

It's all good: Growing your content strategy practice

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Agenda

1. Define

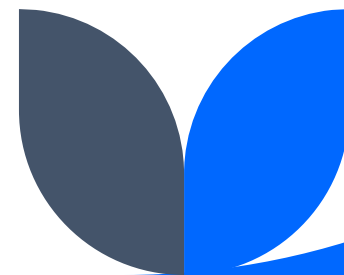
We'll define content strategy and each of its five elements

2. Assess

What's your current level of maturity in content strategy practice?

3. Identify

What's your target? Setting goals that are tangible and achievable



Content strategy

The practice of **planning**
for the **creation**,
delivery,
and **governance**
of **useful, usable** content.

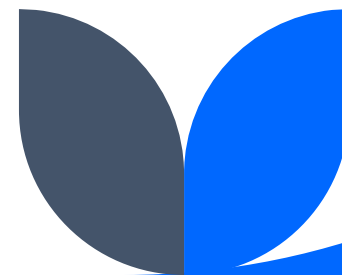
Kristina Halvorson, *Content Strategy for the Web*, 2nd edition

Why content strategy

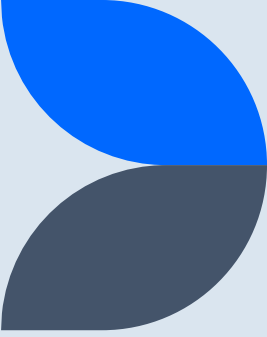
- Authoring, editing and publishing quality content requires special expertise, ongoing time and effort.
- Content *authored by* libraries has increased in the age of the web and now persists.
- Libraries have not widely embraced an editorial culture when approaching and managing library-authored content.
- Ergo, the website* gets bananas. And then it's moldy bananas.

*And the LibGuides and the tutorials and the handouts and the signage and... and... and...

McDonald & Burkhardt, 2019, "Library-Authored Web Content and the Need for Content Strategy." *Information Technology & Libraries* 38(3): 8-21.
Openly available: <https://doi.org/10.6017/ital.v38i3.11015>



Elements of content strategy



Planning



Creation



Delivery



Governance



User
Experience



Planning

An intentional and strategic approach, including brand, style and writing best practices

Actions

- Considering alignment with broader strategic plan or vision
- Setting goals for web presence
- Identifying and articulating best practices

Tools

- Content audit/inventory
- Brand policy and guidelines
- Style guide(s): visual, writing, voice/tone
- Content calendar
- Strategic plan (vision, mission)





Creation

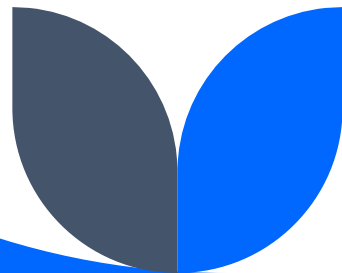
Employ editorial workflows, consider content structure, support writing

Actions

- Defining
 - content creation roles and responsibilities
 - content types & structures
- Establishing editorial processes and content workflows by content type

Tools

- Content planning template(s)
- Intake mechanism(s) for requests
- Training and support documentation for content creators
- Stakeholder facilitation





Delivery

Consider findability, discoverability, and search engine optimization, plus choice of content platform or channels

Actions

- Articulating distinct communication channels or platforms by content type
- Applying industry best practices for information architecture, navigation, search engine optimization

Tools

- Content audit/inventory
- Content planning template(s)
- Metadata
 - Descriptive page titles
 - URL management
- Usage data, log analysis





Governance

Support maintenance and lifecycle of content, as well as measurement and evaluation

Actions

- Coordinating content maintenance through full lifecycle
- Determining decision-making authority
- Establishing clear policies, procedures

Tools

- Testing
 - Maintenance tools (link checkers, tools such as SiteImprove)
 - User research
- Usage data
- Workflow & policy documents





User Experience

Consider needs of the user to produce content that is relevant, current, clear, concise and in context

Actions

- Clearly defining local user groups (including primary) & their needs
- Prioritizing user needs when determining and assessing content objectives
- Testing to validate actions on recurrent basis

