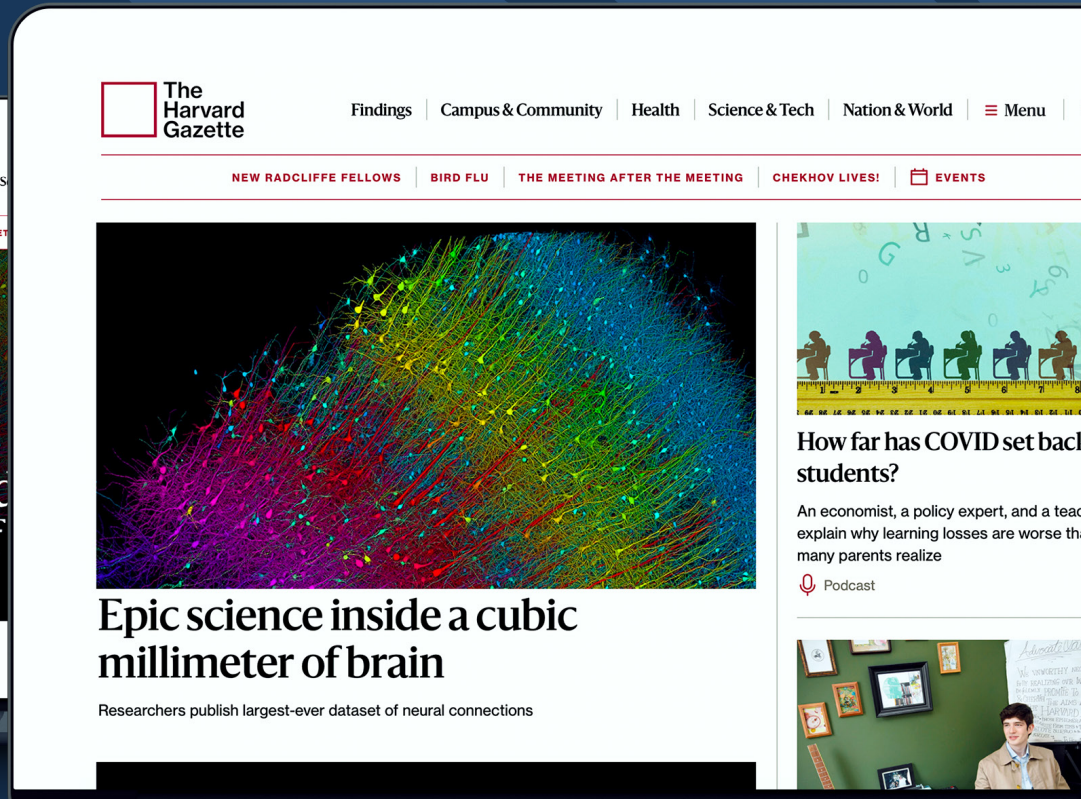
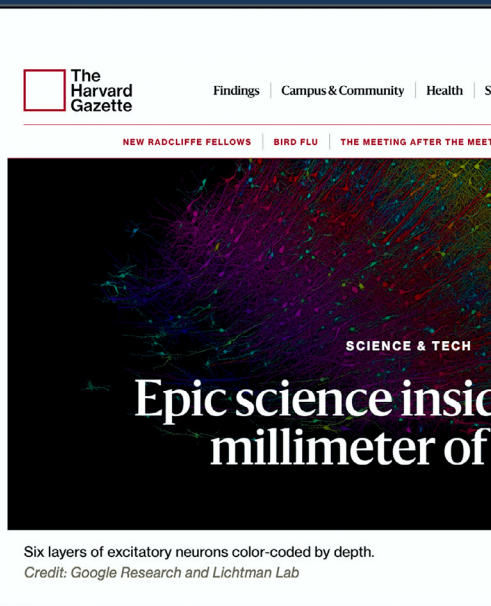


Human Made

CASE STUDIES



# Accessibility in focus

putting people at the heart  
of the Harvard Gazette



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“

Equity, diversity, inclusion,  
and belonging – These core Harvard  
values are sources of strength.  
The Gazette serves a broad global  
audience and its design, branding,  
and execution should reflect the  
diversity of the Harvard community.”

---

**In the highly competitive landscape of digital publishing, institutions like Harvard University are continually seeking innovative ways to engage audiences, share knowledge, and advance their missions.**

As the official news source of Harvard University, the Harvard Gazette plays a pivotal role in disseminating information, sharing insights, and fostering community within the Harvard ecosystem.

With ambitions to create a pillar for advancing their brand and institution, the Harvard Gazette embarked on a transformative journey to reimagine its digital presence in collaboration with us here at Human Made.

**But the Harvard Gazette's aims ran deeper than merely standing out in a crowded digital environment.**

At the heart of the Harvard Gazette's ambitious redesign project lay a deeply ingrained commitment to placing people at the forefront of their digital strategy. From the outset, the Gazette's vision was clear: to create a platform that not only showcases the institution's rich tapestry of news and insights but also resonates deeply with its diverse audience base.

This people-centric ethos, characterised by a relentless focus on user and audience needs, was the guiding light throughout the project, shaping every decision and iteration along the way.

This case study explores the partnership between Human Made and the Harvard Gazette, highlighting the strategies, solutions, and outcomes of the Harvard Gazette website redesign project.

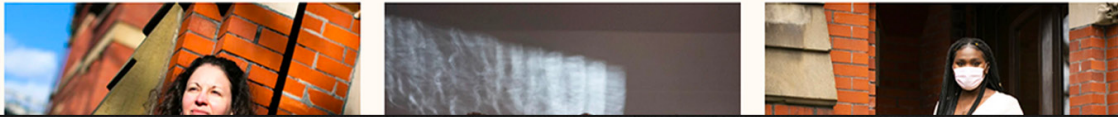




# The Quest for Racial Justice

Stories containing Harvard insights and coverage of the movement against systemic racism in America

Optional introductory paragraph lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur veritas



01

Project Overview:  
Evolving an Icon



Photo: **Caroline Culler**

**The Harvard Gazette, established in 1906 and transitioning online in 2010, serves as the authoritative news source for Harvard University**

**It covers a diverse range of topics, from university announcements to scientific research and community news.**

With over 35,000 students studying at Harvard University, more than 17,800 people in staff and faculty roles, and over 400,000 people in their worldwide alumni community, The Harvard Gazette has a substantial potential readership.

