Lessons Learned from Library Websites

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Eisenhower Public Library District
Eisenhower Public Library District

Established in 1974
New Building, 2008
Serves Norridge and Harwood Heights, Illinois
Eisenhower Website 2012

Patrons told us:

“It is unacceptable”

“It needs drastic changes…not friendly”

“It is difficult to use and a pain in the ass to find events”
Lessons we learned while working on the redesign of our library website...
1. Interview Multiple Developers
2. Check Your Developer’s References
3. Clearly Outline Your Expectations
4. Do Not Skip the Environmental Scan
What We Liked About Our Website

- Contact Info At The Top
- Obvious OPAC Search Box
- Horizontal Navigation
What We Didn't Like About Our Website

Just About Everything!

The Color

Vertical Navigation

Static Content
What We Liked About Other Websites

Focus on Programs and Cool Features
What We Liked About Other Websites

- Vital Information Upfront & Obvious Navigation
- Horizontal Navigation
- Sticky Header & Footer
- Contact Info On Top
What We Liked About Other Websites

Beautiful Design Elements

Horizontal Navigation

Easily Identifiable Search Box

Overall Clean Design, Clear Focus, Beautiful Graphics
What Did We Want?

- Digital Branch
- Iterative & Responsive Design
- Intuitive for Users
- Useful for Librarians
- Dynamic Content
- Visually Engaging
What Did We Want?

- Contact information at the top
- Horizontal, sticky navigation
- Photo rotator
- Bookshelves
- OPAC search box
- Site search option
- Departmental blogs
5. Remember That Form Should Follow Function
It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, 
Of all things physical and metaphysical, 
Of all things human and all things super-human, 
Of all true manifestations of the head, 
Of the heart, of the soul, 
That the life is recognizable in its expression, 
That form ever follows function. This is the law.

-Louis Sullivan
The Goal:

Content and Design that works in harmony

- Easy to navigate for patrons and staff
- Easy to update
- Easy to integrate with social media outlets
6. Begin Fostering Staff Buy-in ASAP
7. Start the CMS Training Cycle Once You Decide on One
Website Style Guide

- Writing for the Web
- Writing Conventions
- Book Review Examples
- Page Layout Templates
- Site Map
- How to handle Photos, Graphics, Videos, & PDFs
- Branding Elements
- Website Committee Contact Information
8. Go With Your Gut
9. Edit Mercilessly
Krug’s Third Law of Usability

“Get rid of half the words on each page, then get rid of half of what’s left.”

- Steve Krug
LET IT GO, LET IT GO
CAN’T HOLD IT BACK ANYMORE
11. Test Early and Often
Usability Testing
Usability Testing
12. Learn How Your Design Works
13. Resign Yourself to a Delayed Launch Date
14. Respond to All Comments
1/3 Positive
1/3 Issue Related
1/3 Hand-Holding
Get Out in the Community

Our newly re-designed website is our online branch, available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Designed to be fully functional from any computer, tablet or smartphone, you now have access to the Library no matter where you are, any time of the day or night.

Features
- Highlights of new arrivals at Eisenhower
- Book recommendation tools
- Access to research databases
- Library event calendar
- Community resources
- Librarian and staff blogs

ADULTS...
- Downloadable audio and eBooks
- Foreign language and ESL resources
- Local history resources
15. Prepare Yourself for Negativity
“I don’t like your new website. The old website was easier to use and understand. Please go back.”

- Website Feedback
16. Making Iterative Design Changes Is Key
17. Watch That Toddler Closely
Beautiful Bookshelves!

No Bookshelves!!!
It’s supposed to be here. We didn’t move it!

This box belongs next to the other two.
18. Be Ready for the Terrible Twos
In-Progress Site
Redesign Your Library Website

Stacy Ann Wittmann and Julianne T. Stam
1 VOLUME

A comprehensive guide for all sizes of libraries, this book guides you through the entire process of effectively redesigning your library’s website—from evaluating your current site and understanding user needs, to creating a budget, through to launching and maintaining your updated site.

FEATURES

- Presents an approachable, complete guide that covers all steps in the process of revamping a library website, turning a potentially daunting challenge into a doable project, even for those without technical backgrounds
- Describes various ways of handling specific steps for different sizes and types of libraries—from a “DIY” approach to cost-effective ways of hiring outside professionals
- Provides an invaluable resource for librarians and library staff members charged with the task of designing or redesigning their library’s website as well as for web developers and designers who work with libraries

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