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Website Case Study: The Tenement Museum - www.tenement.org

**Background:**

The Tenement Museum is located in New York City, in a renovated tenement building. The museum tells the story of immigrant life in a number of ways. The museum has restored the apartments to recreate the living environment of immigrants from various time periods and countries of origin. The Tenement Museum also hosts “Tenement Talks” as well as offering walking tours that highlight the historical experiences of immigrants in New York City. Additionally, the museum tries to help newly-arrived immigrants with a number of social programs.

**Mission:** To promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of immigrant and migrant experiences on Manhattan's Lower East Side, a gateway to America.

**Overall Assessment:**

The main page of the Tenement Museum clearly states that the museum can only be seen through a tour, which is an important piece of information for potential visitors. The organization’s logo is placed prominently and there are multiple ways to reach the contact, donate, directions, and hours of operation from a page. This occurs at the top of the header and on the bottom of the page, in the footer.

The website overall blends modern design with historical photographs and imagery. The bold lines and color choices make the website eye-catching. One critique about the use of color is that two of the navigation tabs use gray, which can be somewhat confusing given the fact that every other tab has a unique color. Also, the website uses maroon for the main navigation as well as on rollovers in the sub-navigation; however, this does not match the color of the logo. Some other elements use the red from the logo, but not consistently.

While the Tenement Museum has a lot of information on its page, it is organized well. An interesting way that the museum organizes an excess of information on the page is by using collapsible sections. These sections expand to reveal information, instead of having a page where the user has to keep scrolling down.

**Prescription:**

Overall, I feel that the website for the Tenement Museum is well designed and very clearly organized. There are two minor changes I would make to this website that would improve and already good website.
On individual pages, some of the collapsible sections have arrows indicating that they are not just headings, but should be clicked on to reveal information. This is not the case for all of the pages. The “History” page is one example: there are several expandable sections under the heading “Using our collections” which has information hidden, but that is not clear from looking at it. I would make every section with hidden information include the arrow icon to indicate that it can be expanded. Additionally, the cursor does not change when hovering over these sections as it would when hovering over a hyperlink; adding this would provide a further useful indication to visitors.

There are two alterations I would make in terms of the use of color on the website. I would change some of the color choices for the individual tabs in the navigation. Some colors are very similar to each other. I think it would be beneficial if all of the navigation tabs had distinct colors, which would give each category a stronger identity and be less confusing to the user. Also, the text of some titles found on individual pages is too light, making it difficult to see on the white background. If these titles were darker, they would be easier to read. This is most noticeable when gray is used.