The Gazette occupies a central position in the Harvard community and beyond: its daily email reaches over 300,000 subscribers, and has a dedicated section called News+ for sharing stories from various Harvard schools.



Recognising the need to evolve its digital platform to meet the changing needs and expectations of its audience, the Gazette embarked on a redesign initiative aimed at elevating the user experience for all users regardless of preferences, requirements, or abilities. This included making older, still-relevant content easier to discover, and finding new ways to facilitate storytelling with audio and video content. Their commitment to providing equitable access to information was twinned with a desire to supercharge the publisher experience, and create a platform built to evolve.

With this in mind, Human Made and the Harvard Gazette team set about redefining the digital experience, ensuring that it was **inclusive, intuitive, and accessible to all.**

# Objectives: Aiming Higher

The Harvard Gazette sought to achieve several key objectives through the website redesign project:

- Be a model of accessible and user-centric design
- Create a pillar for advancing the Harvard brand and institution
- Enhance the user experience through intuitive navigation and compelling layouts
- Supercharge the publisher experience by empowering editorial users with robust content management tools
- Develop a platform and design system built to evolve and adapt to future needs

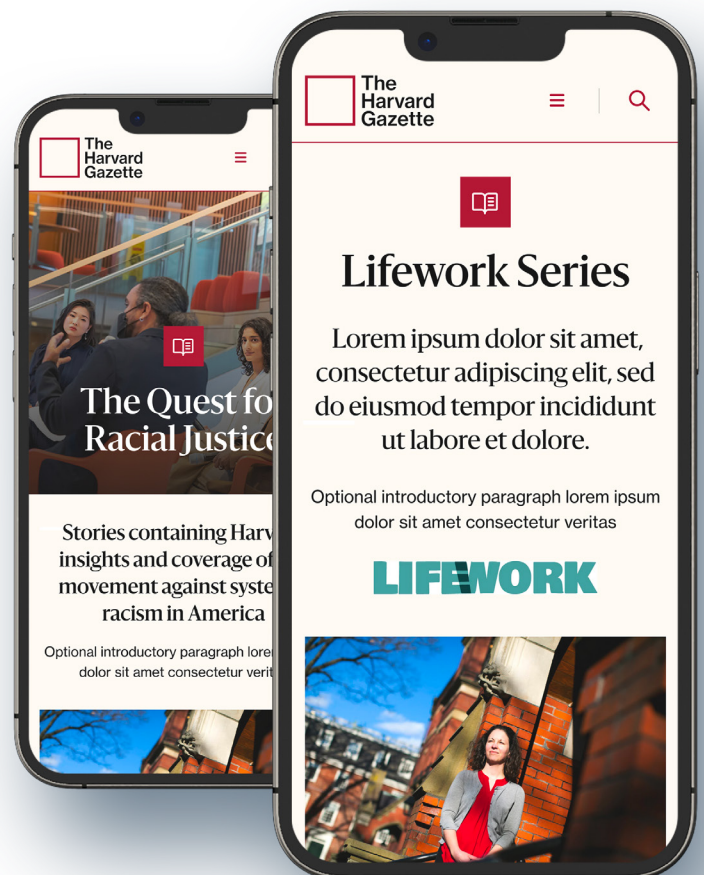
Human Made emerged as the preferred partner for the Harvard Gazette redesign project due to several compelling factors. In response to the Request for Proposal (RFP), we demonstrated a deep understanding of the Gazette's objectives, and a commitment to accessibility, along with a comprehensive solution leveraging WordPress expertise and innovative design principles.

Our culture, expertise, and collaborative approach, combined with the strength of our design partner [Furthermore](#), positioned our agency as the ideal partner to undertake this transformative project.

“

**We want The Harvard Gazette to be a modern news site that is beautifully designed, intuitive to use, and innovative in terms of features and layouts. We also want to find a design that speaks to both the audiences who read the Gazette to stay updated on their alma mater and those who read the Gazette for informed opinions on current events.”**

~ The Harvard Gazette Redesign RFP



# Project Kick-Off and Consultative Approach

From the project kick-off onwards, we assumed a consultative role, collaborating closely with the Harvard Gazette team to define the best way forward.

As trusted advisors, we provided strategic guidance, clarity, and direction throughout the project, ensuring alignment with the Gazette's goals and priorities. The partnership between Human Made and Harvard Gazette fostered a culture of collaboration, trust, and mutual respect, laying the foundation for a successful and rewarding journey.

“

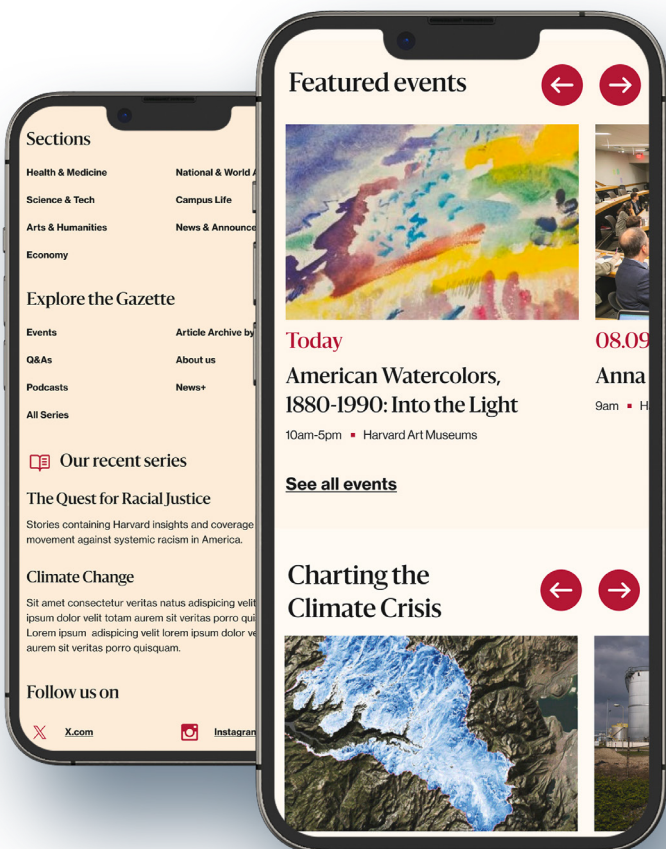
**The Harvard Gazette team was just fantastic. Everyone was technically minded, and they're all really engaged and excited about the work they're doing.**