Tools

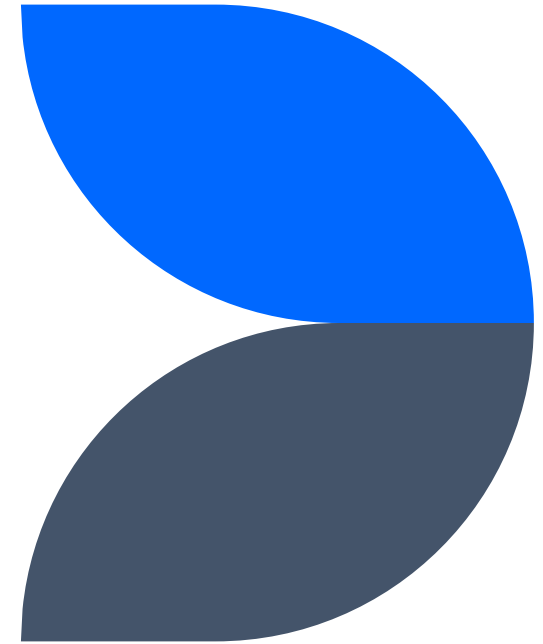
- Testing
 - Direct user research
 - Indirect user research
- Accessibility audits
- Heuristics, industry standards



Assessing maturity in content strategy practice

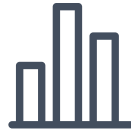
What's a maturity model?

How can it be useful to you?



Maturity models: characteristics

Incremental

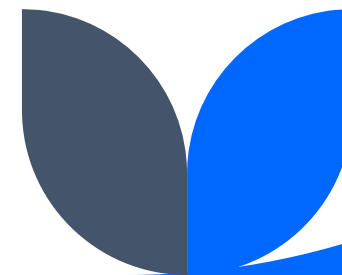


Granular, practice-oriented descriptions focus on domain-specific activities, processes, programs

Additive



Maturity levels (typically five) describe a path from ad-hoc to mature practice



Progressive, not prescriptive

Five incremental, additive stages

Ad hoc

Establishing

Scaling

Sustaining

Thriving



Maturity models: utility

Diagnostic



Articulation across multiple elements of proficiency enables nuanced assessment of current practices

Forward-looking



Clearly defined steps support shared understanding, flexible planning, goal setting



Example

Content strategy element: Creation

Ad hoc

Creation is reactive, distributed, potentially chaotic

Establishing

Basic coordination of content creation tasks

Scaling

Foundational content creation workflows in place across organization

Sustaining

Established content creation workflows coordinated through individual, dept, other governing body

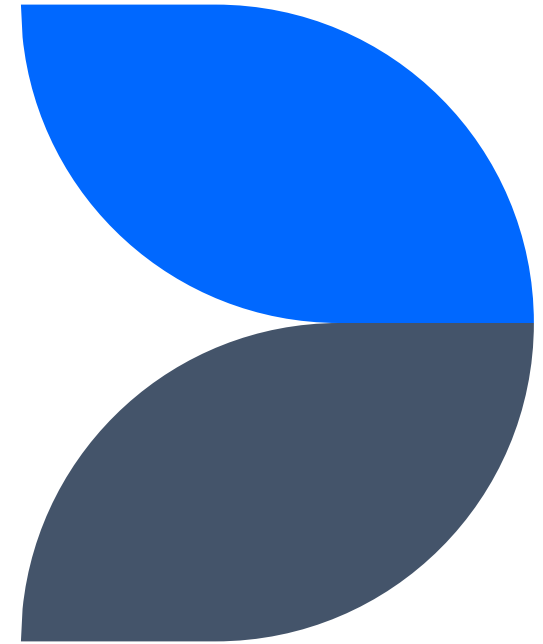
Thriving

Full lifecycle of content managed in coordination across all platforms



Growing your practice

Tangible, achievable goals
for you, for your organization



Goal identification in four steps

Put some strategy on that content!



Diagnose



Visualize



Contextualize



Set goals

1 - Diagnose

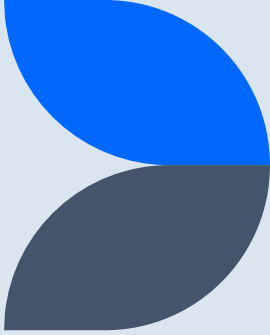


Diagnose

For each of the elements of content strategy, assess your current level.

Then think about your overall level: basic, intermediate, advanced.

Step one: Diagnosis [example]



This isn't grading, you can be more honest, and more squishy.

2ish, Rising 3, etc.

Overall assessment: basic, reaching to intermediate.

