# fOURTH GENRe

# Content Strategy

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# About this Guide

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This content strategy is meant to serve as an in-depth, extensive model for strategically organizing, creating, and distributing *Fourth Genre*'s content. Content on the website is largely comprised of posts (news and announcements), podcasts, digital essays, video essays, images, and social media links. In this guide, we will provide an overall strategy for content and sustainable ways to implement all of these changes. After implementation, this strategy should be be revisited by *Fourth Genre*'s staff to reflect, access, and make necessary changes. This will ensure that this document can be referenced by new team members in the years to come.

## Goals of *Fourth Genre*

The organizational goals for *Fourth Genre*, as we understand them, are listed below:

- Publish quality examples of creative nonfiction that push the boundaries of the genre
- Have a presence in the niche communities of literary journals and creative nonfiction
- Promote creative nonfiction content that goes beyond the pages of the journal, such as podcasts and digital essays

## Goals of Content Strategy

The goal of this content strategy is to provide *Fourth Genre* with a guide that achieves both the current and future goals of the organization. We intend to achieve these goals by providing research-based recommendations and examples of the organization's current content, and ways to access new and old content. We understand that change can cause problems and disrupt everyday business, and for this reason our strategy will be easy to understand and provide *Fourth Genre* a simple yet extensive content strategy that can be referenced by its current and prospective members. It is our mission to understand and uphold the goals of *Fourth Genre* as we create this document.

# Process of Each Phase

We realize that a full content strategy can not and should not be implemented in a short amount of time, so we have divided our strategy into phases which can be thought of as implementation cycles. Our intention is that these cycles will make this transition smooth and thus create a less frustrating experience for *Fourth Genre*, which should not take this all on at once. These cycles are beneficial in another way because this method lets *Fourth Genre* and the team members in it focus on more than just the content of the website while implementing this new strategy, which can set back other pressing tasks. We recommend hiring a new team member to create and maintain this content for *Fourth Genre*. To implement this strategy for *Fourth Genre*'s website, we suggest the following phases:

- **Phase 1 New Theme:** Improving the user experience of the site through consistency and intuitive design. The new theme will be activated, and current content will be edited for tone and consistency.
- **Phase 2 Implement New Content:** Continuing the editing and implementation process for the website's new content in accordance to the new standard of tone and consistency.
- **Phase 3 Social Media:** Modifying and updating *Fourth Genre's* presence on social media and in the literary community, which is done by promoting the journal, podcasts, and digital essays.

# Audience

The following audiences interact with *Fourth Genre*.

**Writers** turn to *Fourth Genre* for a reputable and encouraging platform to publish their work. *Fourth Genre* strives to develop conversations and relationships with writers. It wants to be known as a friendly and accessible journal, one that is devoted to working closely with writers in order to make their pieces the best they can be.

Information and resources writers are interested in:
- Submission guidelines
- Examples of previous work that has been published
- What *Fourth Genre* looks for in submissions
- Podcasts about the writing process

**Teachers** use *Fourth Genre* in their classrooms, to teach about creative nonfiction as a genre. They are looking for strong examples from across the realm of nonfiction. *Fourth Genre* strives to offer pieces that push the bounds of nonfiction and present a variety of forms and subjects.

Information and resources teachers are interested in:
- *Fourth Genre* on Project MUSE
- Institutional Subscription Information
- Video Essays
- Podcasts about the genre and teaching nonfiction

**Undergraduate students** experience the genre of creative nonfiction, perhaps for the first time, through reading *Fourth Genre* in their classes. The journal wants to show them the many possibilities that exist in the realm of nonfiction and work to establish their interest in the genre. This will encourage them to continue reading *Fourth Genre* in the future.

Information and resources undergraduate students are interested in:
- *Fourth Genre* on Project MUSE
- Video Essays
- Podcasts about new forms and subjects within nonfiction

**MFA students** are interested in further exploring into the genre of nonfiction. They look to *Fourth Genre* for quality examples of published work, inspiration for their own work, and a platform for publishing their writing. The journal wants to support MFA students and encourage them to submit their work to *Fourth Genre* so that it continues to demonstrate the breadth of the genre.

      Information and resources MFA students are interested in:
- *Fourth Genre* on [Project MUSE][1]
- Video Essays
- Podcasts
- Samples of published work
- Submission guidelines

**Nonfiction readers** look to *Fourth Genre* for consistently high-quality essays and pieces of nonfiction. *Fourth Genre* to stays true to its original commitment of providing a platform for quality examples of nonfiction, while simultaneously ushering readers into a new era of nonfiction by offering pieces that push and challenge conventional perceptions of the genre. It aims to engage readers in discussions, and offer them resources and information about emerging trends within the genre.

      Information and resources nonfiction readers are interested in:
- Subscription information
- News about upcoming issues/features
- Video Essays
- Podcasts about nonfiction

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[1] http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/fourth_genre_explorations_in_nonfiction/

# Governance

Governance defines the role of each staff member within a team. For *Fourth Genre*, this is important because of the many tasks it takes to keep the journal running smoothly. Below is a detailed list of each role in *Fourth Genre*'s staff, and the jobs that should be assigned to that member.

Here are the roles for *Fourth Genre*:

- Editor(s)
    - Supervise all staff and content creation
    - Approve all content that is to be on the website
    - Hire interns
- Editing and Publishing Intern(s)
    - Participate in weekly editorial meetings
    - Read, evaluate, and manage manuscript submissions
    - Handle correspondence with authors
    - Work within a production schedule
    - Liaison with production staff at the MSU Press
    - Implement a social media strategy for the journal
    - Plan, design, and implement publicity for release of the journal
    - Plan for the journal's presence at annual AWP conference
    - As needed, conduct research on various aspects of journal management and editing
- Media Intern(s)
    - Manage the production of video/digital essays in collaboration with journal staff and with authors
    - Handle correspondence and manage collaboration with authors
    - Manage and evaluate video submissions
    - Manage the journal's website, following the journal's content strategy
    - Work within a production schedule
    - Participate in weekly editorial meetings
    - Participate in sessions or promotion for the journal at the AWP annual conference

*In addition to the roles listed above, there are also readers, contributing editors, and an advisory board. Since they are not in charge of interacting with the content, they will not be discussed in this section.

# Style Guide

This component of our content strategy provides a guide for achieving a tone, style, and format appropriate for content generated by *Fourth Genre*.

## Tone

The tone of *Fourth Genre* should reflect a commitment to pushing the boundaries of nonfiction writing. It is friendly, creative, expressive, and never generic or boring. The purpose of using a specific tone is to position *Fourth Genre* as an accessible yet reputable presence in the literary community.

The following describe the tone and identity of *Fourth Genre*:

- Open
- Friendly
- Playful
- Creative
- Reputable
- Articulate
- Expressive
- Thoughtfully crafted

The tone should be present in headers, titles, body text, and social media. It should follow overarching principles, but can be molded to fit different platforms such as social media, podcasts, and the website. For this reason, we will provide examples and guidelines for several media.

### Example 1: About Page of Website

Avoid: "*Fourth Genre* is a journal for nonfiction literature."
Comments: This example fails to convey the tone of *Fourth Genre*. It is bland and ordinary.

Aim For: "*Fourth Genre: Explorations in Nonfiction* is a journal devoted to publishing notable, innovative work in literary (creative) nonfiction."

Comments: This version expresses the creative, reputable, and deliberate aspects of the *Fourth Genre* tone.


### Example 2: Tweet: Reminder of Submission Guidelines

Avoid: "Do not send submissions without first checking the guidelines listed on our website. We will not read entries that do not follow the guidelines."
Comments: In this example, the sentences sound harsh and uninviting. You want to aim for a friendlier and more energetic phrasing.

Aim For: "Good news! Our regular reading period is now open. You can find submission guidelines here (link). We look forward to reading your essays!"
Comments: This tweet is enthusiastic and inviting. Writers will understand that *Fourth Genre* values their work if the staff expresses excitement at reading it.


### Example 3: Tweet: Release of New Issue

Avoid: "A new issue has been released."
Comments: Here, we have a generic sounding tweet promoting a new issue. There is no emotion in this statement to make viewers excited about the release.