**Every single person we worked with had a great understanding of their ideal user base and what their technical capabilities were.**

**That allowed us to be streamlined in what we were building, so that each person who was interacting with a site, whether it was from the content editing side or from a user perspective on the front end, was able to experience it without any roadblocks, that every little piece was perfectly tailored to the experience that person needs.”**



**Joeleen Kennedy**  
Senior Web Engineer, Human Made, Technical Lead on Harvard Gazette project





Despite the ambitious nature of the project, Human Made and Harvard Gazette successfully navigated challenges and obstacles with a proactive and collaborative approach. Scope adjustments, velocity projections, and continuous communication ensured that the project remained on track and aligned with stakeholder expectations.

By fostering a culture of flexibility, adaptation, and resilience, both teams overcame any hurdles and emerged stronger, laying solid groundwork for future success together.

## Metrics for Success

The success of the Harvard Gazette redesign project was measured against specific metrics and goals, including:

**1.3 million**

page views per month are supported.

**300,000+**

subscribers are reached with daily email newsletters.

**250**

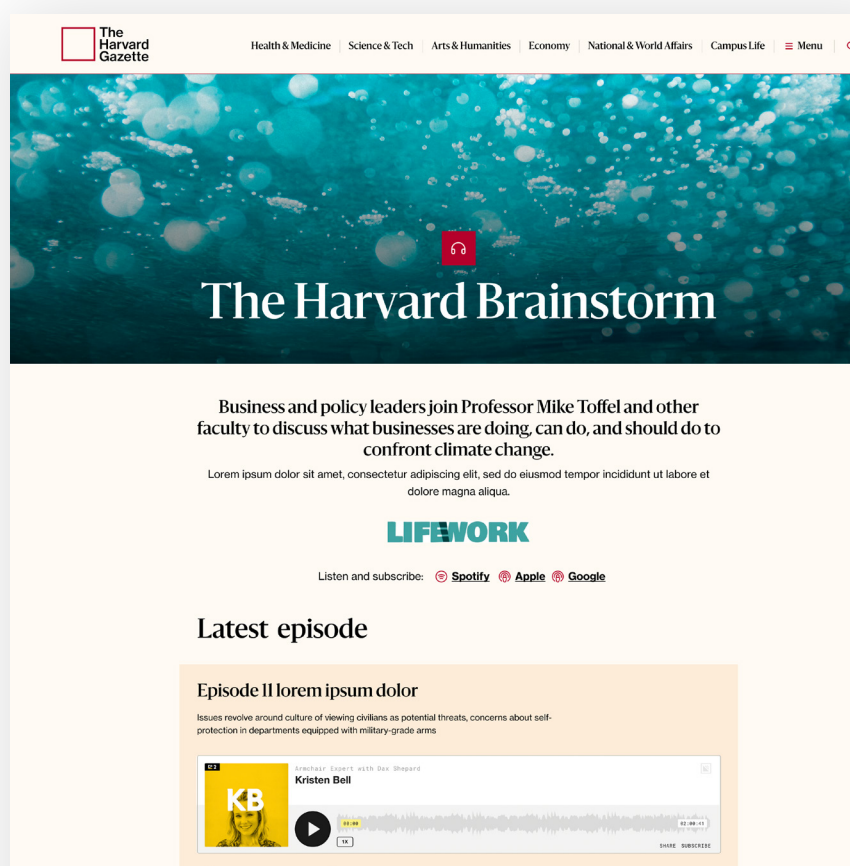
newsletters are published annually, with approximately 75 million newsletters sent per year.

**667+**

new stories and articles are submitted annually by Harvard writers and editors.

**WCAG 2.1**

accessibility requirements are met or exceeded.



## Key Milestones

Throughout the project lifecycle, Human Made and Harvard Gazette achieved several key milestones, which were critical in shaping the direction and success of the project.

### **Getting to know the teams:**

Conducting on-site workshops at Harvard was an essential early step. These workshops facilitated collaboration and alignment of vision and objectives between the project teams. By bringing together stakeholders from both Human Made and the Harvard Gazette, these workshops ensured a shared understanding of project goals and requirements.

**Design phase:** Following the workshops, the project moved into the design phase. Designs were meticulously crafted and refined, with input from both teams. Gaining approval before commencing foundational work ensured that everyone was aligned on the project's direction before moving forward.

**Seeking flexibility:** One significant aspect of the redesign was the creation of brand new [article page templates and blocks](#). These templates and blocks were designed to enhance flexibility and cater to the specific editorial needs of Harvard Gazette. By providing a range of options and functionalities, the new templates and blocks empowered the editorial team to create diverse and engaging content.

**Custom creations:** Developing custom blocks and block patterns was next, and these custom elements were tailored to the unique requirements of Harvard Gazette's content strategy. By leveraging the flexibility of Gutenberg blocks, Human Made created bespoke solutions that aligned with the Gazette's editorial vision.

