

# Website Review

*By Lina Hariri*

## **General Information:**

I have chosen Storybird <http://Storybird.com> and the well-known Spotify <http://www.spotify.com/us/> websites because they represent a similar design idea for my future website project. Storybird is a page to help educators create stories/e-books by providing simple tools to facilitate the creation of learning materials for school kids. It also provides a library of shared published materials for improving reading skills for students. Spotify is a website that offers membership to listen to music on many audio/visual devices. However, these sites have similarities and differences in their design, content, and credibility elements.

## **System**

DELL laptop running Windows 8, Intel Core™ i7, 2 GHz, 16 MB RAM.

Internet Explorer 10.0, Google chrome 55.0

Cable modem, Timewarner, institutional

## **Design**

These two websites have similar homepage design in general with some minor differences. A visitor can tell at-first-glance what these companies do and what can be achieved on their websites. They both have neat, clear pages with coordinated colors. They both provide multimedia elements with clear purpose. Text in both sites are easy to read and had good contrast with background. Font style is consistent in both sites and the icons have the same purpose: not only to present the logo of the site but also to serve as the home page link for all their subpages. Although this is a great idea, however, it takes the user a while to figure out how to go back to the main page. The main site navigation is intuitive; easy to find, understand, and use; and well located at the top of the page. It is consistent across the site and does not change when the user goes to the sub- pages. Both sites have a horizontally scrolling main image that represents what the site is about, however, Storybird's webmaster only controls the horizontal scrolling of the image with a rotating text, while Spotify gives the user the option to scroll the text while having a fixed background image. When scrolling vertically to the main area, both pages are relatively good in size, and carry description of what can be done with the site with efficiency and simplicity. However, Storybird has done a better job at presenting their first page. Scrolling down its main page has easier effect on the user's eye: The whole page scrolls at once. It also contains one title per image, usually an electronic device image, with a very brief description. Spotify on the other hand, while using the same idea of the images, has crowded a part of the main area with multiple devices, and multiple titles. In addition having a fixed background while scrolling makes it harder for the viewer' eye to adjust to at the first few minutes of browsing it. In addition, Spotify site provides some audio

interactive links in its home page, while Storybird shows image sample with no interactivity. When it comes to the materials/products offered at both websites, effective thumbnails have been used.

### **Content**

Both sites have clear and up-to-date links to their products that can be accessed by a sign-up page. However, Storybird offers free membership options by the type of user, while Spotify offer it by product value/offering. Useful contents are two to three layers deep and contain further information about each tool/ product. Also Spotify presents controlled materials provided by external professional materials, while Storybird provides materials created by users. Both sites serve a useful purpose for an identified audience. The thumbnail images give the visitor the desire to check the products and its contents.

### **Credibility**

Both sites have included information regarding authors, affiliations, and credentials that are presented clearly in subpages and/or at the bottom of their homepage. They both also offer links to other social media networks where their products are advertised. Email addresses are not included, neither a way to contact them directly are offered at the main page. Instead, there a link at the bottom of the front page that leads to a subpage where FAQ are presented, then if the user can't find an answer to his/her question, a contact link is provided at the end of the page, where the user can enter his contact information.

### **Scenarios**

- 1- A self-study student might visit the website to learn the language. He will find information on the first page about what the site will offer. He will have links to watch a short dialogue video, see a sample exercise, or read a cultural note about the country, all provided on the first page. From there, he or she can click on the provided links to go to the full lessons list, and when clicking again on a desired lesson topic, he or she will be directed to a full interactive lesson.
- 2- An educator might link the website to his or her Module/Canvas classes by adding lesson URL to the weekly assignment of his course. The assignments can include youtube videos, practice exercises, letters drawing, or reading assignments. The lessons will have brief introduction to help the educator pick the right ones to match his syllabus. There will be also a feedback section where the educator can add comments and suggestions about the provided lessons.

### **Peer review 1 (Christopher Peters):**

I really like the concept of Storybird. I feel that their main website has a lot of good background for what their program does. They do a great job of giving alternatives to books and making it easy to navigate. It really is the Spotify of books or really more like the Pandora of books.

Spotify makes it really easy to find music that suits you. You have to have a membership to really get the full benefits of Spotify but can enjoy it just the same without paying. I like how you can have stations filled with music already to start with or you can start from scratch. The navigation from musician, genre, or playlists is seamless. The only problem with Spotify is that you can't censor explicit lyrics.

### **Peer review 2 (Kimberly Tate):**

Storybird seems to be really interesting. This seems like an exciting tool! The site gives you the ability to create your own stories and read those of others. The site is very easy to navigate, menus are labeled correctly and straight to the point. The graphics/images used on the site, seems to capture the users attention. The first page of the website lets the user know what they are able to do on the website: write, read, discover and share. The title bar does list the appropriate title name for each menu selected. Calm and soft color combination works well with the site. The search bar in the middle of the page allows you to search for images by name. I almost missed it, as I'm familiar with seeing search bars closer to the main menu of the website. I pulled up this website from a computer and a mobile device to see if the layout would be the same. It is exactly the same.

The Spotify website pulls the user in by using bold bright colors. Right away, the first page of the site indicates that it's music for everyone. The website is pretty simple and easy to navigate. All of the menu items works as it should. It has an option to sign up by email or Facebook. If Facebook is chosen, it transfers to your Facebook account to confirm signing up. I also visited this website via computer and mobile device and the page has the same options, however the layout does appear to be different. It's configured to fit a mobile device.

**Peer review 3 (Brian Gibson):**

I really liked the different styles that each website use. I have never heard of Storybird before and I liked the different ways the website used its first page to really draw the user's attention and the site seemed very easy to use even if your are on it for the first time.

I have noticed on Spotify and on Storybird that it does take some time to locate the home icon. Many websites use this as a way to locate back to the home screen but they don't always make it super easy to recognize what is being shown on the website.