note: A syllabus could be labeled with more than one website development stage.

Website Development Process (Lynch & Horton, 2016)

Scan for abstract