**Accessibility everywhere:** Ensuring [accessibility](#) was a top priority throughout the project. Conducting accessibility audits helped identify and address any potential barriers to access. By adhering to WCAG 2.1 standards with one eye on the then-upcoming 2.2 standards, the redesigned Harvard Gazette website was accessible to all users, regardless of their abilities or assistive technologies.

**Migration:** A comprehensive migration strategy was implemented to facilitate the seamless transition to the new platform. This strategy involved careful planning and execution to ensure minimal disruption to existing content and workflows. By prioritising a smooth migration process, Human Made and Harvard Gazette were able to maintain continuity while introducing significant improvements.

**Successful launch:** The culmination of the project was the meticulously planned launch of the redesigned Harvard Gazette website. This launch marked the culmination of months of hard work, collaboration, and dedication from both teams. By executing a carefully orchestrated launch plan, Human Made and Harvard Gazette successfully unveiled the new platform to the world, signalling a new chapter in the Gazette’s digital journey.

**Support and aftercare:** Following the project’s completion, we continued to provide post-MVP development and ongoing support to ensure the Gazette’s digital platform remained optimised and resilient. The establishment of a retainer agreement underscored the long-term commitment of both Human Made and the Harvard Gazette teams to sustain the success of the partnership and drive continuous improvement.

## CAMPUS PHOTOGRAPHY



### A City of Poets

Graffiti of his Los Angeles youth — ‘You could experiment; there was no orthodoxy’ — colors the work of Business School scholar



### Pomp and circumstance — and surprises ↗

Graffiti of his Los Angeles youth — ‘You could experiment; there was no orthodoxy’ — colors the work of Business School scholar



### Making connections between modern, ancient — and each other

Graffiti of his Los Angeles youth — ‘You could experiment; there was no orthodoxy’ — colors the work of Business School scholar

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## BOOK REVIEWS



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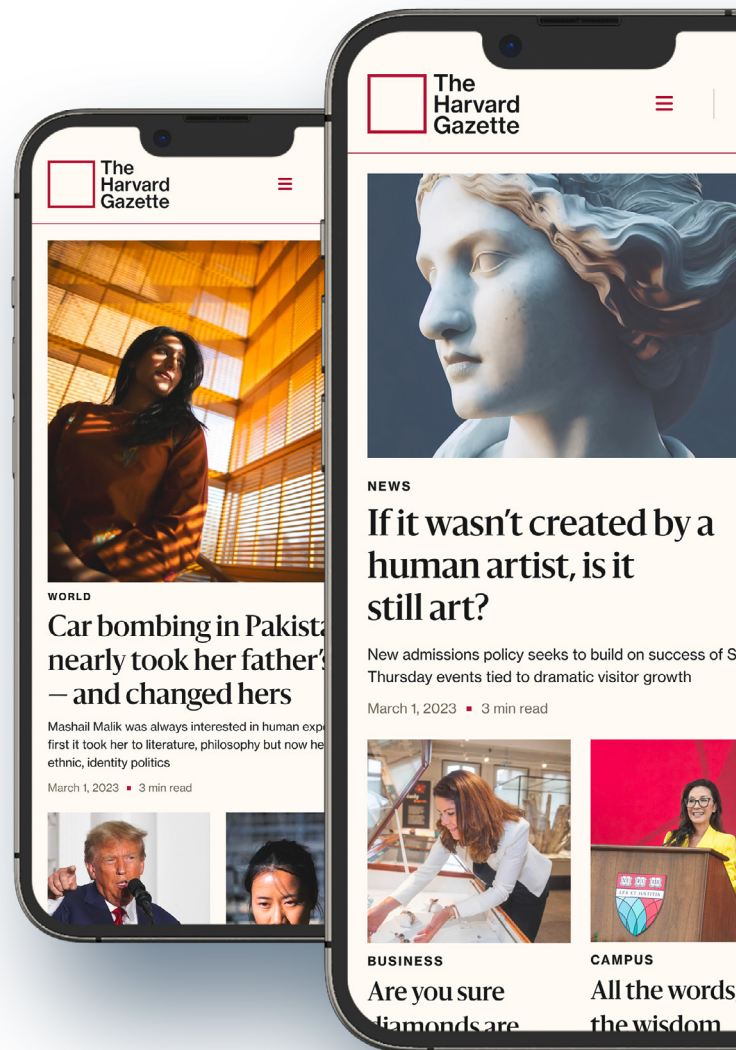
## OUR DISCOVERIES PODCAST



## Key Results and Outcomes

The Harvard Gazette redesign project yielded significant outcomes and achievements, including:

- Total redesign of the Harvard Gazette site focused on improved UX/UI and accessibility
- Supercharged publisher experience through a user-friendly publishing interface
- Enhanced and streamlined publishing workflow using Gutenberg blocks and patterns
- Improved user experience and engagement through compelling layouts and navigation
- Adherence to WCAG 2.1 accessibility requirements for inclusive digital experiences
- Performance improvements for enhanced speed, reliability, and scalability



American Watercolors,  
1880-1990: Into the Light

10am-5pm • Harvard Art Museums

Anna Wong Abroad

9am • Houghton Library

[See all events](#)

## Charting the Climate Crisis

Seeking clues to how shifting climate may change ocean ecosystems

Exxon disputed climate findings for years. Its scientists knew better.

\$200M gift to fund Harvard climate crisis institute

Cost of cleanups set to spiral with continued rise in CO2

Grappling with climate change through deeper learning, real world action

HEALTH

## The brain on ketamine

“We found gamma oscillations – very-high-frequency oscillations – in the prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus. These are regions that are known to be involved in ketamine’s antidepressant effects from other studies.”