Aim For: "*Fourth Genre* just released its best issue yet! You won't be able to put it down. "
Comments: This post is upbeat, and makes *Fourth Genre* sound fun and witty.


## Language Considerations and Standards

- Since it is the title of the journal, *Fourth Genre* should be italicized whenever possible.
- To remain consistent with the tagline "Explorations in Nonfiction," nonfiction should be spelled as one word, rather than hyphenated ("non-fiction").
- Whenever abbreviating, FG should be used instead of 4G.
- The preferred terms for the genre are "creative nonfiction" and "literary nonfiction," as opposed to simply "nonfiction"

# Typography

### Page Title
- Gotham Medium
- 34px
- #541a8b

### Headings of articles
- Georgia
- bold
- 14px
- #000000

### Navigation Bar
- Gotham Book
- 16px
- #000000

### Paragraphs and body text
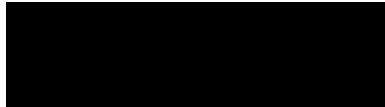- Georgia
- 12px
- #000000

### Links
- Font of designated section
- Font size of designated section
- #541a8b

# Color Palette

### Purple-#541a8b

Black-#000000

We believe that a simple color palette is best suited for the tone of *Fourth Genre*. Using traditional black and white text adds to the reputable feel of the journal. For emphasised elements, the dark purple is fun but not overwhelming, and easily integrates into the professional atmosphere of the website.
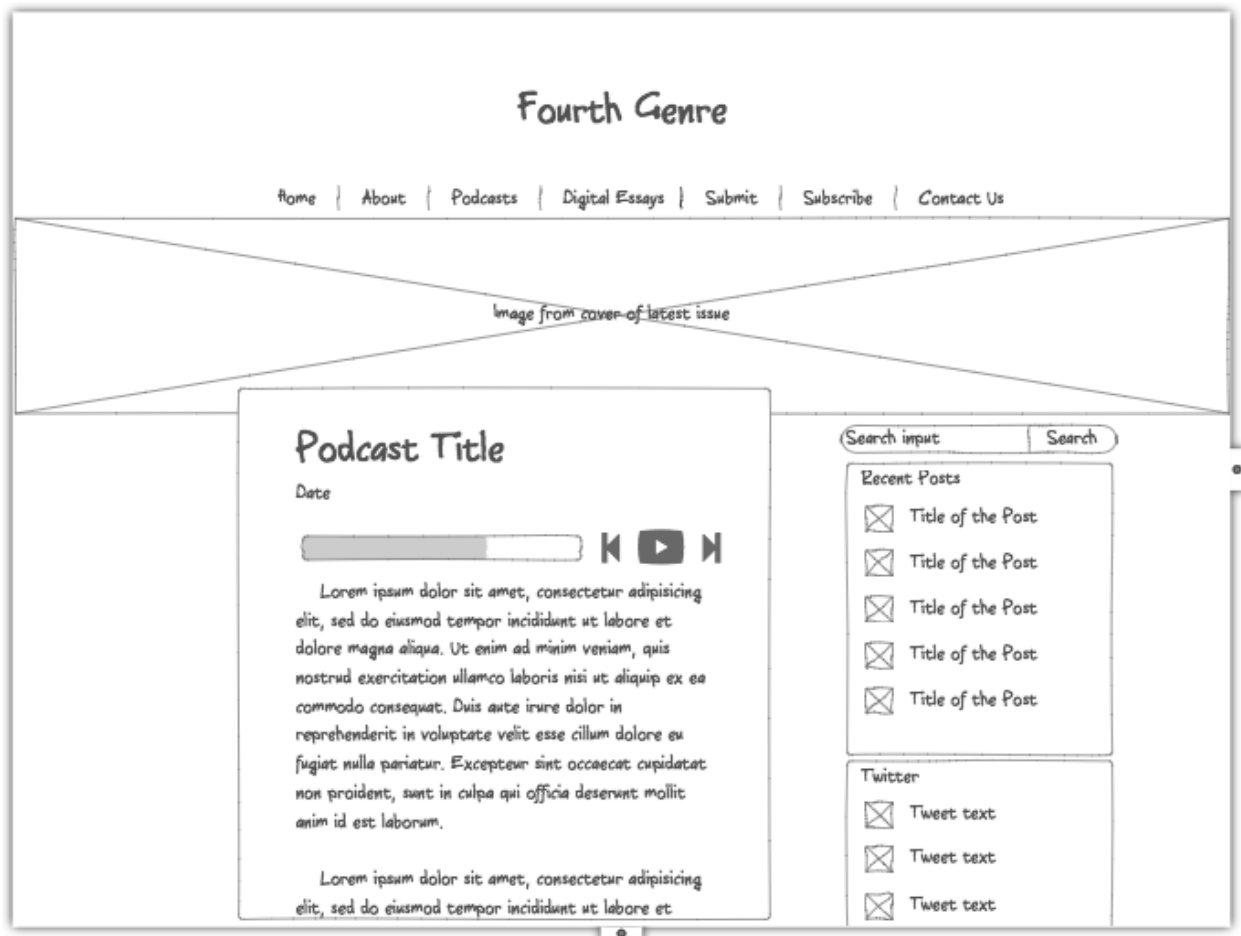
# Templates

We have created several wireframe diagrams that outline the way we feel the *Fourth Genre* website should be organized.

## Home Page
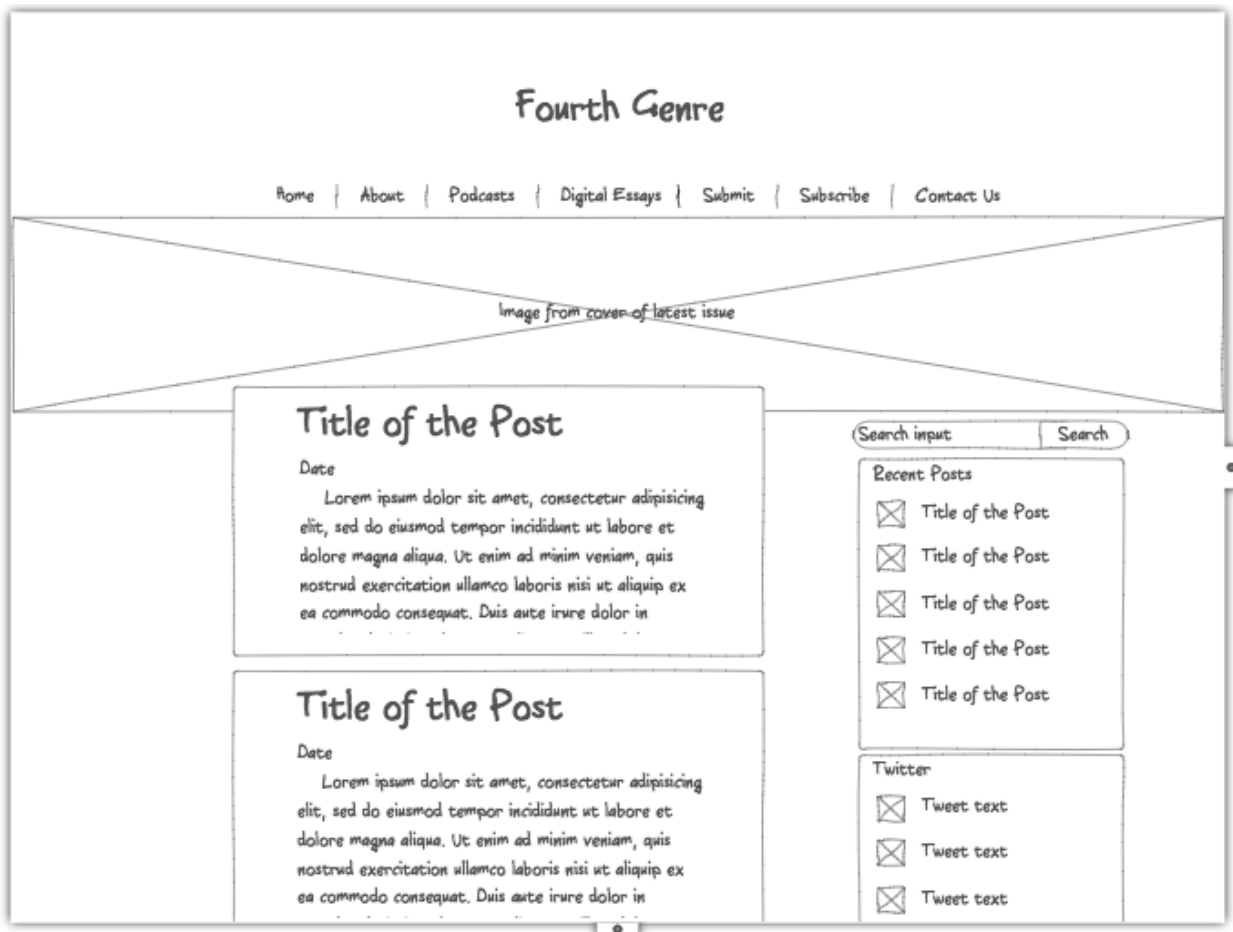


A large header image, based off the cover of the latest issue of the journal, spans the length of the site. Below this are the blog posts and a sidebar that features a search function, recent posts, and a Twitter widget.

