

User research for Content Management System project



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Overview

- Purpose
- Method
- Results
- General conclusions
- General recommendations



Purpose

Gather information from Brandeis web publishers about

- current web publishing activities
- desired characteristics of a web content management system



Methods I

- Two focus groups of web publishers
- Survey
 - Sent to *webdevelopers* e-mail list. Response rate: 27%
- Web services requests:
 - University-level web publishing requests
 - Library web publishing requests



Methods II

- Compiled and organized data by theme
- Developed findings, conclusions, and recommendations



Results

(What did we learn from you?)

Key:

- Finding
- ⊙ Conclusion
- Recommendation



Barriers

- Web publishing is complicated, tedious, and frustrating.
 - “I despise the process...”
- Top five barriers:

Lack of time	51%
Lack of guides	44%
Lack of skills	33%
Lack of support	26%
Scripting and databases	26%
- ◉ Time is a barrier for many -- but people don't want to spend more time on web publishing.

“We’re at the mercy of the students.”



- Departments rely on student labor, a double-edged sword
 - “We don’t have the resources in place to support the web. If you get lucky and happen to have a good student, you’re OK.”



Training

- Staff struggle to retain web publishing skills.
 - “We learn, we get busy, and we forget.”
 - GoLive isn’t easy to use.
 - “I use GoLive, but I don’t understand it.”
 - Staff want training and education.
 - “The process would be easier if I understood it better. What limits me most is my own ignorance.”
 - Cheat sheets and guides would help staff publish more easily and learn independently.
- Establish a multifaceted training program.

Best practices & guidelines



- Develop a web style guide that complements Brandeis identity manual.
 - “I work a lot with Creative Services and they have a style guide online... Could something like that be available through [WTS]?”
- Provide technical guidelines for more advanced publishers.
 - E.g., scripting, image sizes, “meta” tags (web page metadata)

Communication from WTS



- Web publishers want Web Technology Services to communicate more consistently and more clearly.
- Send out a monthly e-mail newsletter.



Keeping content fresh

- Updating non-text content (forms, images, and PDFs) frustrates web publishers
 - “We can all do text, but it’s the graphics we have issues with.”



Managing page design

- Templates simplify web publishing.
 - “Having some standard templates would be useful - it's always easier to start with something and modify.”
- Content Management System (CMS) should support multiple templates.

Support experience



- Current support experience is inconsistent and confusing.
- Delays or lack of communication lead departments to seek alternative help.
 - “It takes a lot of time...to get a response. We had to hire a student worker.”



Support mechanics

- Publishers request services & support primarily via email.
 - More than 70 emails per week from web publishers (university-level and library)
- Many requests involve only simple changes to existing text.

Support mechanics



- A small number of organizations account for a disproportionate number of requests.
 - Top 3: Communications, Registrar, Athletics
- ◉ Outreach to these groups would empower publishers & reduce support requests.

Support and service levels



- ⊙ Web publishers need an improved support model
 1. Calling for help
 2. Requesting services from development team
 - “We can handle day-to-day updates. [We’d like to see] an internal Brandeis group to do higher-end updates.”
 3. Assistance in finding and working with external vendors (e.g., web design firms)

Site management tools



- There is a pressing need for site management tools.
 - “A database driven tool with templates would save a lot of time....Easy to use, efficient and accurate site-wide change tools are huge.”
- The CMS should offer basic and advanced modes.
- ◉ Making web publishing easier promotes better stewardship of web pages.

(CMS = Content Management System)



Data integration

- Web publishers want to integrate into their websites:
 1. data from PeopleSoft and custom databases
 2. news, events, and other information.
- Continue developing services for integration of data from various campus sources into websites

General conclusions



- ⊙ Within the limits of their expertise, web publishers are comfortable.
 - For tasks beyond their expertise, they are less confident.
- ⊙ Web publishers largely teach themselves with limited assistance from WTS.
 - As a result, they reach a ceiling in their skill level.

General recommendations



- Focus on consistency of service and message for everything Web Technology Services does.
- Mind people's time. Provide tools that permit faster, simpler, and more efficient web publishing.
- Provide a *program* of tools, training, and support to develop the skills of web publishers.