Fangyun Tian from Massachusetts General Hospital

[READ THE Q&A](#)

# 2022

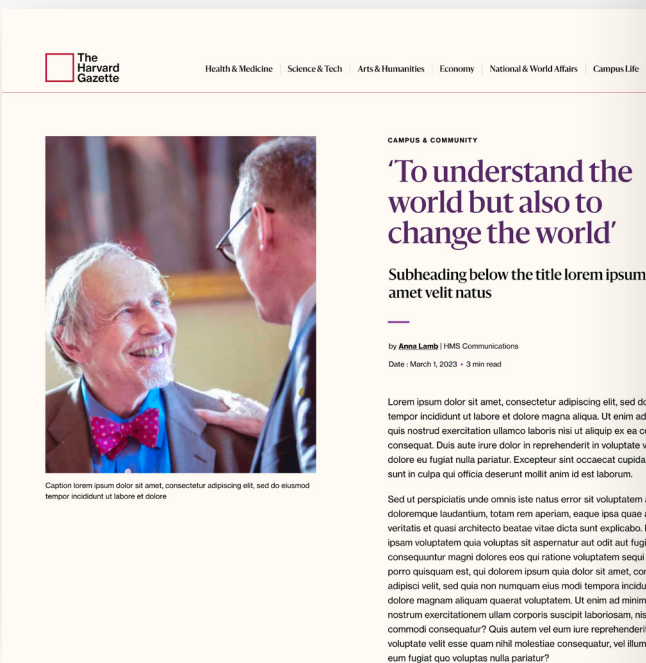
## Prioritising Accessibility: Ensuring Inclusive Digital Experiences

Accessibility was a cornerstone of the Harvard Gazette’s redesign process, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and equitable access to information. Digital content plays an increasingly central role in communication and dissemination of knowledge, so ensuring that the Gazette’s website was accessible to all users was paramount.

From the outset, the Harvard Gazette project team recognised the importance of designing with accessibility in mind. With a diverse audience that includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the wider community, it was imperative that the redesigned website be navigable and usable by individuals of all abilities.

The people-centricity of the project encompassed a genuine desire to understand and address the diverse needs of their ever-expanding community. It not only ensured that the digital redesign would meet the requirements of its current audience, but would also foster a deeper sense of connection and engagement with the Harvard community.

In the process, the Gazette created a platform that lives up to the institution’s values of inclusivity and accessibility.



## Embedding WCAG Standards

One of the key considerations in the redesign was compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 standards.

These internationally recognised guidelines provide a framework for creating accessible web content, covering areas such as perceivability, operability, and understandability. By adhering to these guidelines, the Harvard Gazette aimed to ensure that its digital platform was accessible to users with disabilities, including those using assistive technologies such as screen readers, voice recognition software, and alternative input devices.

## Going Beyond the Standard

The accessibility efforts extended beyond mere compliance, with a focus on creating a truly inclusive user experience. This involved implementing features and functionalities that enhance usability for all users, regardless of their abilities. For example, the design team paid close attention to factors such as colour contrast, font size, and navigation structure to ensure clarity and readability for all users.

The project team also engaged in thorough accessibility testing and audits throughout the development process. This involved conducting usability tests with individuals with disabilities to gather feedback and identify any barriers to access. By incorporating user feedback and iteratively refining the design, the team was able to address accessibility concerns proactively and ensure that the final product met the needs of all users.

Ultimately, the project proved that accessibility, as well as being functional and inclusive, could also be beautiful.

## Diversity and Inclusion Starts Here

The commitment to accessibility was not just a technical requirement, but also a reflection of Harvard University's broader values of diversity and inclusion. By prioritising accessibility in the redesign process, the Harvard Gazette reaffirmed its commitment to providing equitable access to information and fostering a digital environment that is welcoming and inclusive to all.

“

We got some feedback from a long-time reader of the Harvard Gazette. This particular person has macular degeneration, which means that they have difficulty seeing things.

After we launched the new design, this person is able to see the site so much more easily; they're able to read the content, and they said it was a huge improvement for them because we really hit that accessibility mark. And so that person who has a disability is now able to interact with the site on a whole new level.”



**Joeleen Kennedy**

Senior Web Engineer, Human Made, Technical Lead on Harvard Gazette project

We're proud to have been part of a project where accessibility was not just a checkbox to be ticked off, but a fundamental principle that guided the entire redesign process. By embedding accessibility considerations into every stage of the project, the Harvard Gazette lived up to its core values of **equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging**, and set a new standard for inclusive digital experiences in higher education publishing.





The new cohort of Blavatnik Fellows are Patrick Emedom-Nnamdi (from left), Luca Gian, Simin Lee, Morgan Moncada, and Nuria Puigmal Dominguez.

NEWS+

## Business School announces 2023-24 Blavatnik Fellows

Contact [dsalinas@hbs.edu](mailto:dsalinas@hbs.edu) | [www.hbs.edu/news](http://www.hbs.edu/news)

July 21, 2023

Harvard Business School has announced the 2023-2024 cohort of Blavatnik Fellows. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Blavatnik Fellowship in Life Science Entrepreneurship was launched in 2013 as part of a gift to Harvard University from the Blavatnik Family Foundation. The fellowship offers HBS alumni and Harvard-affiliated postdocs the opportunity to work closely with leading biotech industry and biomedical authorities, receive mentorship, and join a community of entrepreneurs shaping the future of science.

