

## **EDUCAUSE 2001 Web Administrators Constituent Group Meeting**

**Monday, Oct. 29, 12:45-2 p.m.**

**Attendees: 50**

**Leader: Donna Hamilton, Wright State University**

General discussion revolved around the following issues, comments, ideas, etc.

**Communication.** The EDUCAUSE listserv for Web administrators was plugged. You can subscribe at <http://www.educause.edu/memdir/cg/web.html>. The University Web Developer's list, UWEBD, was also mentioned. It's maintained by Terry Calhoun from the University of Michigan and has 1,000+ subscribers and sometimes 15-20 messages a day, but you can choose a digest edition. Subscribe at

[http://listserver.itd.umich.edu/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=uwebd&text\\_mode=0](http://listserver.itd.umich.edu/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=uwebd&text_mode=0)

**Reporting Structure and Staffing.** Web function reported to computing area at more than half of the universities represented. At only about eight universities did the Web function report to the Communications & Marketing or Public Relations area, although the majority of people said they coordinated with the Marketing/PR area.

### **Design Updates.**

1/3 of those attending redesigned their main Web page within the past six months;

1/3 redesigned within the past year;

1/3 have not redesigned in more than one year.

One person suggested a problem with redesigning too often is being able to propagate the new design throughout the site before another design is instituted.

Many of the Web site redesigns were tied to print publications in look and feel, and the print publication time schedule dictated the university Web site redesign at many schools.

### **Primary Audience.**

Only about 1/3 of those attending said prospective students were their primary audience. Current Students was the next most popular primary audience.

Several people said they had multiple primary audiences.

### **Targeting your Audience.**

We talked about the importance of using terms that your audience uses. For example, not all prospective students realize what the word "prospective" means.

The Ohio University usability study was mentioned as being very useful. It's located at [http://www.ohio.edu/mediapros/web/user\\_test.html](http://www.ohio.edu/mediapros/web/user_test.html).

**Statistics and Search Engines.**

Suggestions included reviewing the most frequently used search terms (from Web server traffic reports generated by statistics packages such as WebTrends) and then using this data to help make it easier to find the appropriate Web pages. Ideas included adding or moving links to these pages, updating meta tags, etc.

We had some discussion on people from various departments requesting Web statistics but not really knowing what to do with them. Several people were using WebTrends to create reports.

**Domain names.**

Very few universities had considered and/or decided to buy additional domains (e.g. .info and .biz) with their university name or variations on their university name (e.g. wrightstate.org, wright.org). Wright State University has purchased several combinations on recommendation from our General Counsel.

**Content Management.**

Only one or two institutions were using true content management systems, but several were looking into it.

**Test Sites.**

Several institutions are running test Web servers, whose content is then moved to the "production" Web server once the testing period is complete. Duke uses an automated syncing system that moves pages every 30 minutes from the test server to production server.

**Scripting/Dynamic Content.**

Many institutions are using PHP for creating dynamic content and scripts for the Web. About five people used asp, and two used jsp.

**Charging for Services.**

About five institutions said they charged for Web services. Others provided services as they were able and without charge.

**Web Policies and Accessibility.**

Only about half the institutions had policies dealing with Web accessibility, but most had some type of Web policy. Half or fewer had privacy policies in place.

Many used Bobby as a test for accessibility. Some used the W3C standards. Wright State University is using the standards set forth in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These standards became enforceable on June 21, 2001.

**Browser Standards.**

Most institutions were testing pages with 4.x and above browsers. A few have downloaded pages to PDAs to test usability.

**Hiring Students.**

Several institutions hired students for Web work. Suggestion was made to have the applicants submit a cover letter and resume to test their English language skills, ability to follow instructions, and desire to get the job. At WSU, we sometimes request a 300-word paper about customer service. This serves a similar purpose.