Brief History

The Anchorage Museum opened its doors in 1968, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the U.S.A.’s purchase of Alaska from Russia. In 1986 funds were raised to complete a 140,000 square-foot expansion of the Museum, specifically to house the Alaska Gallery, which showcases the Museum's permanent historic and ethnographic collection. This gallery is still the main attraction for Alaskan’s and tourists alike to learn about Alaska’s unique history. Today, the Anchorage museum merges art, history and science, exploring phenomenon, celebrating Alaska’s history and showcasing fine arts.

Overall

Overall, the museum’s website is easy to navigate, aesthetically pleasing and very informative. I can find all the information I need, the layout is intuitive, and the images are provocative enough to get me interested in visiting the museum. My first impression is this museum is well funded and knows how to promote itself through the internet.

Specifics:

More specifically, navigation is consistent on every page, its location and content never changing. Simple rollovers in another color provide subtle visual cues of where you are on the page. Sub navigation also has its own space along the left side of the page, and the colors chosen are used to create unity. As the entire site is considerable in size, this consistency is extremely helpful in tying the different types of content together (i.e. buying tickets/restaurant information/exhibits coming soon…).
Content provided addresses the “need-to-know” facts that a museum visitor is looking for, while also allowing for a more in-depth search about ticket prices, store items, museum rentals, its history, and contact information. Menus are provided, programming and classes are available, and you can even create a wish list in the museum store.

In the “event” page, information about family events, lectures, book signings, planetarium shows, tours and more are all easily located under an up-to-date “clickable” calendar. When you select a specific day, the main content area changes to include a small thumbnail photo and label of what events/opportunities/programs will be held on that day. You can then click on any of the thumbnails or headers to navigate to another page with information about that specific event, etc.

The videos imbedded with the site add an extra layer of information, and at least for me, it gets me excited to visit and see for myself everything shown within the video. Shots of their architecture, specific exhibits and interactive activities demonstrate the museum’s focus on diverse audiences and specific experience. The video makes it clear that the museum is a high target tourist attraction dedicated to teaching about Alaska’s history, culture, and art.

Social networking is also imbedded into the site (specifically Facebook and twitter), and there is a search box available through Google.

**Prescription**

Overall, the website is outstanding. It conveys a professional attitude while allowing the viewer to get a sense of how important it is in the community. The web developers are obviously professionals, and there is almost no disconnect between
information, navigation, and intended viewers. The only criticism I would have is that the search bar and social media are placed at the bottom of the page, making it harder to find. The only other aspect I would expect from a museum of this caliber are galleries of some of their permanent exhibits (such as with the MoMA). It’s a great site.