To date, Blavatnik Fellows have created 35 companies in biomedical industries, including: a novel enzymatic RNA synthesis platform, an immune system-driven dendritic cell therapy to combat cancer, new molecular technologies for the delivery of transdermal formulations, a lipid-targeting drug to treat cancer and neurodegenerative disorders, and a tumor oxygen sensor for personalized medicine. The program also has supported the 2020 winners of the

### CAMPUS PHOTOGRAPHY



of Poets

his Los Angeles youth — "You could experiment, there was no orthodoxy" — colors the work of Business School



Pomp and circumstance — and surprises

Graffiti of his Los Angeles youth — "You could experiment, there was no orthodoxy" — colors the work of Business School scholar

### BOOK REVIEWS

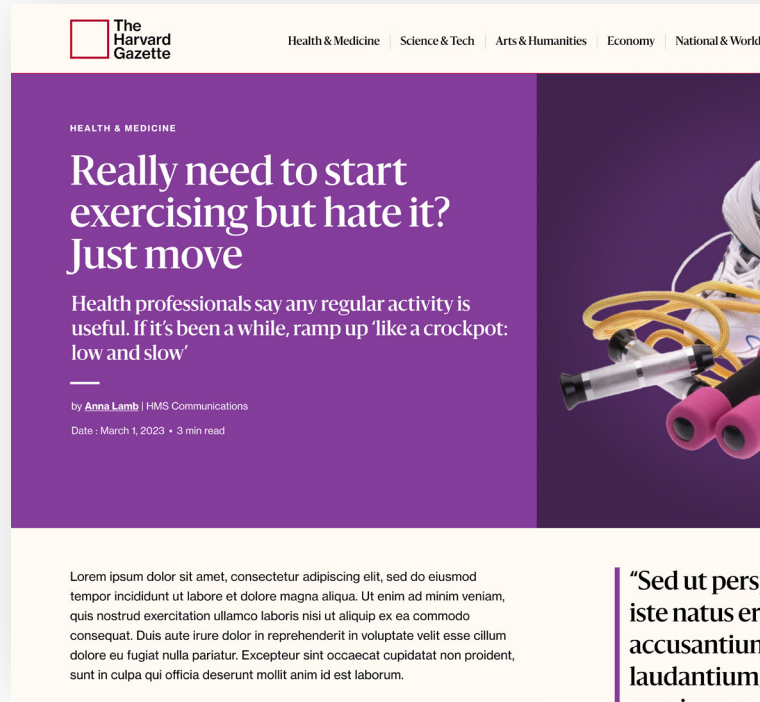
# Unlocking creativity through reimagined UX

The redesign project involved a multitude of technical solutions and innovative features aimed at enhancing user experience and functionality. Let's delve deeper into some of the technical highlights and solutions we implemented.

## Custom Blocks and Block Patterns

One of the key aspects of the Harvard Gazette redesign was the development of custom blocks and block patterns to cater to the diverse content needs of the publication.

With over 33 custom blocks, including child blocks, wrapper blocks, and bundled blocks, the redesign introduced a new level of flexibility and customisation to the editorial workflow. These custom blocks empowered editors to create engaging layouts and presentations, while maintaining adherence to brand guidelines and accessibility standards.



## Colour Palette Picker

To ensure consistency and accessibility in design elements, the redesign incorporated a colour palette picker feature, enabling editors to select text and background colours from pre-defined palettes.

This intuitive tool simplified the process of styling content, while promoting accessibility by offering predefined colour combinations that met WCAG standards. By integrating the colour palette picker into various blocks and templates, the redesign maintained visual coherence across the Gazette's digital platform, while empowering editors with creative control.

Default background style

**\$4.4b**  
in equity financing

Sand background style

**\$4.4b**  
in equity financing

Color background style

**\$4.4b**  
in equity financing



Hundreds of stunned students, faculty, and staff gathered at the Harvard Kennedy School as the horrors of 9/11 unfolded.

*Rose Lincoln/Harvard file photo*



Students gathered around the Harvard Information Center's big screen TV.

*Stephanie Mitchell/Harvard file photo*



Johanna Paretzky '03 (left) and Kamala Salmon '03 held each other during the campus vigil on Sept. 11.

*Harvard file photo*

## Media Selector Component

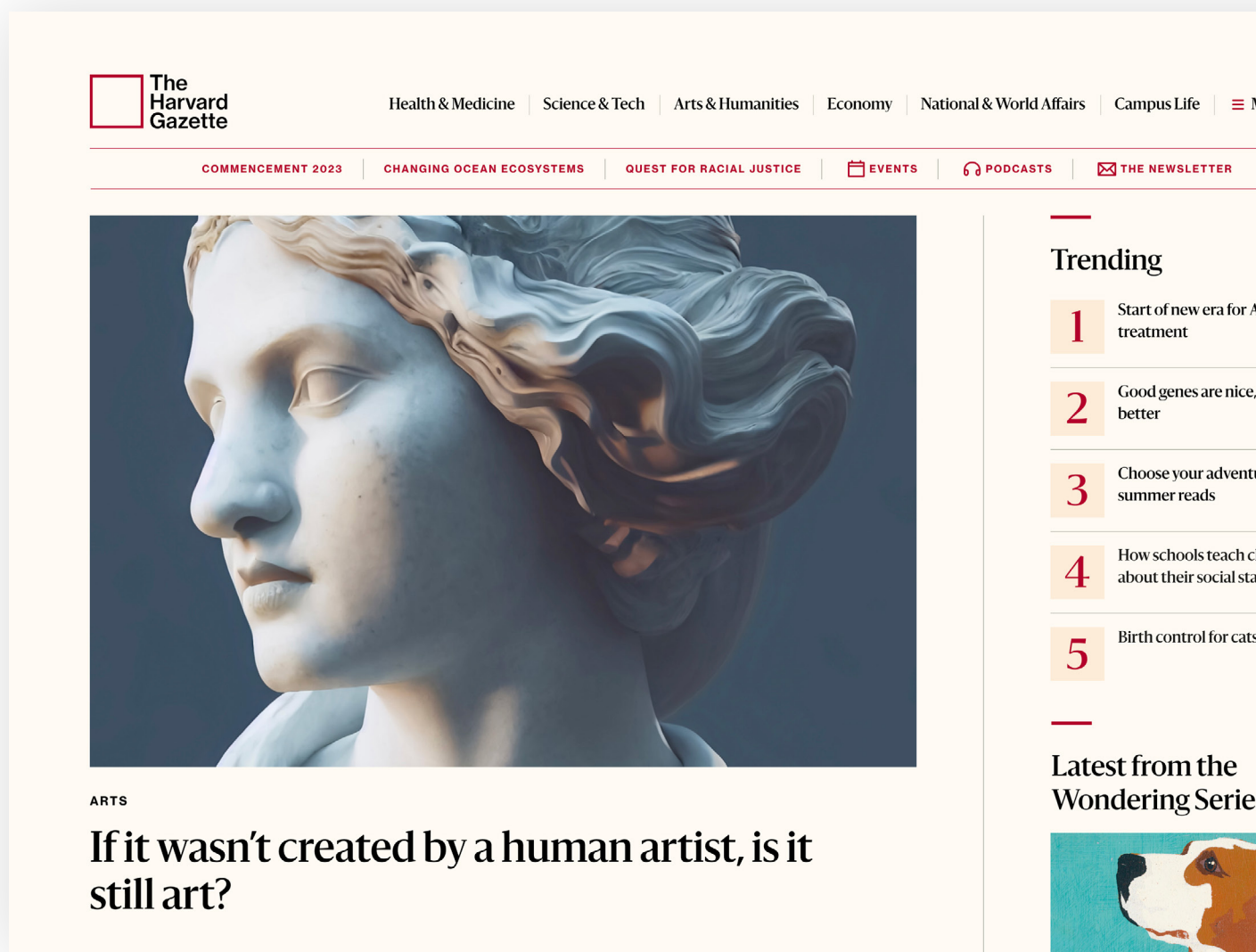
A standout feature of the redesign was the implementation of a custom media selector component, allowing editors to seamlessly select and embed images, videos, and multimedia content within their articles.