# Content Page



This particular image demonstrates a page that would house a podcast episode, but this is the template that all other pages should follow.

Podcasts should be posted with the audio embedded at the top and a description below. The audio itself would preferably be stored on mediaspace.msu.edu due to the space constraints of other websites such as SoundCloud. Ideally, the podcasts will also be accessible via a feed on the iTunes store.

# Mobile Template
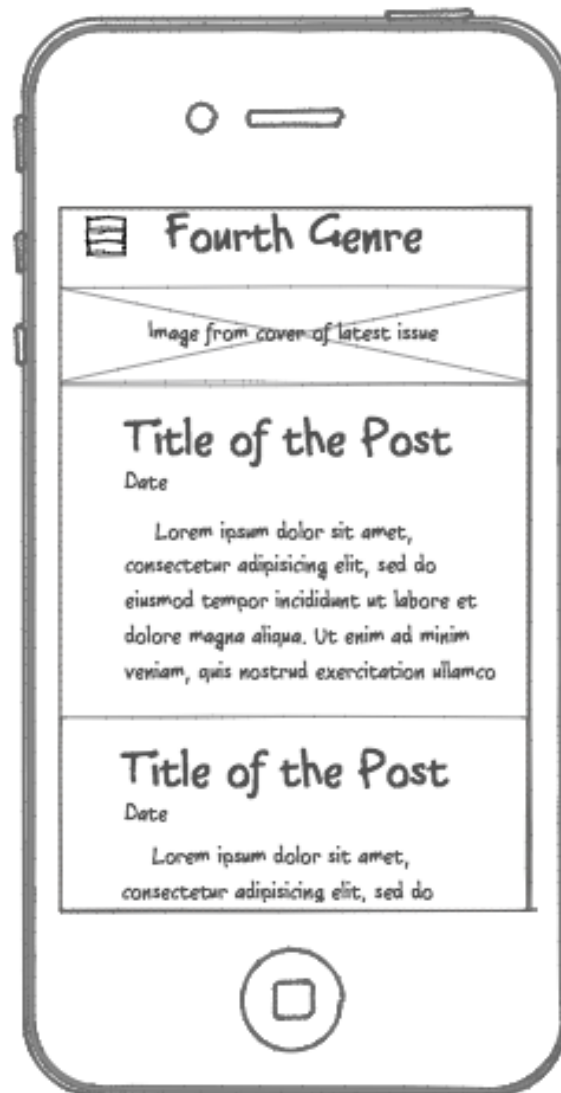


In the mobile version of the website, the navigation bar turns into a drop down menu, represented by the square to the left of "*Fourth Genre*" at the top of the page. The header image still makes an appearance, but it is much smaller. The top of the post boxes no longer overlap with the header, as they do in the desktop templates.

At this time we do not feel that a downloadable mobile app is necessary for *Fourth Genre*, since the time and expertise required for such an undertaking would be better spent elsewhere. Users can still access all of the content of the site from their smartphone's browser, and the podcast feed, available through the iTunes store, would be better accessed through Apple's own Podcast app.
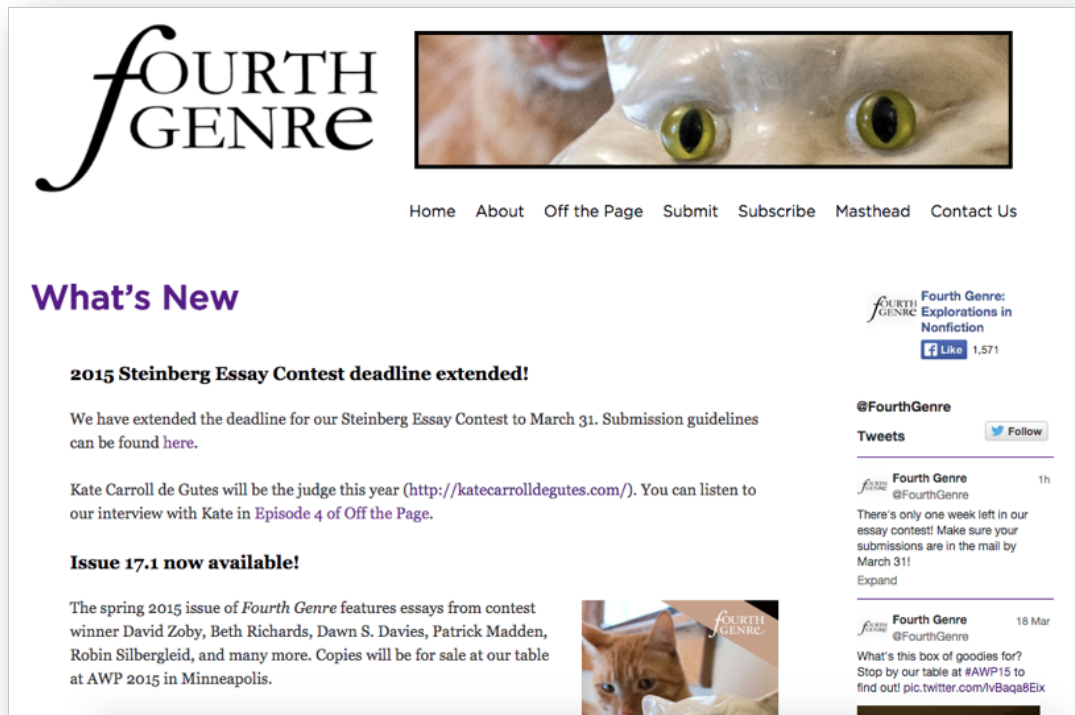
# Theme

While the current Wordpress theme in use on the website has the clean, minimal design *Fourth Genre* aims for, it has several issues that need to be addressed. First, the current theme is not responsive, so it is difficult to view the website on smaller resolutions. This is especially problematic for people who want to listen to the podcast on their mobile devices. Second, the current theme does not allow for blog-like posts, which makes the home page appear clunky. Switching to a theme that allows for posts will make this section more adaptable to the frequent changes it undergoes.

For these reasons, we suggest switching the WordPress theme to Lovecraft. This theme has many of the features of the current one, but is responsive and the blogging style setup allows for posts to be featured on the landing page. This theme is also more mobile-friendly and more aesthetically pleasing than the current one.

The following page contains a mockup of the *Fourth Genre* website under Wordpress' Lovecraft theme, paired with a screenshot of the website as it stands currently. Note the differences in the navigation bar.

**Screenshot of the current website**



**Our proposed design for the updated website**

We chose to use the Lovecraft theme because it strikes us as an improved version of the theme currently in use. Visitors to the new site will not find the theme change jarring, but rather will see it as a logical evolution of *Fourth Genre*'s look and feel. With two columns to work with, the new *Fourth Genre* home page will be able to feature news items in a blog format on the bigger, left-hand column, and fill the smaller, right-hand column with widgets, a Twitter feed, and a search bar.

The responsiveness inherent in the Lovecraft theme will ensure that the *Fourth Genre* site will be automatically optimized for any resolution, including mobile. Last, but not least, the Lovecraft theme is free, meaning that all of these site upgrades can be made painlessly.