	Ad hoc	Establishing	Scaling	Sustaining	Thriving
Planning		2+			
Creation			Low 3		
Delivery		2ish			
Governance			Rising 3		
User Experience				3	

2 - Visualize

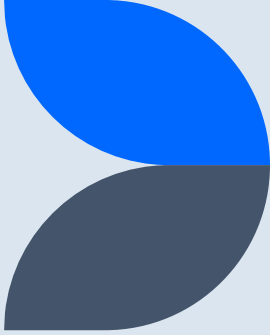


Visualize

For each element, what would be a small, but tangible increment of growth?

What would be a stretch goal, either for individual elements or by combining steps for up to three?

Step two: Visualizing [example]



Some growth increments will be smaller, some larger; that's OK.

	Ad hoc	Establishing	Scaling	Sustaining	Thriving
Planning		2+ <i>Revise & reissue the style guide?</i>			
Creation			Low 3 <i>Time for a training push</i>		
Delivery		2ish <i>Focus especially on LibGuides in the style guide?</i>			
Governance			Rising 3 <i>Develop and issue and annual report</i>		
User Experience			3 <i>Resume pre-COVID testing plan</i>		

3 - Contextualize



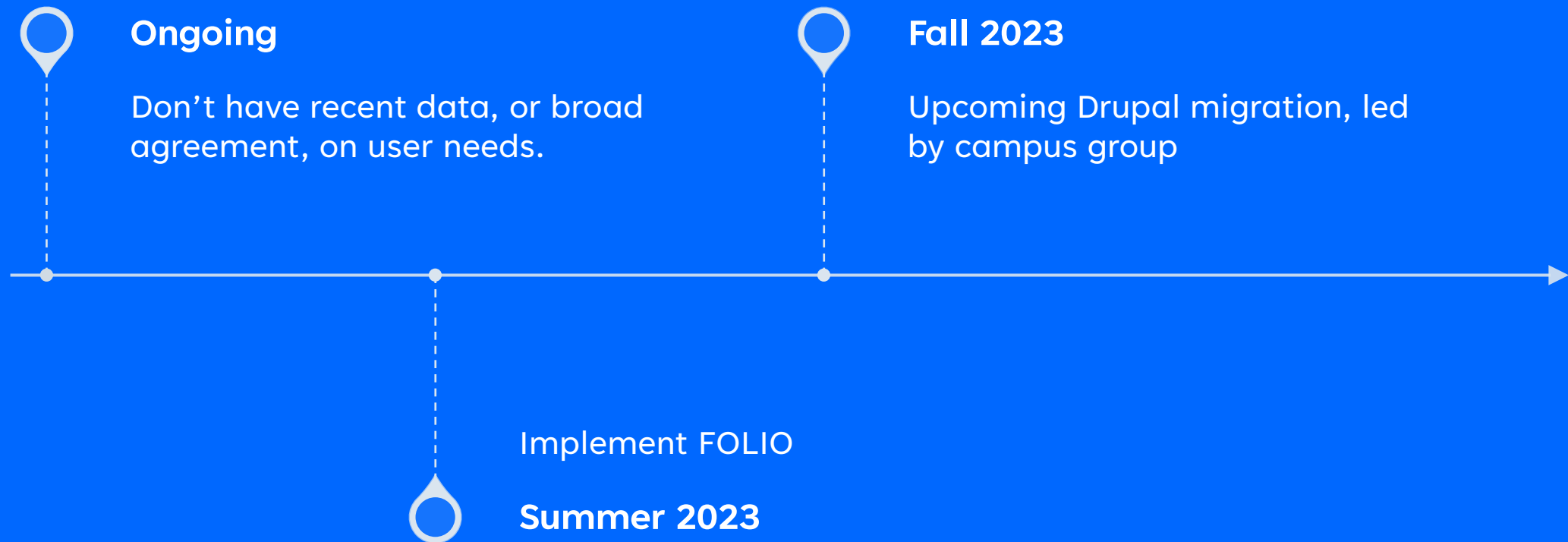
Contextualize

Identify dependencies for each element's growth increment.

