INFORMASIETEGNOLOGIE

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

NEED TO BUILD A WEBSITE?

What platform should I use to author and publish my department/faculty/division/centre website? This is a question that the IT and Communications divisions are often asked and we have consequently prepared the following guidelines and advice. But first some important principles…. Authoring, publishing and maintaining a website need not be tasks reserved for technically-minded people. In fact, it is far preferable that these tasks are performed by the people most concerned with communications in your entity – and in order to do this they need not be skilled in "html, javascript" and other arcane technical tools and languages. Secondly, websites must increasingly be fresh, dynamic and interactive. This implies that website maintenance is not a once-in-a-semester exercise, but a continuous commitment that should involve many contributors and authors in your environment, all co-ordinated by a designated editor. Where one does require professional input is at the initial stages of a website's design: design of the particular user experience that is required, graphical design and information layout (i.e. templates or master pages) and preparation of the technical platform. After these stages website management revolves around generating content and using the site for effective communication with the target audience(s). So – in order empower people not skilled in web technologies to manage and contribute to their own websites and to maintain image and look-and-feel consistency across multiple pages and sites, most institutional websites are increasingly built on so-called Web Content Management Systems (WCMS). There are various examples of such WCMS's including, Joomla!, Wordpress, Sharepoint, Drupal, Oracle Portal, Nettoolbox, etc. So which one(s) should you use? We strongly recommend the following:

1. *Until recently many faculty and departmental websites were built and authored on the Oracle Portal WCMS. However, this platform is approaching end-of-life and will be phased out over the next years. Do not build any new sites or do major upgrades of sites on this platform anymore.*
2. *The university has officially adopted the Microsoft Sharepoint platform as the institutional WCMS for official websites. Do build new sites on this platform. Both the IT and Communications divisions are gearing up to be able to support and advise website owners on its use.*
3. *We also offer a Wordpress blogging platform for sites that require blogging functionality. Institutional support is limited, but Wordpress is easy to use and suited to small, single sites.*
4. *Ensure that all websites include the necessary code to log web usage data for analysis of usage of the sites (known as Web Analytics). We offer a PIWIK Web Analytics platform for this purpose, although you could use Google Analytics as well. But you need to be aware that given the need for on-campus users to open Inetkey for Google Analytics to work, such users, if they are in your target audience, will experience degraded site performance if Intekey is closed.*
5. *Ensure that you are familiar with the requirements of the University's Web Regulation, which governs the management of institutional websites.*

Although all the other WCMS's mentioned above, and others, do run on our servers and are used by many, neither the IT Division nor Communications provides any WCMS-level support for them. Entities that have in-house technical skills or are able to afford external technical support may wish to continue using them, but we recommend that plans be made to eventually migrate those websites to the Sharepoint platform. Contact the E-communications Division

(ecomms@sun.ac.za) or Advanced Support, IT Division (helpinfo@sun.ac.za) in order to learn more about Sharepoint and to prepare the plans for your new or upgraded website.

ARTICLE BY RALPH PINA

Posted in:General | | With 0 comments