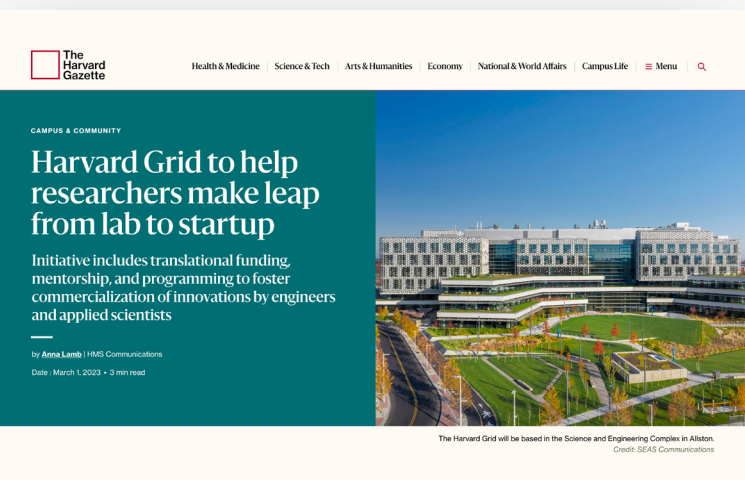
This bespoke solution facilitated the creation of visually rich and dynamic content, enhancing the overall storytelling experience for readers. With features such as captions, media credits, and drop shadow block styles, the media selector component offered unparalleled versatility and creativity to content creators.

# Featured Articles Block

The introduction of a featured articles block with 11 different block styles revolutionised content presentation on the Harvard Gazette website.

This versatile block supported post selection from multiple types and taxonomies, allowing editors to curate and showcase compelling stories with ease. With customisable titles, thumbnail images, and layout options, the featured articles block offered unparalleled flexibility in highlighting noteworthy content, driving engagement, and enhancing discoverability.

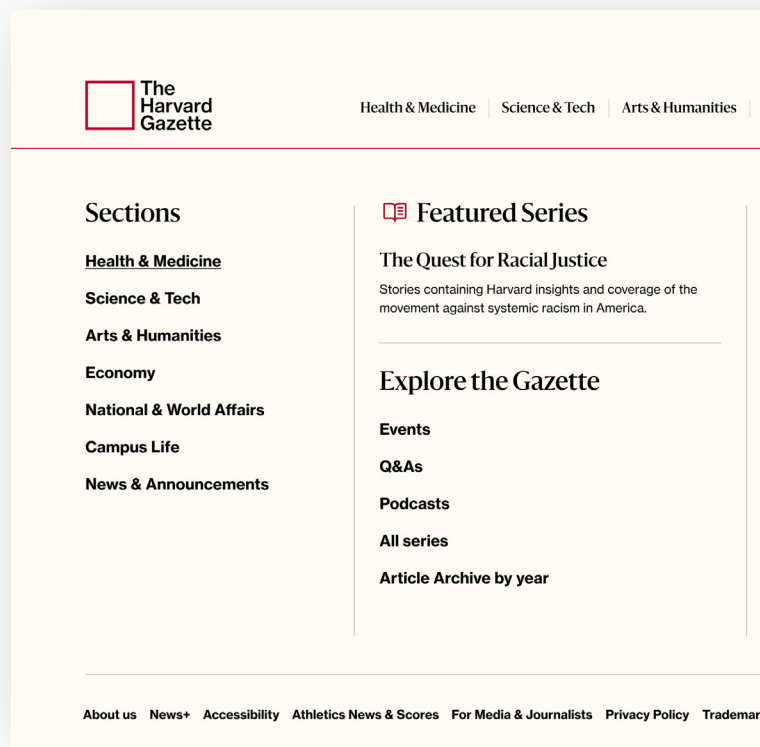




## Article Header Block

Another notable addition to the redesign was the article header block, offering six distinct block styles and advanced display options for article headers. This feature-rich block empowered editors to create visually striking and immersive article layouts, complete with customisable text, image positioning, and interactive effects.

Whether opting for classic layouts or experimenting with full-width designs, editors had the tools to captivate audiences and elevate storytelling on the Harvard Gazette platform.



## Mega Menu Block

The redesign introduced a mega menu block with an editable icon and label, providing a dynamic and interactive navigation experience for users. With customisable layout options for overlay areas, the mega menu block facilitated intuitive navigation and enhanced discoverability of content.

Whether accessing menu items or conducting searches, users benefited from a seamless and efficient browsing experience, resulting in increased engagement and satisfaction.

