Web Communications Overview Session

A new model for building and maintaining effective Web sites

Presentation by the Office of Communications
Friday, July 15, 2005
Overview of session

• Introduction
  - Background and history
  - Key aspects of the new model

• Part 1 – Overview
  - The Web and communications
  - Princeton’s content management system
  - CMS demonstration
Overview of session

• Part 2 – Options offered and planning
  – The core Web site as one application of the new model
  – Communications office Web offerings
  – Design options
  – How we classify and plan for Web projects
  – Our methodology and process
  – Where we are today
  – Preparing for a Web project
A new model for building and maintaining effective Web sites

Introduction
Background and history
// Technical and organizational legacy

- Web communications constrained by technology
  - Implementation complex
  - Design and content merged
  - Technical experts required to modify content

- Organizational foundations
  - Front-line responsibility for Web sites originally with IT
  - Decentralized growth of support for sites with varying degrees of quality
  - The Web seen as a place to store information
Background and history
// The nature of the Web

- The communications nature of the Web
  - A powerful and flexible medium for “telling your story”
  - Becoming the first source of information

- Key elements of a good Web presence
  - Consideration of users’ characteristics and needs
  - Clear strategic communications goals
  - Design that is engaging
  - Well-crafted and timely content (copy and pictures)
  - Dynamic content (news and events)
  - Navigation that is functional and predictable
  - Consistency
Background and history

// Limitations of the legacy model

• Individuals cannot “do it all”
  – Putting together good design, effective information architecture, well-written copy and professional photography is not a “one-person show”

• Technology can enable or inhibit communications
  – Legacy technologies can hold you back
Key aspects of the new model
// In general

- Current technology trends favor better communications
- Responsibility for the Web is moving to communications organizations
- The proper tools allow nontechnical people are able to modify their own sites
- New Web standards make information accessible to all
Key aspects of the new model
// At Princeton

- Communications office is at the front line, with support from OIT
- Focus is on promoting higher quality
- Model design templates are available but are not the only options
- New technologies greatly facilitate building and maintaining Web sites
- An advanced “content management system”: Roxen CMS
Key aspects of the new model
// At Princeton

• Important quality standards
  - Overall user-friendliness
  - Clarity and usefulness of design
  - Accuracy, consistency and style in prose
  - Ease of navigation
  - Accessibility
  - Appropriate image selection and optimization
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Part 1
Overview
The Web and communications
// Key points about the Web

The Web:
• is often the primary source of information
• allows you to tell your story to a larger audience
• is a dynamic way of communicating
  – It can be updated quickly with news and fresh content
  – It is interactive
The Web and communications
// Key elements of design

- Design includes more than "look and feel"
  - includes navigation, structure and presentation of information

- Logical information architecture can teach us what to expect, what to do and what the site visitor can do
The Web and communications
// Different perspectives ... and results

Very important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>user</th>
<th>designer/developer</th>
<th>administrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interface</td>
<td>Interface</td>
<td>Updating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>Security</td>
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<td>Ergonomic</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Less important
The Web and communications
// At Princeton

• Princeton's core values should be represented by appropriate content and design as well as consistently high standards
Princeton’s content management system

- Roxen CMS unanimously selected
  - Reviewed 50 products out of hundreds on the market
  - Selected 15 to receive proposals from
  - Communications, OIT and the Computer Science Department selected the top 5 solutions
  - Top 5 included open source and proprietary solutions
  - A committee of 30 selected Roxen CMS unanimously
Princeton’s content management system

- The CMS allows you to maintain fresh content
  - Build Web pages without knowing anything about markup languages
  - Team members can preview your pages before they are made public
  - Automatic e-mail notification
  - Information in the editing environment is secure
  - Permissions can be controlled to a finely detailed level
  - The CMS allows you to revert to any previous version of a page
  - News items can be added to pages manually or through automatic news categories
Princeton’s content management system

- Content is separate from design and functionality
  - Page editors can't "break" the design
  - The design can be changed more easily
  - The content can be rendered in other formats (e.g. for PDAs and news readers)

- Immediate ROI
  - Centralized support and decentralized editing
  - Centralized maintenance of infrastructure
  - Don’t have to maintain departmental Web servers
  - Technology staff resources freed up for other work
  - Administrators can maintain their own content
Princeton’s content management system

- Additional CMS advantages
  - Site navigation is dynamically built as you add pages
  - It is easy to modify this navigation without knowing HTML
  - The templates are designed to be accessible to site visitors with the broadest range of abilities
  - The system is infinitely extendable and scalable with commonly used Web programming languages
CMS demonstration
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Part 2
Options offered and planning
The core Web site as one application of the new model // Key elements

- Multiple ways of finding information (navigation+)
- Accessible groupings
- A “sense of place” (to know where you are)
- Telling a story
- Engaging and “open” design
- News focused
- Accessibility
- Advanced technologies

http://www.princeton.edu/
Communications office Web offerings in partnership with OIT

- Strategic communications planning
  - Analysis of audience needs and your communications goals
- Design and template integration
- Writing/editing/proofreading
- Information architecture
- Photography and photo optimization
- Functionality extensions, such as database integration, Web forms and more
- Usability testing
Design options

- Model templates are available but are not the only options
- New designs can be developed
- Design should support your content and information architecture needs
- Quality standards are the key

http://www.princeton.edu/pr/web.html
How we classify and plan for Web projects

Key to the following pages

- Information architecture
- Collaboration
- Design templates
- Technology
- Content & page building
- Individual and/or group training
- Limited service
1. **Project overview session: Web site design and content management implementation**

   - Information architecture
   - Design templates
   - Technology
   - Content & page building

2. **Project track options**

   - **Track 1**: Design templates + Technology + Content & page building
   - **Track 2**: Information architecture + Design templates + Technology + Content & page building
   - **Track 3**: Information architecture + Design templates + Technology + Content & page building
   - **Track 4**: Information architecture + Design templates + Technology + Content & page building

3. **Quality assurance and site launch**
How we classify and plan for Web projects

• The “Building Blocks” project review (see handout)
Our methodology and process

- Collaboration
- Client survey
- Involving the user
- Getting early feedback
- Project brief

Introductory meeting

Collaborative work session and brainstorming

Understanding the situation

Project brief:
- content needs
- information architecture
- design guidelines
- technology specifications
- phases
- timetable
- cost (OIT input if needed)
Our methodology and process

- Defining the concept (design + information architecture)
- Collaborative review
- Iterative modification
Our methodology and process

- Template building
- Collaborative review
- Refinement
- Training
- Page building
- Preparing for testing
- Quality assurance
Our methodology and process

- Testing
- Modifying
- Sign-off
- Site launch

Client tests the site and reviews content

Web team tests the site and reviews content

User tests the site

Feedback and changes

Web site is launched
Where we are today

• Recent sites:
  – http://www.princeton.edu/president/
  – http://www.princeton.edu/tigers09/

• A couple of our summer projects:
  – ODUS
  – Politics

• Our list of projects

• How to plan
Preparing for a Web project

• Clarify goals and do audience research
  – What are the strategic goals of your Web project?
  – Who are your audiences/users?
  – What are the needs of your users?

• Assess your content
  – Does your current site have all the content you need?
  – Is your content up-to-date and relevant to your goals?
  – What is the desired tone?

• Review design priorities and options

• Contact the Communications Web team
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Thank you

Our goal: Creating a coherent “language” (by design, navigation, structure) that ties Princeton’s sites together so that the collection is greater than the sum of its parts.