## Navigation

We recommend that the current "Masthead" page be incorporated into the "About" section, instead of taking up a separate page all on its own. Typically, users tended to associate "Masthead" with the "About" section.

The order of links should also be changed. "Submit" and "Subscribe" would be better placed immediately after the "About" link and before "Off the Page," which we recommend be renamed to the more universally understood term "Podcasts." "Off the Page," as it appears in the navigation bar currently, is a drop down menu consisting of the seven episodes of the podcast. As the episode count increases with each new entry, the length of the drop down menu will become unwieldy, if it isn't already. For this reason we've decided to ditch the drop down menu and turn this into a simple link that will direct users to a page resembling our home page template (see Templates section), wherein users can scroll down the list of podcast episodes, each with a title header and embedded audio player, and click "Continue Reading" to access a fuller description of the episode.

During our interview, it was stated that *Fourth Genre* planned to expand its content to "Digital Essays". We chose to include the term in our navigation bar, so there would be a page to store published videos in. This differs from the current site, which does not mention the essays anywhere.

# Photographs

The featured header photograph on the website, Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as the profile picture for the email account should be taken from the cover of the most recently published issue. Therefore, the photograph will need to be changed every time a new issue is released to maintain consistency across platforms. The profile picture for the Facebook and Twitter is the *Fourth Genre* logo. Credit to the photographer should be included at the bottom of the website.

Additional photographs included on the website and social media should be consistent with the tone outlined above. Because of the nature of social media, photographs posted on Twitter and Facebook may be more playful and post-specific than those on the website. Photographs on the website should be professional, and reflect the established nature of the journal.

# Web Content

## Web Content Assessment

We have analyzed the current content of the *Fourth Genre* site and the MSU Press page and have developed a list of pros and cons for both. We have also included a few brief suggestions in the table below. **(+ indicates a positive aspect, - indicates negative. Suggestions have an asterisk.)**

| *Fourth Genre* | MSU Press |
|---|---|
| **Layout**<br>+Simplistic Design (Black + White)<br>+User-friendly<br>+Utilizes social media<br>-No clickable link to subscribe/buy current issue on Landing page<br>*Consider attaching the Editor's note onto the Landing page with each new issue. | **Layout**<br>+MSU brand standard design/colors<br>+Easy to navigate<br>+Current/past work (books/journals) displayed with clickable links to purchase<br>+Link to current catalogue |
| **Off the Page/Digital Essays**<br>+Three podcasts with text descriptions<br>-No photos of interviewer/interviewee<br>* Consider adding the Digital Essay sections to the website into this page.<br>* Embedded Youtube/Vimeo videos is the only prerequisite for having Digital Essays | **Books**<br>+Displays current published work, new releases, and upcoming news<br>+Sidebar sorts books by Subject<br>+Media about MSU Press |
| **Masthead**<br>-Bare and impersonal<br>-No pictures/clickable bios | **Journals**<br>+Same layout as the **Books** page<br>+Includes a "How to Order" section<br>+Excellent search function<br>+Email Signup |
| **Submit**<br>+Information is clear and concise<br>-Both clickable links take the user to the same page (16.1 Editor's Note)<br>-Include link on page to view *Fourth Genre* content on Project MUSE | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Subscribe**<br>-Heading link takes you to a page without a subscription option<br>* Consider adding pictures with clickable links to current/past issues of 4G on this page | |

# Site Map

The following list is a sitemap showing the layout of the *Fourth Genre* site with the new strategy implemented.

- Home/Landing
    - About
    - Podcasts
        - Embedded Audio
    - Digital Essays
        - Embedded Video
    - Submit
        - Regular Submissions
        - Special Contents
    - Subscribe
        - MSU Press
            - Subscription Options
            - Previous Issues
    - Contact
        - Masthead
        - Email
        - Facbook
        - Twitter

## *Fourth Genre*

The list below is not a site map, rather, it is a list of content you will find on each page of the website.

- Landing
    - Link to current issue
    - Editor's note with each issue

- Off the Page
    - Photos of interviewer/interviewee
    - Add section for Digital Essays(?)
- Masthead
    - Photo of each member of staff
    - Bio for each member of staff
- Submit
    - Two links to same page; consider removing/changing one.
    - Link to view *Fourth Genre* content on Project MUSE
- Subscribe
    - Make sure link leads directly to page that already has subscription option
    - Pictures with clickable links to issues of *Fourth Genre*
- Contact
    - Maybe merge with Masthead
    - Remove picture of plush toys
    - Include links to Facebook, Twitter, etc.

## MSU Press

- Make sure the subscribe link on *Fourth Genre* website leads to the subscribe section of Press
- Add link to *Fourth Genre* website on landing page.

## Content Types

- Wordpress Posts
    - New posts will be added to the news on the landing page
- Podcasts
    - Should be posted to mediaspace.msu.edu and embedded in Off the Page section.
    - Localize files to prevent possible loss in the event of a crash of mediaspace
    - An h1 header will be used to post the title of the episode as "*Fourth Genre*: Off the Page (Episode [episode number]: [name of interviewee]).
    - Each podcast uses a tracking bar with play button and volume control
    - Podcasts will include a brief text summary of the episode beneath tracking bar
- Digital Essays
    - Posted to the Digital Essays section of website

- ○ Each post should include the author's name
- ● Video Essays
  - ○ Posted to Youtube/Vimeo and embedded into Digital Essays section
  - ○ Localize files to prevent loss
  - ○ Creator of video essay should be credited within post
- ● Images
  - ○ Images must adhere to standards set by the editor. No explicit images may be posted. Images must be appropriate and must relate specifically to the content of the page they are placed in.
  - ○ No explicit images
  - ○ No unrelated images (such as Squishables)
  - ○ Appropriate images may be used throughout the site.
- ● Social Media Links
  - ○ Links may be placed in Contact section or in a widget on the right side of the page.
  - ○ Links should be represented by clickable icons as opposed to hyperlink text.

The Editor approves all content on the website. Interns should present any changes to website content to editor for approval.

# Editorial Calendar

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This calendar will have dates about when to post about essay contests, send out calls for submission, check up on social media strategy, discuss problems and achievements over a semester, and etc with the *Fourth Genre* staff. It should be regularly updated to ensure that that the dates are correct for each year. The purpose of this calendar is to ensure every staff member has immediate access to dates and deadlines that allow them to stay updated with weekly, monthly, and annual tasks.

*Fourth Genre* Editorial Calendar[2]

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[2] http://bit.ly/1ItVGjl

# Social Media Marketing Strategy

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The goal of this strategy is to provide guidelines for *Fourth Genre* to:

- Engage followers with rich and meaningful social media content
- Increase the presence of *Fourth Genre* in the literary community via social media
- Share news and promote the journal, podcasts, and digital essays
- Consistently engage the literary community and encourage audience participation

## Managing Social Media

We recommend that the media interns working for *Fourth Genre* be in charge of managing all social media accounts (see [Governance](#)). In order to provide an opportunity for assessment, we suggest that the the media interns produce a monthly social media marketing dashboard. This dashboard will be presented to the editor and include key metrics and insights about the effectiveness of the social media strategy that month  (e.g. what type of post worked well and which did not). We have provided a template social media marketing dashboard in the appendix, and recommend that it includes the following elements:

- Executive summary
- Updated number of likes and followers
- Measures of reach and engagement
- How many visits the website is receiving along with an explanation of the source
- Analysis of why posts/tweets were successful or unsuccessful
- Goals for the upcoming month
- Analysis of any Facebook Ad Campaigns
- Recommendation for future posts

Key sources for the information included in the dashboard are Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, and Hootsuite analytics.

Each social media platform has a unique purpose and set of audience expectations. Understanding this context is essential to creating successful content.

# Twitter

Each social media platform has a unique purpose and set of audience expectations. Understanding this context is essential to creating successful content. Twitter is a news platform, primarily used to share the most recent content, news, and opinions. The purpose of the Twitter page is to keep *Fourth Genre*'s audience current with the journal.

Since an average tweet reaches 75% of its potential engagement [within less than 3 hours,](#)[3] it's important to only post the most current information.