## Immersive Block and Image Replace on Scroll

Innovative features such as the immersive block and image replace on scroll added a layer of interactivity and visual appeal to the Harvard Gazette website.

The immersive block allowed for slow scrolling of content over a pinned background image or video, creating captivating storytelling experiences. Meanwhile, the image replace on scroll feature dynamically replaces images while scrolling, adding visual interest to article layouts.

These immersive elements enhanced user engagement and retention, transforming the Gazette into a multimedia-rich digital content destination.

By embracing emerging technologies and best practices, the Gazette is poised to remain at the forefront of higher education publishing, delivering value and impact to its audience and stakeholders.



H2 Autumn's warm hues turn icy when printed as cyanotypes

# Supporting Content and Taxonomy Archive

The redesign addressed complex content layout requirements through features such as supporting content blocks and taxonomy archives. By leveraging supporting content blocks, editors could enhance article layouts with images, stats, quotes, and other supplementary content, creating visually compelling and informative presentations.

Additionally, the implementation of taxonomy archives facilitated the organisation and navigation of content across diverse categories, ensuring a seamless and intuitive browsing experience for users.



**HEALTH**

### Is cycling safe?

We shouldn't take no for an answer, researcher says  
3 min read

The general estimation is just taking 220 and subtracting your age — that will give you a sense of your maximum heart rate. And to get any training effects you want to exercise at anywhere from 65 to 75 percent of your estimated maximum heart rate. That's what's called your target heart rate. Let's say we're talking about a 60-year-old — 220 minus 60, their estimated maximum heart rate is 160. They need to take 65 percent — that's 104. So ideally, when they're walking, they're getting their heart rate up to 104 beats per minute.

You can track that with a smart watch or Fitbit. If you don't have one, you can use what's called the rate of perceived exertion (RPE). That's a simple scale of one to 10. One, you're resting, and 10 is working way too hard, so you can't even really breathe. You want to be in the four to six range — a moderate level of work.

The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes a week, or 30 minutes a day for five days, of cardiovascular exercise. Ideally, that's what you're doing. If you've been inactive for a long time, that's going to be a goal to work toward gradually. I might start out at five minutes every other day, slowly increasing that amount of exercise over time, to that 30-minute time frame.

As for where you walk — it's a personal preference. What's good about walking outside is different terrain. So going up and down hills is going to make you work harder than walking on a flat surface. We would encourage people who prefer to walk on a treadmill to walk on a little bit of an incline or change the incline as they're walking to make them work a little bit harder to get that heart rate up.

— As told to Anna Lamb

### Share this article

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- [Share by email](#)
- [Tweet](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on LinkedIn](#)

## Future Enhancements and Innovations

Looking ahead, the Harvard Gazette remains committed to driving innovation and excellence in digital publishing.

With a roadmap of future enhancements and innovations, the Gazette aims to further elevate user experience, expand content offerings, and optimise performance.

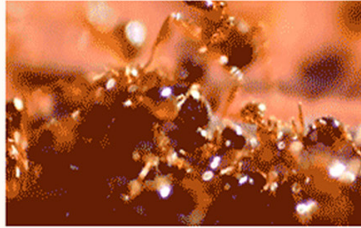
Key initiatives on the horizon include the implementation of Harvard Reads, further performance optimisation, and the introduction of new content blocks and features.

By embracing emerging technologies and best practices, the Gazette is poised to remain at the forefront of higher education publishing, delivering value and impact to its audience and stakeholders.



## Science & Technology

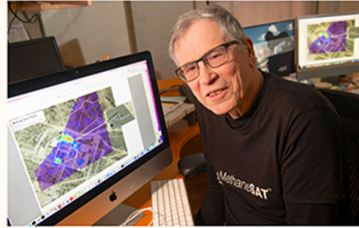
Science & Technology stories containing insights, news, research, innovations, experiences, and perspectives from those at Harvard and beyond.



### Buck Trible and the case of the mutant ants

Spontaneous mutation offers new theory about how ants evolve into social parasites, how human bodies grow

March 1, 2023 • 3 min read



### Buying crucial time in climate change fight

MethaneSAT satellite will spot global sources of methane emissions, which in many cases can be halted with relatively simple fixes

March 1, 2023 • Video | 3 min read

### Spotlight

Good genes are nice, but joy is better

Plant-based diet shows promise in dementia test

Election night on 'Succession': Art imitating life?

# Final Thoughts

## **The Harvard Gazette redesign project represents a milestone in the evolution of digital publishing, showcasing the power of keeping people at the heart of digital infrastructure and design.**

The partnership between Human Made and Harvard Gazette exemplifies the strength of collaboration, innovation, and shared vision in achieving transformative outcomes in digital publishing. This effective collaboration between Human Made and the Harvard Gazette allowed the redesign project to achieve remarkable outcomes, including improved user experience, enhanced publisher capabilities, and firm adherence to accessibility standards.

By leveraging cutting-edge technology and design principles alongside an unshakeable user-centric approach, the Gazette has redefined its digital presence, setting new standards for excellence in higher education publishing.

Moreover, the emphasis on accessibility has underscored the Gazette's commitment to providing equitable access to information, reaffirming its values of diversity and inclusion. By adhering to accessibility standards and incorporating user feedback, the Gazette has created a digital space where every individual, regardless of ability, can engage with content seamlessly.

By placing users at the forefront of the redesign process, the Gazette not only met but exceeded expectations, creating a digital platform that resonates deeply with its community. Through meticulous attention to detail and a genuine desire to understand and address user needs, the Gazette has forged stronger connections with its audience, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement.

As the partnership continues to evolve, both parties remain committed to driving innovation, fostering engagement, and advancing the mission of Harvard University through digital storytelling and dissemination of knowledge.

# Talk to us about your next project

Get in touch with us to find out how  
we can help you build your future.

[sales@humanmade.com](mailto:sales@humanmade.com)

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*Human Made*

CASE STUDIES

