

2004 AALS Conference :: Institutional Advancement :: Website Challenges

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COMMON MISTAKES & HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS:

- LIMIT TEXT. Reading from a computer screen is 25% slower than paper. Limit text and make your page "Scannable" (headlines, highlighting, bullets)
- UPDATE INFORMATION. In a study of Web Journals: 67% were not updated for 2 months. 25% were not updated since started. Keep your info up-to-date. It promotes credibility.
- PRIORITIZE FAST DOWNLOAD TIMES. In 2000, 93% of home users had dial-up connections. Making users wait is the #1 reason to not revisit a site. Keep graphics/animation to a minimum. 84% of major sites have a slow server response time due to large graphics files, personalization & databases (reliance on server actions).
 - Use text, not graphics, for links whenever possible.
- HELP YOUR AUDIENCE FIND INFORMATION. 74% return to sites because of ease of use/navigation. Design your site for your audience, not your Administration. Conduct usability tests on your target audience.
 - Keep design & navigation consistent
 - Place important information "above the fold"
 - Limit links. More than 9 links confuses users.
- DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE WEB. Place a professional in charge of your site.
 - Websites are PR, Information & Technology working together. Web Managers should understand HTML (& other programming languages, if possible), usability & accessibility, information architecture, graphics & design, and marketing.
 - Don't forget to budget time & money for maintenance and research.

CREATE AN ONLINE "COMMUNITY":

- Alumni may be more inclined to give if they feel included in their school.
 - Introduce them to new faculty & even some students and staff.
 - Offer an alumni directory to keep them up-to-date on classmates. And allow them to update their contact information online.
 - Link to sites for alumni clubs & keep a long list of upcoming events.
 - Show photos of recent events.
 - Offer e-news and online publications.
 - Review other schools' sites. See what they offer their alumni.
- Make giving easy. Accept credit cards & provide a simple, secure online giving process.
- Show what their money can do. Meet the students, faculty. Tour the buildings.
- ~50% of UF alumni are under 30 years old so use the web to its full potential. "If you build it, they will come".
- Publicize your website in every publication.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

1. *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability* by Steve Krug
****HIGHLY RECOMMENDED****
2. *Son of Web Pages That Suck: Learn Good Design by Looking at Bad Design* by Vincent Flanders & Dean Peters
3. *Homepage Usability: 50 Websites Deconstructed* by Jakob Nielsen & Marie Tahir
4. *Designing Web Usability : The Practice of Simplicity* by Jakob Nielsen
5. *Hot Text: Web Writing that Works* by Jonathan Price & Lisa Price

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES:

- <http://www.useit.com/> (usability information by Jakob Nielsen)
- <http://www.webbyawards.com/> (samples of good/interesting site design & function)
- <http://www.utexas.edu/web/guidelines/> (excellent example of specific web guidelines)