The main uses of Twitter should be:

- Share news about the journal, including information about podcasts, video essays, contests, submissions deadlines, etc.
- Provide updates and teasers in order to maintain interest and generate excitement about new content
- Engage with other twitter accounts in the literary community and share news relevant to literary non-fiction

## Post frequency

At a minimum, tweets should be posted at least three times a week. This will ensure that the journal stays present and current in the literary community and remains visible to those on social media.

## Best Practices

In order to use Twitter most effectively, we recommend each tweet contain each least two of the following elements.

- Call to action
- Hashtag
- Image
- Link

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[3] http://heidicohen.com/social-share-lifespan/

The sample tweets below illustrate both successful and unsuccessful twitter practices.

**Example of successful tweet:**



*Why this tweet works:*
This tweet includes a clear call to action and a link for the user to follow. It also aligns with the fun and friendly tone of *Fourth Genre*.

**Example of unsuccessful tweet:**



*How this tweet could be improved:*
This tweet lacks a, hashtag, link, or image. While it does provide the user with information about submitting work, it doesn't fit in with the tone or voice of *Fourth Genre*. Rather than friendly, it is uninviting and verges on scolding.

## Hashtags

We recommend that *Fourth Genre* use hashtags in order to increase engagement and target relevant communities on Twitter. According to research by Buddy Media, tweets

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with hashtags receive [twice as much engagement as those without](). [4] With this in mind, we suggest the following hashtags for *Fourth Genre* to increase engagement and connect with relevant audiences:

- #NonFiction
- #Literary
- #CNFTweet (Creative Non Fiction Tweet)

# Facebook

The purpose of the Facebook page is to emphasize *Fourth Genre*'s unique role within the larger literary community. Facebook content has a longer lifespan than Twitter, with 75% of an average post's engagement [occurring within the first 5 hours](). [5]

With this in mind, Facebook posts can be used to tell a more permanent and detailed story about *Fourth Genre* and literary non-fiction. It is an ideal medium for sharing information about contests or highlighting *Fourth Genre* content.

Our main uses of Facebook should be:

- Linking to *Fourth Genre* content such as contests, submission guidelines, podcasts, and video essays
- Sharing news articles about *Fourth Genre* or the genre of literary non-fiction
- Sharing images relevant to journal or its creation (e.g a photo of the new cover or of a recently interviewed author)

## Post frequency

We recommend that *Fourth Genre* creates at least one Facebook Post per week. This will ensure that the journal stays present and current in the literary community and remains visible to those on social media.

## Best Practices

In order to use Facebook most effectively, we recommend each post contain at least two of the following elements:

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[4] https://blog.bufferapp.com/a-scientific-guide-to-hashtags-which-ones-work-when-and-how-many
[5] https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-frequency-guide

- Call to action
- Image
- Link


## Boosting posts

Posts that are boosted should contain exciting news or announcements. They should be time-sensitive and semi-urgent.

Examples of posts/events that could be boosted:
- Announcement of Essay Contest winners, with a link to buy a subscription
- Call for submissions to the Essay Contest or regular reading period
- Announcement of Pushcart Prize/Best American Essay winners from *Fourth Genre*
- New or special features such as digital essays or podcast episodes



*Why this post works:*
This Facebook post contains a picture, a link, and a call to action. In addition to these elements, it maintains the friendly and playful tone that *Fourth Genre* aims for.

Fourth Genre: Explorations in Nonfiction
August 12, 2011 · 🌐

And the new reading period begins . . .
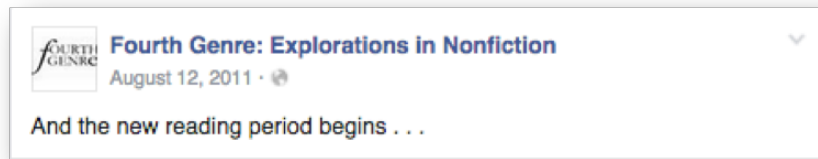
*How this post could be improved:*
Although it conveys some information, this post does not contain a link, photo, or call to action. It does also align with *Fourth Genre*'s tone.

# Scheduling Posts

Scheduling posts helps ensure that social media is being updated on a regular basis. Rather than having to remember to post 3-4 times a week, all posts and tweets for the week can be written and scheduled at once.

## Twitter

We recommend using [Hootsuite](#)[6] to manage the twitter account. Hootsuite is a third-party tool that allows you to schedule when tweets get posted. (Note: The free version of Hootsuite is not optimized for including pictures, and should not be used when planning tweets that include an image.)

## Facebook

Facebook has a built-in feature that allows posts to be scheduled. This allows *Fourth Genre* to write posts ahead of time and schedule them to post when applicable. Although Hootsuite can also be used for Facebook, we recommend using the built-in Facebook feature instead, as it allows the poster to view the correct formatting.

# Visual Marketing

As user research continues to rank visual content over text, it is critical that *Fourth Genre* uses high resolution images that are correctly sized as often as possible in order to optimize engagement and reach across social media accounts. According to *[The Science of Marketing](#)*,[7] tweets with images are 94% more likely to be retweeted, receive 89% more favorites and 18% more clicks than those without. Similarly, research

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[6] [https://hootsuite.com/](https://hootsuite.com/)
[7] [http://danzarrella.com/use-images-on-twitter-to-get-more-retweets.html#](http://danzarrella.com/use-images-on-twitter-to-get-more-retweets.html#)

by [Hubspot Blogs](#)[8] revealed that Facebook posts with images recieve 53% more Likes and 104% more comments than an average post without an image.

## Resizing Images

Images can be resized using Adobe Photoshop, iPhoto, or Preview. When resizing, images should be scaled, not distorted or unevenly resized.

## Image Sizes

The size of visual elements changes frequently as social media platforms are updated. Visit Sprout Social for an always-updated [Social Media Image Sizes Guide](#).[9]

2015 Twitter Image Sizes:

- Profile Photo: 400 x 400 pixels
- Header Photo: 1,500 x 500 pixels
- InStream Photo: Minimum 420 x 220, Maximum 1024 x 512

2015 Facebook Image Sizes:

- Profile Picture: 180 x 180 pixels
- Cover Photo: 851 x 315
- Shared Image: 1,200 x 630
- Shared Link: 1,200 x 627
- Highlighted Image: 1,200 x 717

## Image File Types

Digital images can be saved as a wide range of file types, including JPEG, PNG, TIFF, and GIFF. Each file type has advantages and disadvantages. We recommend that Fourth Genre use either JPEGs or PNGs when working with images on the web:

- **JPEG:** This file type should be used whenever working with photographs on the web. JPEGs allow for optimized image quality and aren't as large as PNGs.

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[8] [http://bit.ly/ITzLHt](http://bit.ly/ITzLHt)
[9] [http://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-image-sizes-guide/](http://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-image-sizes-guide/)

● **PNG**: This file type should be used whenever working with graphic elements, images that contain transparency, or images that need to be saved without a background. The downside to PNGs are their large size.

## Uploading Images

Correctly uploading images to social media platforms affects how the image appears in users' feeds. This is especially relevant when using Facebook, because the platform offers several ways to upload images.

