

Introduction to Library Web Strategy & Development

Who we are & what do we do

The Library's User Experience team consists of John Laskowski (User Experience & Web Strategy Coordinator) and Eva Gellman (User Experience & Content Specialist). Some of our primary responsibilities include:

- Serving as liaisons between Library units and our team of web developers.
- Developing strategic priorities and web concepts to ensure the Library's online presence aligns with our overall mission.
- Advocating for our users at each step of the web development and design process.
- Providing web training and digital accessibility support to Library faculty and staff.

We work closely with the Library's Web Development team to maintain our WordPress sites. The web development team consists of; Dan Dalpiaz (Senior Web Application Developer), Shareese Rucker (Web Application Developer), John Rutherford (Web Application Developer) and Jay Heldreth (Digital Library Research Programmer).

Pillars of our work

Web Strategy & Coordination

We ensure that our web projects meet each Library unit's needs while also aligning with the organization's overall strategy and goals. We balance big picture strategic goals with daily maintenance to create a web presence that is informative and responsive to user needs.

User Experience

We employ user experience (UX) tools when creating, developing, and testing new digital products and web services. Our UX work takes many different forms, and some common approaches we utilize are guerilla interviews, surveys, and focus groups. UX helps us prioritize user needs throughout each step of the web process.

Accessibility

Accessibility and user experience are deeply intertwined; accessibility benefits all users, and an accessible website is much more likely to be user-friendly and intuitive for all users. It is each web editor's responsibility to ensure that we are creating products, services, and experiences that are accessible for individuals with a diverse set of needs and abilities.

Defining our web strategy

Mission-focused: The Library’s website is a core service for our users, and it is important that our site support the Library’s overall mission to provide “unfettered access to information for all users.” Our website is designed to share the breadth of information and knowledge available in our collections and from our librarians and subject specialists.

Action-oriented: A strong website is not static. We strive to remain proactive by regularly reviewing, revising, and culling our existing content to decrease “noise” and provide users easy access to essential information and resources.

User-focused: We prioritize our user’s needs at each phase of web strategy and development. We solicit user feedback and devise strategies to make updates and improvements to better meet their evolving needs.

Evidence-based: Our strategy is driven by both data and direct user feedback. We utilize Google Analytics as well as surveys, interviews, and focus groups to make informed decisions.

Inclusive: We are committed to a website that makes accessibility and inclusion a baseline expectation rather than an added bonus.

Iterative: Web strategy and development work is cyclical. We remain open and flexible to new ideas and ways of doing things to provide a strong experience for our users.

Leading: Information has never been more digitally accessible than at this current moment. As one of the country’s leading libraries, it is our responsibility to provide our users with thoughtful analysis, research guidance, and scholarly support.

What is WordPress?

WordPress is a Content Management System (CMS) used by the Library to create, organize, and publish web content. It originally began as a blogging platform but is now the leading web publishing platform in the world.

It utilizes a “**What You See Is What You Get**” (WYSIWYG) editor. This means that website editors can create and edit content without any knowledge of HTML or CSS.

The University Library website consists of over 80 individual websites. These sites are hosted on the library web servers and can be managed from a single dashboard. These sites are linked together under a common domain (www.library.illinois.edu).

Your role

Website editors are responsible for helping to maintain unit websites or create web content. Your responsibilities may vary depending on the needs of your unit.

There is no need or expectation for you to know HTML or CSS. WordPress is an intuitive and easy-to-use platform, and our web development team maintains the backend of our sites.

Getting started

After this session, you'll receive an invitation to take our Library WordPress Canvas training. This training provides you with an overview of how to use WordPress and includes helpful video tutorials and step-by-step instructions.

Once you've completed the training and passed the accompanying short quiz, you can reach out to the Library IT web team and request editor access to your unit's website.

The WordPress Canvas training can be found here:

<https://canvas.illinois.edu/courses/17012>

Additional resources

Shortcode tutorials

Shortcodes are a shortcut that you can use to format your page without using any complex HTML or CSS.

<https://wordpress.library.illinois.edu/wp-training/shortcodes/>

Accessibility tips and best practices

This website provides detailed guidance about key accessibility topics: color use and contrast, headings, alternative text and images, links, multimedia content, and documents. We regularly update this website as new guidelines or best practices evolve.

<https://wordpress.library.illinois.edu/digital-accessibility-training/>

Contact us!

Library IT Web Team:

<https://help.uillinois.edu/TDClient/42/UIUC/Requests/Service/610/Library-Request-Form/Request>

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