



**Chapter Council Presents
Sharing Roundtables
MLA Annual Meeting
San Antonio, TX
Monday, May 16, 2005**

Tables 29A/29B: Web Design

Facilitator: Beth Layton (beth@library.health.ufl.edu) <http://library.health.ufl.edu>

Recorder: Beverly Murphy (murph005@mc.duke.edu) <http://www.mclibrary.duke.edu/>

Additional Participants:

Dorothy Barr (dorothy.barr@umassmed.edu) <http://library.umassmed.edu/>

Megan Crouch (mecrouch@sfu.ca) <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/>

Suzanne Nagy (suzanne.nagy@med.fsu.edu) <http://med.fsu.edu/library>

Edward Roberts (ejnr@u.washington.edu) <http://healthlinks.washington.edu/hsl/liaisons/roberts>

Helena VonVille (helena.m.vonville@uth.tmc.edu) <http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/library>

Topics discussed and ideas shared:

Some of the participants have to use a university template which is a problem. One person could only change the sidebar and nothing else, and another felt their template was boring. One person inherited some design elements (e.g., use of relative URLs vs. absolute) that she didn't agree with. Not having enough space for content was also mentioned as a problem when working under a larger domain.

Website redesign was the next topic of discussion, and people were in different phases of the process. One participant's site had recently been redesigned and launched in January. Their last redesign was done in 2000 after obtaining feedback via a Website usability study. This time, a new design was created first and patrons were asked to react to it after it was launched. The whole process went very well, and there were no calls from patrons concerned about where things were after the new site was brought up.

It was suggested that small groups work best when redesigning a site. Focus groups have also been used extensively in the redesign process. One library made use of a "Friends of the Website" as a working group.

A process used by one of the libraries was described as the "spiral method of development" which involves distinct phases of development - usually design, implementation, and testing. This method allows for developing each individual component and testing it before moving on to the next component.

Some participants found it difficult communicating with people who had roles in maintaining their Websites (i.e. a marketing person for the university and a Web person who wasn't a librarian).

When questioned about page ownership, many of the libraries declared ownership in the footers of their pages. A question was also posed as to whether all pages on the various sites were owned by someone so they could be kept up with. Quality control was also an issue that was brought up, as well as how to get people on board to submit content.

There was some discussion as to the different ways people sorted resources (e.g., categories). One library's site had search capabilities by type, need (clinical, research) which consisted of a scroll box with an alphabetical list. All of the participants' Websites had a search button.

In terms of content management systems, most of the participants did not have them in place at their libraries. As mentioned earlier, some had to go through others to maintain the content on their sites. One library created pages on a development server and then emailed the information technology person to publish the pages. Another participant used Dreamweaver and FTP to publish content.

One library used zope (open source software) as a backend for their site, although they had not actually implemented the management content piece of it. Although zope is not a database creation software, it usually plays well with database driven content.

The ability to find what's needed is most important in Web design. The meat should be in the middle of the sandwich. Most people don't mind clicking multiple times, as long as they ultimately get to what they want and don't end up going down an extremely wrong path.

The roundtable ended with some discussion on static HTML pages and legacy static content (unmanageable), dynamic data driven content, and the use of sequel servers.