DEPARTMENTAL WEBSITE REDESIGN PROJECT

PROJECT PLAN

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

Faculty of Arts & Science
Departmental Website Redesign Project

Table of Contents

Background

For the Faculty of Arts & Science's many departments, centres, institutes and schools, their websites are their primary communications vehicles — and their main face to the world. Their websites play a pivotal role in sharing important information with key audiences and celebrating departmental successes.

To empower departments to better engage with digital audiences, the Faculty of Arts & Science Communications and Information & Instructional Technology (IIT) teams are undertaking a departmental website redesign project using the Drupal content management platform.

Until now, each departmental website has featured a unique design — meaning as visitors navigate from site to site, they essentially need to learn afresh how to find critical information. This is especially problematic for prospective students, who may research multiple departments across the Faculty.

Furthermore, some websites are missing foundational features such as accessible content and mobile-friendly design.

Needs

There are a number of factors that necessitate a centrally-managed overhaul of departmental websites, including:

1. Departmental websites lack consistent navigation, making it difficult for users to find the information they need — and, when they are ready, to find their way back to central websites.
2. Departmental websites do not always conform to U of T's Visual Identity.
3. Many departmental websites are not mobile-friendly, which makes viewing content a challenge for smartphone and tablet users.
4. We must comply with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) guidelines.
5. Links to UTSC and UTM departmental counterparts are not consistent, and not always easy to see.
6. Departmental staff do not always have the time or resources to maintain their sites' design.

Objective

Better serve the needs of website users while highlighting the unique strengths and features of each department.

A department's website is its primary opportunity to communicate all of the vital information users count on it to provide and highlight its unique strengths.

However, an incoherent web presence can frustrate users by making it difficult for them to find the information they need.

Working closely with departmental administrative staff to understand departments' needs, we will deliver a small number of website templates that will:

- Feature a coherent, easy-to-navigate design that conforms to the University of Toronto Visual Identity.
- Offer a degree of choice — departments will choose, from the aforementioned templates, the one that best meets their needs.
- Be accessible to all users. All users deserve engaging, easy-to-read content. It's the right thing to do — and it's the law, thanks to Ontario accessibility legislation (AODA).
- Be mobile-friendly (51 per cent of Canadian Internet traffic in 2015 was linked to a phone or tablet, while 49 per cent was tied to a computer[1]) with a responsive design that displays properly and is easy to read, regardless of users' screen size.
- Feature clear, concise, engaging content that adheres to best web writing practices.
- Be easy and less time-consuming to maintain.

How Arts & Science will help:

- We will teach departmental staff how to:

  - Follow best practices in usability, scannability, accessibility and readability.
  - Write and re-purpose web content that will appeal to their key audiences.
  - Effectively use, present and credit visuals such as photographs and graphics.
  - Manage and update their sites — regardless of their experience level.

- We will provide ongoing support by:

  - Updating website templates on a regular basis — no need for departments to worry about paying for maintaining or overhauling their sites' design or technology in the future.
  - Training new or additional staff members as needed.
  - Answering any questions staff may have about their websites, or about producing effective content, at any time in the future.

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[1] Source: comScore

Target Audiences

Primary Audiences

Current undergraduate and graduate students, prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni and donors.

Secondary Audiences

Potential employees, parents and high school guidance counsellors, University of Toronto leadership/faculty/staff, colleagues at peer post-secondary institutions, government, and the media.

Platform, Hosting and Standards

Hosting

The site will reside on a server managed by Arts & Science Information & Instructional Technology (IIT).

Platform

We will move all sites to the open-source Drupal content management system.

Site Search

To identity the most effective option for site search, we will evaluate the results performance of both the U of T Google search tool and the onboard Drupal search feature.

Analytics

We will investigate web analytics providers and communicate the results to departments.

Accessibility

We are responsible for meeting new accessibility requirements that came into effect on January 1, 2014. These requirements specify that we make our websites and web content accessible according to the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

We will incorporate an Accessibility Statement link as per U of T's AODA Office. Drupal renders W3C-validated, standards-compliant HTML. Compliance helps with cross-browser compatibility and ensures websites are more easily indexed by search engines.

Process Overview

1. **Exploration and Planning**

Meet with departmental staff to uncover their needs; identify commonalities among departments; and examine peer websites. Develop site re-launch plans and requirements in consultation with departmental and IIT staff.

2. **Collect Feedback**

Collect and analyze feedback from users via online surveys and in-person interviews in order to understand their needs.

3. Content Analysis

Departmental staff will review all of their website pages and determine which content will remain, which content will be deleted, and which new content must be created. Senior Communications & Web Liaison will be available for advice and support.

4. Architecture

Create a diagrammatic representation of sites' navigation, including content hierarchy, and secure departmental approval.

5. Wireframes

Develop a skeletal blueprint of how website content will be arranged on templates and secure departmental approval.

6. Design

Develop a look and feel for website templates, including graphic styles, colours and fonts. The University of Toronto's Visual Identity — and the need for departments to communicate their unique strengths in a consistent manner — will be top-of-mind.

7. Mock-Ups

Create visual mock-ups of website templates and secure departmental approval.

8. Early Development

Set up server, produce code for basic design, and secure departmental approval. Create migration plans for migrating selected content from WordPress sites to new Drupal environment.

9. Content

Revise existing content and draft new content as required, and set up workflows and approval chains, in cooperation with departments.

10. Development

Code templates; select, develop and test any special modules and features; and migrate content to beta sites.

11. Testing and Debugging

Ensure websites work across all major browsers; add URL redirects as needed from old sites; ensure compliance guidelines are met; and conduct usability testing with relevant audiences.

12. Training

Provide training to departmental site managers.

13. Release

Transfer sites to live server, complete final testing and cross-browser checks, launch new sites, and promote sites.

14. Evaluation

Gather post-launch user feedback, implement ongoing maintenance and editorial plans, collect and analyze analytics, and implement a broader communications strategy.

15. Ongoing Training, Advice and Assistance

Provide ongoing communications, technical and design support to departments.

Approach

Nine departments have indicated their interest in participating in this project's first iteration.

After meeting with departments, we will divide the departments into three groups of three. Each group will be tackled consecutively in phases 1, 2 and 3.

However, to ensure the templates reflect the needs of all participating departments, we will meet with all departments and collect feedback from users of all nine departmental websites via online surveys in phase 1.

Timeframe

A detailed critical path outlying key milestones and deadlines will be developed in consultation with each unit.

Communications Plan

Once the project is underway, departmental leads can expect:

- Communication of project progress as it happens (to be sent by email)
- Bi-weekly project status updates (to be sent by email)
- A monthly at-a-glance project report (to be sent by email)
- In-person meetings as needed

Executive stakeholders (see below) can expect:

- Bi-weekly project status updates (to be sent by email)
- A monthly at-a-glance project report (to be sent by email)

Project Team

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