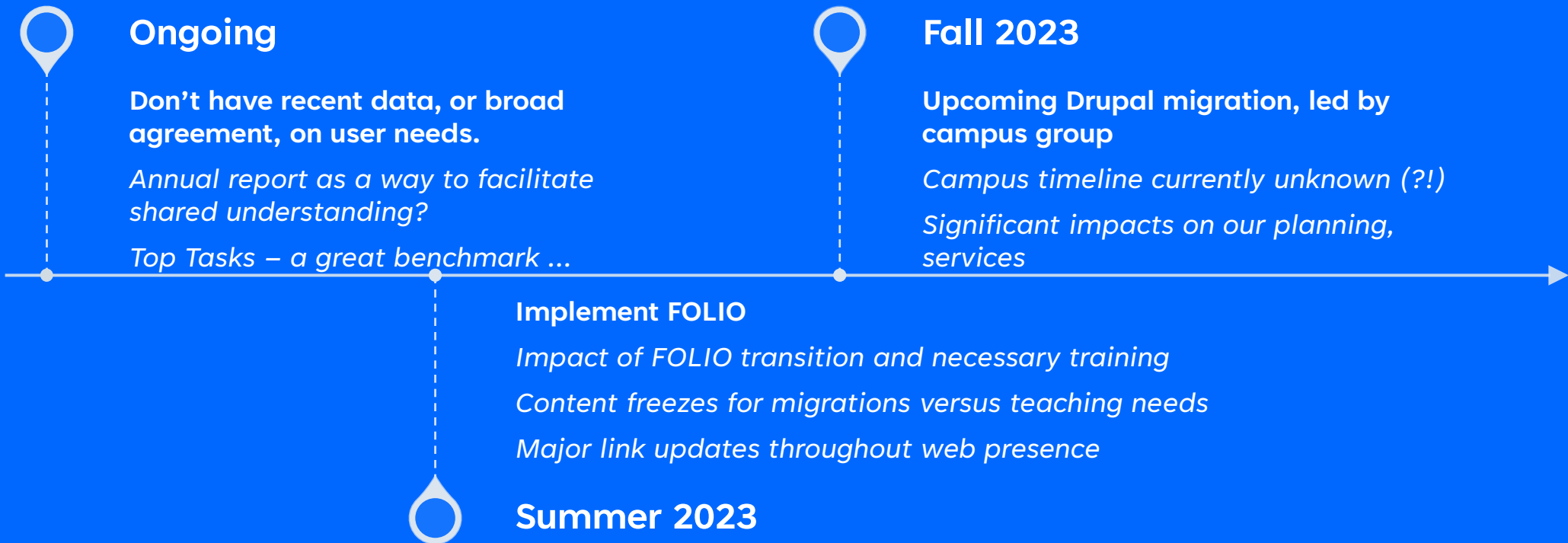
What boosts or barriers exist in your short-term and long-term environment?

Where can you build on/ develop strengths?

What do I mean by contextualizing?



Context: boosts, barriers, strengths



4 – Set Goals



Set goals

If necessary, redefine growth increments based on Step 3.

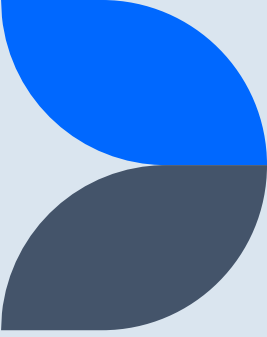
Then determine goals and put them in priority/time order.

Step four: Set goals [revisions]

After taking context into account, revise and redefine.

	Ad hoc	Establishing	Scaling	Sustaining	Thriving
Planning		2+			
		<i>Revise & reissue the style guide?</i>			
		Conduct content audit to prepare for Drupal 10 migration			
		Revise style guide(s) to reflect changes in platforms			
Creation			Low 3		
			<i>Time for a training push-Not yet</i>		
Delivery		2ish			
		<i>Focus especially on LibGuides in the style guide? Lump in with above</i>			
Governance			Rising 3		
			Develop and issue and annual report		
User Experience			3		
			<i>Resume pre-COVID testing plan</i>		
			Plan & complete Top Tasks Survey		

Step four: Prioritize goals [example]



Set goals

Organizational goals

Develop and issue an annual report

Conduct content audit to prepare for Drupal 10 migration

Revise style guide(s) to reflect goals

My goals

Plan and complete Top Tasks Survey

Goals: pitfalls

Don't

Try and do everything for every area all at once.

Feel bad if you aren't able to 'complete' your goals in the time you hoped.

Watch out for

Over-estimating your own bandwidth or the bandwidth of your colleagues.

Making this process a referendum on the importance or influence of content strategy or UX in your organization.



It's all good

...if the goal is growth, whether small or big steps – that's progress.

Ad hoc

Establishing

Scaling

Sustaining

Thriving



Thank you

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<https://courtneymcdonald.ly/>

Open Access link to article:

[Web Content Strategy in Academic Libraries:
Methods & Maturity](#)

Huge appreciation
to my co-author
and partner in
content strategy,
Heidi Burkhardt