When creating a Facebook post with an image, we recommend that *Fourth Genre* uploads the correctly sized image directly (using one of the functions pictured below) and then adds the link to the post, rather than adding a link first and allowing facebook to generate a small thumbnail image. This results in a larger, more eye-catching image that increases the visibility of the post (see images below).
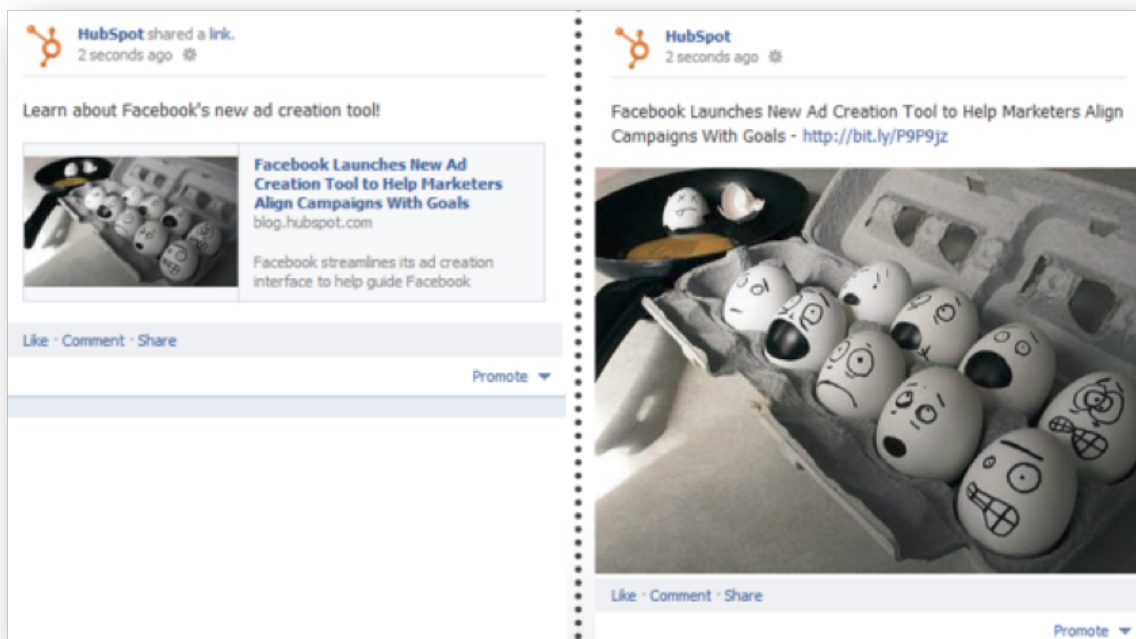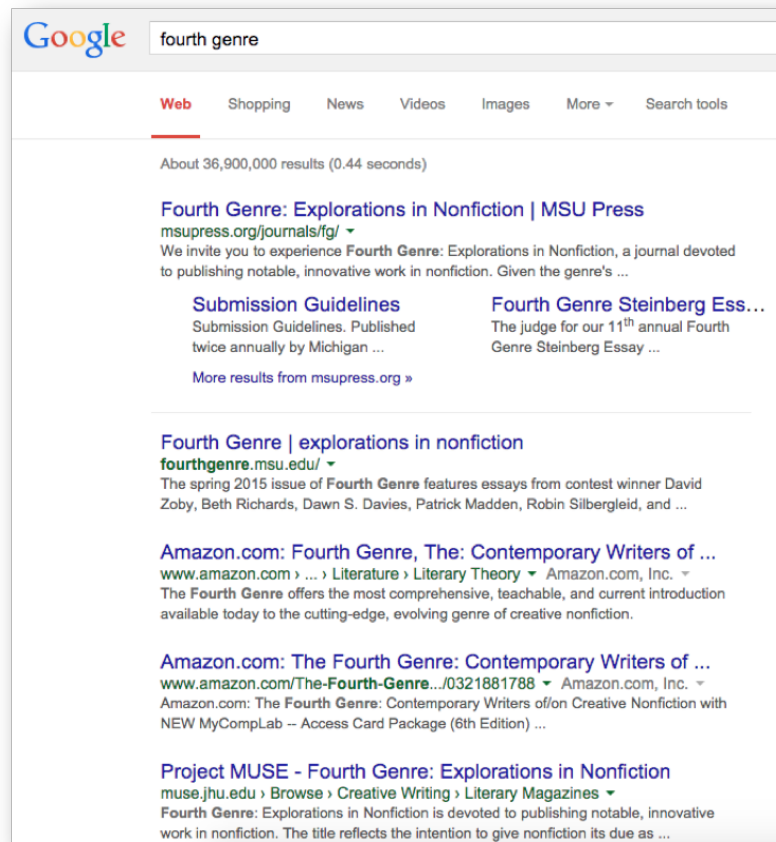


An incorrectly uploaded image (left) compared to a correctly uploaded image (right). Source: http://bit.ly/ITzLHt

# SEO

The goal of Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is to ensure that a website places high on search engine results.

Currently, this is what appears when a search for "*Fourth Genre*" is conducted through Google:



The first, and most important, result is not the *Fourth Genre* website, but rather the MSU Press' page for the journal. Ideally, the owners of *Fourth Genre* should be in control of what's likely a curious user's first online exposure to the journal.

## Ways to Improve SEO

There are a number of steps that can be taken to make fourthgenre.msu.edu the top result.

## Metadata

When search engine bots crawl the net, close attention is paid to the information contained within the metadata of code. Metadata is, as the famous definition goes, "data about data." As the *Fourth Genre* website is managed through Wordpress, some metadata tags are already added to each page of the site. Take a look at the metadata tags currently on the "Submit" page:

```
93  <!-- Jetpack Open Graph Tags -->
94  <meta property="og:type" content="article" />
95  <meta property="og:title" content="Submit" />
96  <meta property="og:url" content="http://fourthgenre.msu.edu/?page_id=38" />
97  <meta property="og:description" content="We have two reading periods: August 15  —  Nov
    March 15. Find information particular to each in the drop d..." />
98  <meta property="article:published_time" content="2013-02-12T23:49:18+00:00" />
99  <meta property="article:modified_time" content="2015-01-24T17:52:21+00:00" />
100 <meta property="article:author" content="http://fourthgenre.msu.edu/?author=2" />
101 <meta property="og:site_name" content="Fourth Genre" />
102 <meta property="og:image" content="http://wordpress.com/i/blank.jpg" />
103 <meta name="twitter:site" content="@jetpack" />
104 <meta name="twitter:card" content="summary" />
```

This is an adequate start, but there are several ways to improve the tagging. Optimized metadata tags include things like the author of the post:

```
<meta name="author" content="Laura Julier">
```

The title of the page (very important):

```
<title>Submit | Fourth Genre</title>
```

A description of content on the page, to appear on the search result:

```
<meta name="description" content="160 characters of description">
```

Keywords that describe the page, separated by commas. Provided are some example keywords that would make sense for the *Fourth Genre* site:

```
<meta name="keywords" content="non-fiction, literary, creative
non-fiction, MSU, journals, submission, submit">
```

You can even include location data:

```
<meta name="zipcode" content="48824">
<meta name="city" content="East Lansing">
```

