Method

Content audit

A two-part method: first you inventory all the content of a site or service, then you assess the quality of each piece to decide what to do with it.



In Spanish

Auditoría de contenido

Origin

A website management practice; described in content strategy by Halvorson and Rach (2012) and in Land's handbook (2nd ed., 2023)

Output

A spreadsheet with every content item, its details, and the decision to keep, update, or remove it

What it's for

It helps you know what content really exists before redesigning, migrating, or writing something new, and find what is duplicated, out of date, or not needed by anyone.

Key elements

Count first, assess later

The inventory answers what's there (title, address, owner, date, format); the audit, whether it's any good.

Criteria before you start

Assess against readers' needs, writing standards, and usage data, not personal taste.

A scope you can finish

Better one section or one key journey, with a deadline, than the whole site at once.

Every piece gets a decision

Keep, update, or remove, with an owner for each change.

How it's done

1

You build the inventory with each item's details in a shared spreadsheet.

2

You assess each piece against agreed criteria and usage data.

3

You decide what happens to it and who takes care of it.

Applications in design

When to use it

Before redesigning or migrating a site, and before writing new content on a topic that may already exist.

Avoid

Stopping at the list: an inventory with no assessment or decisions changes nothing.

Don't fall for it

An audit is never finished: if nobody keeps it up to date, within a few months it's out of date again.

Connections

Used by

- Information architecture
- Content design
- Content strategy

Authors and works

2012	**Kristina Halvorson and Melissa Rach**	In Content Strategy for the Web, placed the audit in the discovery phase, with a quantitative inventory and a qualitative assessment.
2020	**Anna Kaley**	Distinguished the inventory, the list of everything there is, from the audit, which assesses its quality, and described the process and its common mistakes.
2023	**Paula Ladenburg Land**	Brought together in a handbook how to prepare, run, and present inventories and audits, and how to turn them into long-term content governance.

Sources

Secondary sources

- Kaley, A. (2020, September 27). Content inventory and auditing 101. Nielsen Norman Group. View source (https://www.nngroup.com/articles/content-audits/)
- Halvorson, K., & Rach, M. (2012). Content strategy for the web (2nd ed.). New Riders. View source (https://www.pearson.com/store/p/content-strategy-for-the-web/P200000000302)
- Land, P. L. (2023). Content audits and inventories: A handbook for content analysis (2nd ed.). XML Press. View source (https://xmlpress.net/content-strategy/audits-and-inventories/)

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