Bayer Center for
Nonprofit Management
at Robert Morris University

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Case Study:
Website Development for a Library

The library needed a website with sizzle, and yet manageable without an in-house expert. It ended up with a site as dynamic as they were!

The Client

Libraries, by definition, manage an enormous amount of information. As the digital age advances, a library's nimbleness at managing information digitally is a good indicator of its continued relevance. What does a library do with a large media collection and portfolio of community programs, but a limited amount of in-house website savvy?

The client was a library with about 70 staff members and nearly 200,000 items in its collection. Its original website was built in Dreamweaver as a collection of stand-alone pages with an inconsistent appearance. A single staff member updated content, which affected the quantity and speed of changes made to the site. Later, staff changes resulted in a limited ability to fully brand and control the site's layout and appearance.

The library wanted a more permanent and professional-looking solution, and sought advice from the Allegheny County Library Association. They were referred to the Bayer Center.

Our Work

A Bayer Center consultant sat down with the executive director and marketing director to determine the most important elements of the new website. As well as platform that permits staff to edit and update content easily, staff wanted a site that was is responsive to mobile devices, and could incorporate third party software tools.

With those goals established, the consultant got to work. Selected library staff provided feedback on possible website navigation with an on-line test. Soon, staff could review draft pages and give feedback on the design and functionality. The consultant tested specific tools to make sure they would work within the platform. Previously, the library had been able to list their catalog digitally and collect donations on-line. Now they could also share information on events in a straightforward calendar format, and easily create web-based slideshows of new book releases as the titles arrived.

The Result

After the new website rollout, feedback was immediate. Librarians and staff were pleased with the professional and consistent appearance of the website. They feel they finally have a site that is fitting and reflective of a large library with dynamic programming and services. Marketing staff were excited by the ability to update the website whenever they wish, and were pleased at how easy it was to use the WordPress platform.

Of course, library patrons needed to feel the same degree of enthusiasm. Patrons reported that the new website made it easier to find information on library services and programs. They felt the website was dynamic and easy to navigate– just the sort of experience that today's library wants to generate.

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