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```
<meta name="state" content="Michigan">
<meta name="geo.region" content="US- MI">
<meta name="geo.placename" content="East Lansing, MI">
```

## HTML accessibility

"Web Accessibility," according to the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#),[10] refers to websites that are navigable by a wide "range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these." Generally, improving your site for these people simultaneously improves your site for everyone.

In addition to its benefits of social inclusion, [W3C](#)[11] notes that "There is also a strong business case for accessibility. Accessibility overlaps with other best practices such as [mobile web design](#),[12] device independence, multi-modal interaction, usability, [design for older users](#),[13] and search engine optimization ([SEO](#)).[14] Case studies show that accessible websites have better search results, reduced maintenance costs, and increased audience reach, among other benefits."

Thus, implementing these tips, provided by [Usability.gov](#), will improve *Fourth Genre*'s accessibility and search engine ranking, among the other benefits described above:

*When creating digital content, make sure to consider the following:*

- *Do not rely on **color** as a navigational tool or as the sole way to differentiate items*
- *Images should include **Alt text** in the markup/code; complex images should have more extensive descriptions near the image (perhaps as a caption or descriptive summaries built right into a neighboring paragraph)*
- ***Functionality** should be accessible through mouse and keyboard and be tagged to work with voice-control systems*
- *Provide **transcripts** for podcasts*
- *If you have a video on your site, you must provide visual access to the audio information through **in-sync captioning***

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[10] [http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/)
[11] [http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility](http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility)
[12] [http://www.w3.org/WAI/mobile/](http://www.w3.org/WAI/mobile/)
[13] [http://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/soc.html#older](http://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/soc.html#older)
[14] [http://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/fin.html#seo](http://www.w3.org/WAI/bcase/fin.html#seo)

- *Sites should have a **skip navigation** feature*
- *Consider **508 testing** to assure your site is in compliance*

## HTML validity

Running the site's code through the HTML validator provided by W3C[15] will point out ways the site can be improved. Web developers or interns who have taken either of the Web Authoring classes at MSU (WRA 210 and 410) should be familiar with how to make use of this validator. A fully validated site will rank higher in search engines, though it's worth noting that many popular sites do not have perfectly valid HTML. Thus, this is more of a suggestion than a requirement.

# Outbound and Inbound Links

The extent to which a website is connected to other sites, both through inbound and outbound hyperlinks, influences its placement in search results. Obviously, outbound links are easier to control, but in addition to suggestions for those, we've included a list of sites that will perhaps be willing to include inbound links to the *Fourth Genre* website. The easiest way to encourage other sites to have inbound links to *Fourth Genre's* site is to engage with them and provide links to their website.

## Outbound links

- We *Fourth Genre* on the MSU Press (http://msupress.org/journals/fg/)
- Michigan State University (http://msu.edu)
- Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures (http://wrac.msu.edu/)

## Potential inbound links

- *Fourth Genre* Facebook page (http://on.fb.me/1GLwcyH)
- *Fourth Genre* on the MSU Press (http://msupress.org/journals/fg/)
- Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures (http://wrac.msu.edu/)
- Association of Writers & Writing Programs conference (https://www.awpwriter.org/awp_conference/), and any other conferences where *Fourth Genre* has a presence
- Websites for essay contest

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[15] http://validator.w3.org/

# Podcasts

## Schedule

Podcasts should be released on a regular schedule that is easier to sustain. We suggest quarterly so listeners aren't waiting too long for new content - or if that is too much, twice annually (between issues of the journal). The advantage to this is two-fold. If *Fourth Genre* has a consistent schedule for podcasts then their audience will be more apt to know when to tune in or expect new episodes. On the other side the editor and media intern(s) at *Fourth Genre* will have an easier time releasing four episodes every three months, rather than clumping them together.

## Format

So far each episode of *Off the Page* has consisted of an interview with an author published in the journal. These can be hard to produce, however, as evidenced by the very large gaps in the releases of each episode (see table on the next page).

In order to create more episodes in the absence of available interviews, we suggest recording audio versions of essays that appear in the journal (if *Fourth Genre* has the right to do so).

## Production

To maintain its professional image, all components of each *Off the Page* episode - introductions, interviews, and conclusions - should be recorded with a high quality microphone. An iPhone laying on the middle of a table doesn't quite cut it. Gain boosting can be used to make quiet recordings louder, but not to the extent that it distorts the audio. We recommend editing the audio on [Audacity](http://sourceforge.net/projects/audacity/),[16] a free program that can be safely downloaded from the internet.

When the episodes are being edited later on, special attention should be paid to the difference in audio levels between the intro/outro and the interview itself. This will help avoid situations such as [Episode 6](http://fourthgenre.msu.edu/?p=904),[17] where the interview that comprises most of the episode suddenly gives way to an outro that is several times louder.

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[16] [http://sourceforge.net/projects/audacity/](http://sourceforge.net/projects/audacity/)
[17] [http://fourthgenre.msu.edu/?p=904](http://fourthgenre.msu.edu/?p=904)

## Length

All six of the *Off the Page* episodes currently published fall between 25 and 40 minutes. This is a good window to shoot for. Particularly long interviews can be split into multiple parts.

## Intro/Outro Music

The "theme song" of *Off the Page* is "Theresa St. Johns" by Doug Mains & The City Folk. The descriptions in the first three episodes reference the creators of this music, but the others don't. For consistency, this sentence should be appended to all posts:

> "Special thanks to Doug Mains & The City Folk, who provided our intro and outro music with their beautiful song "Theresa St. Johns" off the album *The Mountain's King*. You can learn more about the band on their website."

## Distribution

Podcasts should be posted on the *Fourth Genre* website. In each post, the audio should be embedded at the top followed by a description below. The audio itself would preferably be stored on mediaspace.msu.edu due to the space constraints of other websites such as SoundCloud. The first three episodes, currently available through SoundCloud, should be posted to mediaspace.msu.edu to ensure consistency.

Ideally, the podcasts will also be accessible via a feed on the iTunes store. To get the podcast on to iTunes, we recommend using the free syndication service at Podomatic.[18]

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[18] http://www.podomatic.com/

# Existing Content

Here is a table of what *Fourth Genre* currently has:

| Episode | Release Date | Where It's Uploaded | Episode Length |
|---------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 5/3/2013 | Soundcloud | 37:04 |
| 2 | 11/11/2013 | Soundcloud | 30:21 |
| 3 | 3/28/2014 | Soundcloud | 35:24 |
| 4 | 9/12/2014 | Kaltura | 25:51 |
| 5 | 10/17/2014 | Kaltura | 35:53 |
| 6 | 2/5/2015 | Kaltura | 37:05 |
| 7 | 3/6/2015 | Kaltura | 28:11 |

Currently, there is no consistency as to when podcasts are posted and where they are uploaded. Sometimes there are six months between episodes, other times there is only one. Creating a more regular release schedule will allow listeners to know when they should look for a new episode, rather than surprising them each time. Hosting all of the podcasts on a free and secure server like MSU Mediaspace's Kaltura will also create a sense of consistency and regularity.

# Electronic Submissions

In order to support *Fourth Genre*'s readers and writers, we believe that having multiple, easy submission venues would encourage writers to submit more pieces and lead to an even greater set of diverse literary fiction that would please readers.

Creating an online submission form is feasible for *Fourth Genre*, and can be easily accomplished with an application called [Submittable].[19] Submittable can be attached to any Wordpress site and allows users to create submission forms for any type of content, including videos and text documents.

In addition to creating the forms, Submittable also houses all of the submitted work. This means that *Fourth Genre* can store all videos and online work on the Submittable database, eliminating the need to worry about long upload times to YouTube or distribution of the video without the author's consent. Submittable does require a yearly payment for its services. However, it gives a fifty percent off discount to literary journals (via the coupon code "FailBetter50percent"), making the cheapest plan only $150 a year. If you don't feel that the price is worth it, there are other, cheaper applications that will do this, but they will be less user-friendly and have less features.

We suggest creating two additional pages underneath the "Submission" tab in place of the "Regular Submissions" tab. These pages will be titled "Print Essays" and "Video Essays." On these pages will be submission forms for both written and video essays. Details of what should be on each page are written in the sections below. As written in the [Governance] section, the management of these digital submissions, including uploading them to the *Fourth Genre* website, would be the task of the digital media intern.

## Print Essays

Although *Fourth Genre* already receives hundreds of submissions a year, we would like to make sure an online option is available to encourage those who may not have the resources to submit physical copies of their work.

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[19] [http://www.submittable.com/](http://www.submittable.com/)

At the beginning of the web page there should be a short paragraph explaining that *Fourth Genre* takes electronic and hard-copy submissions.  It should also note that an essay should only be submitted one way, and not both, to prevent dual copies.

Beneath this will be a small subheader titled "Physical Submissions." All of the information currently written on the "Regular Submissions" page can be used under this header, minus the sentence stating that Fourth Genre only accepts print submissions.

