

Idaho State University
Web Services Council
Minutes for August 24, 2005

Meeting convened 3:00 PM

Present: Tony Lovgren, Ken Trimmer, Randy Gaines, John Kijinski, Libby Howe, Mark Lee, Janet Higgins, Ali Nelson, Juli Mead, Randy Stamm, Blake Beck, Paul Winder (for Roger Egan)

Excused: Kent Tingey, Craig Joseph

Taken by: Janet Higgins

Agenda Item 1 – ADA Compliance Effort

The Rehabilitation Act, passed by Congress in 1998, requires Federal agencies to provide disabled employees and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access available to others. Section 508 of the Act provides explicit guidelines for web developers. This is typically referred to as ADA compliance, which requires that a website be coded in such a way that those with disabilities can access every box/element on the page. For example, there must be keyboard shortcuts for all elements on a page so that persons with impaired movement can move around the page without using a mouse. Another example is flashing boxes or moving text that makes it hard for those with cognitive disabilities to use a website.

Because ADA compliance is such an important issue, Mark paid particular attention to Section 508 when developing the new ISU website. As soon as the new design was finalized, Todd DeVries, ISU's Assistive Technology Coordinator in The ADA and Disabilities Resource Center, was asked to review the new website design for accessibility. Todd's initial feedback was very positive and he said that most of the site looked good, but promised to run the pages through additional tests.

In addition, Mark consulted with Terry Thompson from the University of Washington. Terry's work is funded by a grant that is meant to help higher education institutions with accessibility requirements. Terry brought up four issues, which Mark is currently working:

1. The Quick Links box needs a "submit" button next to each item, so that tab and arrow keys can be used to scroll through the list.
2. The "Alt text" for the pictures needs to be more descriptive and include the quotes.
3. A hidden heading on the second level pages to be more informative.
4. Implement a "skip navigation link" on the second level pages, so that screen readers can go straight to the page content.

Action Item: Send an email to Cory Schou and Jane Strickland to let them know that there has been a dedicated effort to make the ISU Website ADA compliant.

Agenda Item 2 – Campus Liaisons – mass e-mail asking for page updates

The suggestion to use the Campus Web Liaison mailing list to facilitate updates to all pages before the launch date was revised to include an invitation to a face-to-face meeting with the newly appointed liaisons – or a designated representative. A meeting has been promised since the beginning of the project to identify liaisons in every college/department, so this will be a perfect opportunity to get them involved and behind what the Council is doing.

Action Item: Set up a meeting in early September.

Agenda Item 3 – Set a Launch Date

Blake asked that Council determine a fixed target date. After a brief discussion, October 10th was settled on as the official launch date. The fact that it is also Columbus Day could be used in promotional literature.

Agenda Item 4 – Reconvene working groups for all content pages: review the suggestions from the focus groups

Janet reminded Council that there are many suggestions from the Focus Group sessions that still need to be reviewed by the four working groups: Faculty/Staff, Alumni/Visitors, Current Students, and Prospective Students. Ali would like to be included in the Current Students working group. Some issues, e.g., branding, are more top-level and will be addressed by Libby and others, as time permits.

Action Item: Janet will send an electronic copy of the Focus Group session summary to the Council mailing list.

Action Item: Suggestions will be reviewed by the working groups and recommended changes will be sent to Mark by September 14th.

Action Item: At Council's September 21st meeting, Mark will summarize the changes and report on any requested change(s) that conflicted with another request(s).

Agenda Item 5 – Announcements Section – Responsible Persons

Blake asked for direction on how to formalize accountability for the current announcements section – left-hand bar – for every 2nd level page. In order to keep these pages up to date, there must be individuals whose assigned duties include submitting regular announcements for their respective 2nd level web pages. These individuals must be in a position to have good information readily available about campus activities and events.

The announcements section will include short, basic information with links to more information. These need to be major events or important announcements, for example, deadline for applications, registration deadlines, and so on. We also need generic place holders for each page for the occasional time when there are no announcements.

Ken pointed out that some announcements will be appropriate for more than one page, so there needs to be coordination among the groups submitting information. Juli suggested creating a Web form like the one used to submit items to the Bulletin Boards. The form could prompt for the message, the beginning and ending dates, and the Web pages that the announcement should go on. There was some discussion on how to handle approval for the submitted items, perhaps through University Relations or through restricted access to the form by authorized individuals only. Mark should not have to make any judgment calls on whether or not a particular item is appropriate.

Other thoughts included:

- Assign one of the members from each content working group to coordinate and submit the information.
- Pull items from the Bulletin Board.
- Find an ASISU Program Board person for the Current Students page
- Human Resources and University Relations staff could submit items for the Faculty/Staff page
- Someone from the Alumni Office for the Alumni/Visitors page.
- Someone from the Recruitment Office for the Prospective Students page.

Action Item: Juli will talk about this when the Current and Prospective Students working groups meet.

Action Item: Libby will contact people from the various departments mentioned above.

Agenda Item 6 – Front page adjustments – About ISU/Academics

In an effort to address concerns about visibility for the About ISU link and the desire to keep an Academics button, it was decided to create 2 small buttons, placed side-by-side, for Academics and About ISU. These 2 buttons will provide the “who we are” type of information that is important to a variety of outside visitors. The four “who we serve” buttons will be placed directly below and will continue to support the original user centered, portal design. The Council supported the split button.

The About ISU page needs work. Tony commented that an “about” button is where one often finds information about services, population (traditional versus non-traditional, demographics, and so on), links to the surrounding area, a walking tour of the campus, driving directions, and historical information.

Action Item: Libby will continue to work on this page.

Agenda Item 7 – Content for Academics Page

The Academics Page does not yet exist, as no one is willing to take responsibility for it. This page could include college and department addresses, faculty email addresses, dean-level people (like the Chief Research officer), directory information, research centers, the Accelerator Center,

researchers could be highlighted, information about what is happening in departments could be included, and so on. Additional suggestions can be found in the focus group summary document

Action Item: Juli will rough out a base page that can be taken to department chairs for comment.

Agenda Item 8 – Response to E-mail on Faculty/Staff Web Page

Mark has already made changes based on Cindy's email, but the page is still too busy.

Action Item: Mark will meet with the Faculty/Staff working group before making additional changes. Mark will also meet with the Current/Prospective Students working group. He will report on changes at the September 21st meeting.

Agenda Item 9 – Web Page Workshops

As soon as the new site is launched, Mark will start conducting workshops on how to use the templates. This can be an agenda item for the meeting with Campus Web Liaisons. However, there is an initial workshop for interested people already scheduled for next week.

There was a short discussion about the numerous publishing groups we have on campus. There are currently 180 publishing groups, which is problematic for Mark when he is asked to provide help. Due to system limitations, Mark can only be authorized for 10 publishing groups at any one time. This topic may be raised again in the future.

Agenda Item 10 – Time table for more help for Mark

Blake raised the issue of needing permanent help for Mark. Mark is getting too busy and can not continue to be the only staff person in the Web Services Group. Council needs to think about how to support the promised training for the templates and the ongoing website maintenance. Initially the additional help could be in the form of dedicated student help. All suggestions are welcome.

Agenda Item 11 – Regular meeting times

Council settled on every second Wednesday at 3:00 PM in the Library's conference room. The next meeting will be September 7th.

Adjourned 4:26 PM