After this section would be another subheader, labeled "Digital Submission." The form would require all of the same information as the print submissions, but in fill-in-the-blank boxes:

- name
- address
- phone number
- email
- title of the piece
- word and character count
- written piece in word processing format

# Video Essays

## Submitting Video Essays

As *Fourth Genre* expands its content to digital essays, we suggest establishing a set of standards for submission that will make it easier for the media intern to quickly and easily release videos to the public. We suggest releasing these videos once every six months, until more submissions are received and releases can increase in frequency.

The "Video Essays" page would begin with a short description detailing what a video essay consists of, along with a sample video for reference.

Beneath this intro would be the standards *Fourth Genre* requires for digital essays. The standards would state timeframes of the submitted videos along with rules for content. For example: *Fourth Genre* doesn't accept videos with explicit images or with excessive expletives in its contents.

Finally, would be a form for readers to submit digital essays on the website. The form should request the following:

- the same requirements for written work (name, address, email, etc.)
- a video essay (Submittable lists the acceptable formats for a video)
- a short description on the piece (no more than three sentences) as they want it portrayed

## Managing and Publishing Video Essays

Once videos are submitted, *Fourth Genre* can then download the videos they want to publish off of Submittable. These files can be stored in the MSU MediaSpace, along with the podcasts. This is not only to keep media files stored in a uniform database, but to ensure that *Fourth Genre* maintains ownership and control over media files. Publishing video essays on MediaSpace will also allow the videos to be more accessible, since MSU MediaSpace allows captioning and offers guidelines for adding captions to videos here.[20] You will need a transcription software such as InqScribe[21] in order to create a caption file to upload to MediaSpace.

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[20] https://mediaspace.msu.edu/help#addcaptions
[21] https://www.inqscribe.com/

# Implementation and Maintenance

After completing the strategies from the previous sections, the process of implementing and maintaining content can begin. This process will discover how these strategies are helping to achieve the goals of *Fourth Genre*, please refer to the About this Guide section to see the goals of *Fourth Genre*.

This process should be iterative in order to continually evaluate the content's effectiveness. If you're able to complete Phase One before the suggested 4 month time period, move on to Phase Two. These phases were created to keep you on track and in order with the estimated date of completion; these phases were not created to distract from the top priorities or the *Fourth Genre* and jeopardize its reputation. We also recommend assessment at the end of each term; failure to assess and reflect could negatively impact the success of the strategy.

## Implementation

### Phase One (4 months)
- Hire an intern
- Implement new theme and color palette on the site (see Style Guide & Templates)
- Ensure content on the website is up-to-date, organized, and meets standards (see Website Content)
- Create editorial calendar (see Editorial Calendar)
- Connect to social media sites; sites should match *Fourth Genre*'s tone, be up-to-date, and have posted news regarding major events specific to the *Fourth Genre* (see Social Media Strategy)

### Phase Two (8 months)
- SEO tags are consistent on posts in order to raise *Fourth Genre*'s rank on Google searches, and create outbound links to other pages (see SEO)
- Podcasts are moved to a single storage space, mediaspace.msu.edu, and should be backed up on a external hard drive (see Podcasts)
- Activate Electronic Submissions form on the Submission page (see Electronic Submissions)

# Maintenance & Sustainability

The third phase doesn't involve implementation, rather assessment and reflection. For clarity reasons, we have opted to move these guidelines into their own section. This assessment should be completed once every semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer) to guarantee long term success of both the *Fourth Genre* and its new content strategy.

## Assessment (post 8 months)

After assessing and reflecting upon the 8 month implementation period, please update this content strategy and ensure someone after you can use it effectively. Refer to these points (that are inline with the goals of the *Fourth Genre*) and make sure you've stayed true to the goals & objectives of this strategy.

**Point:** User's response to the social media strategy

- **Quantitative:** By what percent have the social media posts increased?
- **Qualitative:** What is the message of these tweets? Do they engage in the conversations *Fourth Genre* wants to be associated with? Are they retweeting or favorited? By who?
- **Takeaways:** Is the current social media strategy appealing to the users and promoting *Fourth Genre*'s presence in the literary community? If not, what ways would better appeal to this?

**Point:** Content on the website and its usage

- **Quantitative:** How much have the visits to the site increased since the past assessment? At what time periods were they the highest and lowest? What percent were mobile versus desktop visits?
- **Qualitative:** Have all posts been conveyed in the desired tone for *Fourth Genre*? What post was received the best? What could have been done better? What content seems to be accessed the most by the site's intended audience? Are we reaching that audience?
- **Takeaways:** Is the content being conveyed in a unique, engaging manner that is attracting the desired audience and correctly representing *Fourth Genre*?

**Point:** Effectiveness of governance and workflow

- **Quantitative:** How many hours has each worker been putting in? Is that their intended amount of hours?
- **Qualitative:** Has anyone had to stray from their designated tasks (besides collaborating to finalize products)? How does each coworker feel about their position (left out, overworked, perfect)? Has the established governance been maintained or have new roles developed?
- **Takeaways:** Has the workflow maximized the amount of work each member can complete and utilized everyone's strengths?

# Appendix

Within this appendix, we've provided *Fourth Genre* with a couple of things. This is done for your convenience and for full clarity of the strategy. The stakeholder interview questions and answers are listed to show your goals and how we've implemented them into this strategy. In addition, below the questions is a table of the current editorial calendar for *Fourth Genre*.

## Questions

1. **What are your business goals?**

   - Publish good stuff.
   - Have a presence in literary journal communities.
   - Creative non-fiction is a niche category.
   - Make a sustainable presence.
   - Promote content such as podcasts/video essays.

2. **What is the main function or goal when someone is on your site?**

   - Find out submission information.
   - How to subscribe to site.
   - Working with press.

3. **What platforms or devices do you expect to be on?**

   - Research what platforms people use this site with.
   - Make podcasts more mobile friendly. Put podcast on iTunes.

4. **Who is your audience?**

   - Writers, editors, not kids.

5. **What do you think your tone is? What are you trying to accomplish with the tone?**

   - Playful without being silly.

- Pays attention to language.
- Avoid being boring.
- Audience awareness.
- Don't want to sound awkward or afraid.
- Want the journal to be a place where we are working with writers rather than a journal that is unaccessible.

6. **How often do you update the site?**

   - As often as a student can update the site.

7. **Who updates the site? Who has access?**

   - Christine, Laura, and Eric have access.

8. **What kind of media do you want on your page (images, videos), and how much?**

   - Digital Essays. Don't see it as something that needs to be on a schedule, but maybe one every 6 months or so, dependent on the production schedule and whether we have submissions vs. something we make.
   - No squishable pictures. Find professional pictures that give us a persistent and concise tone.

9. **What sort of schedule and strategy do you have for the podcasts?**

   - Develop one for Laura. One per month, one every other month (at the least). Make them and keep them in reserve. Not about time sensitive events, but they generally take a long time to publish.
   - Need to figure out a way to manage where the files are and how to retrieve it.
   - She currently uses Own Cloud, for people we have recently published.

10. **What do you see as the main goal of your social media?**

    - Visibility, being present in conversations--look at Ned Stuckey-French.
    - Looking to have professional and up-to-date posts that attract conversation and gain followers.

11. **Who posts on social media? Who has access?**

- ● We rotate interns so that everyone has the chance, rotates based on who is interested. Reference the old strategy.

12. **What other ways do you want to promote the journal?**

- ● Going to conferences.
- ● Would be useful to have a strategy for how to work with the press, so that we know when to send things to the press.
- ● Having a checklist to make sure they've done everything.

13. **What areas would you like to be improved? What are your main concerns?**

- ● Tools, knowing where things are, organize and schedule promotions.
- ● Podcasts (strategies and tools), a system to structure and organize how/when everything is going to happen.
- ● Digital essays
- ● Strategy for keeping the website and keeping it updated.

14. **Who is going to implement this strategy?**

- ● Media intern (podcasts/website/videos. NOT social media), will be implementing the strategy, but not necessarily the social media

15. **Have you seen any other journals doing what you want Fourth Genre to do?**

- ● Brevity, an online journal
- ● River Teeth (does too much)
- ● Waterstone Review
- ● Fourth River
- ● Creative Nonfiction

# Current Ad Calendar for Fourth Genre

| Type | For | Venue | Issue | Pub. Date | Booking Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Online | | New pages | Online gen'l journal overview (yr long) | June 1 - May 31 | May - 1 |
| Classified | General Read Period | Poets and Writers | September / October | Aug - 14 | Jun - 16 |
| Classified | General Read Period | Writer's Chronicle | September (Submit Section) | Aug - 1 | Jul - 11 |
| Online | General Read Period | New Pages | August (through October) | Aug - October | May - 28 |
| Classified | General Read Period | Review Review.com | September (1 month) | Sep - 1 | Aug - 25 |
| | | | | | |
| Classified | Prize | Poets and Writers | January / February | Dec - 9 | Sep - 29 |
| Classified | Prize | Writer's Chronicle | December (Submit Section) | Dec - 1 | Sep - 29 |
| Online | Prize | Poets and Writers | January / February (1 month) | Jan - Feb | Dec - 1 |
| Print | Journal / Prize | New Pages Magazine | AWP LitPak | | Feb - 6 |