Web Advisory Committee

Report to the UTL Strategic Planning Steering Committee
April 2013

The Web Advisory Committee (WAC) would like to thank the Strategic Planning Steering Committee for this opportunity to participate in the strategic planning process.

The University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) website (http://library.utoronto.ca) plays an important role at the University. Apart from the main University of Toronto (UofT) website (www.utoronto.ca), the UTL site is the most heavily used website at the UofT. In 2012, the site had over 2.5 million unique visitors and over 13 million page views. The main goal of the UTL site is to support the mission of the University of Toronto Libraries (http://discover.library.utoronto.ca/general-information/about-the-library/mission-statement). It is the gateway to the Library's vast array of print and online resources, and supports the core functions of the University: research, teaching, and learning. Many of our users only visit the Library via the website. Our site must therefore not only enable easy access to the Library's resources, but must also provide an effective means to communicate with users about the Library's special collections, events, and services. The importance of the UTL site will continue to grow in the coming years with the ubiquitousness of mobile devices, and as the library's online collections become more comprehensive.

The Web Advisory Committee will continue to play an important role in informing future development of the Library's digital presence, and ensuring that the online Library becomes increasingly user-friendly, mobile-optimized, and accessible. This report outlines the key issues, questions, and areas for development pertaining to the Library's digital presence that we believe should be considered in the context of the UTL Strategic Plan.

User Experience
Continue to improve the online user experience through the collection and analysis of user feedback and usage statistics; continue to develop and update best practices in the UTL Web Style Guide.

- Continue the practice of making evidence-based decisions about changes / additions to the website, and to the Library's online presence in general.
- Actively gather user feedback (including staff feedback) about the website / the library's digital presence. It is essential that we develop a better understanding of how people use the library's sites on a day-to-day basis. Feedback should be collected in a variety of ways, including focus groups, surveys, usability testing, online suggestion forms, etc.
- Increase our focus on faculty. Based on the LibQual 2010 results, faculty indicate that the UTL site is not meeting their needs; they continue to be unable to find the resources and information that they need.

- Continue to build our repertoire of analytics tools (including subscribing to Crazy Egg, or other Heat Map software); continue to develop staff expertise in the use of analytics tools.
- Other considerations / questions:
  - Would it be possible for different patron groups (or patrons with different subject interests) to see different homepages / search interfaces when they visit the UTL site? (i.e. Is a greater level of customization be possible?)
  - How can the Library's web presence be modified to best support international students?
  - To provide a seamless experience for the user, it will be important for the Web Advisory Committee to work collaboratively with other Committees, groups, and departments, at UTL, UofT, and even at other institutions.
- Develop additional best practices for the homepage, informed by best practices for the web and the UTL Web Style Guide. For example, develop a content strategy for banners on the site, outlining what to include, why, and when; develop best practices for the development of video tutorials.
- Improve the user experience through design enhancements (layout, colour, images, etc.)

Accessibility
Ensure that the Library's digital presence is accessible to all users.

- Work to ensure that the UTL website and current digital projects will be fully compliant with WCAG 2.0 standards by the 2014 deadline.
- Ensure that all newly created websites and digital projects are fully accessible.
- Assess, recommend, and implement 2021 accessibility standards on public-facing websites and digital projects once the 2014 deadline has been achieved.

Promotions / Communications
Increase the promotion of services, collections, resources, and spaces through the strategic use of the Library's digital presence.

- Expose / highlight services, collections, resources, and spaces more effectively, through targeted promotions, such as specialized tools for faculty, new digital collections, e-books, etc. Many patrons are unaware of key resources in their field(s) of study.
- Ensure the timely use of digital real estate to promote products and services to various audiences, in collaboration with the Library's communications staff.
- Use tri-campus messages consistently in all promotions and communications.
- Research and establish best practices for homepage content and design.
- Communicate the value of the Library by developing and distributing analytics reports for library administration which can be shared with UofT administration, potential donors, etc.
- Learn more about future plans for the UofT website -- how will it change in the next five years? For example, Steven Green's (Director of Online Communications at UofT) branding plan for UofT sites.

New and Emerging Technologies

Continue to investigate new and emerging technologies and their application to libraries. Advise and submit proposals to the University of Toronto Libraries Web Coordinator, and participate in the planning and implementation of new and emerging technologies.

- Continue to simplify the homepage - make iterative design changes based on feedback and quality assessment programs -- this will help to make resources more findable.
- Investigate future plans for UofT's website -- are there plans for a redesign on the horizon?
- Launch mobile / responsive site.
- Increase collaborations and sharing of information with the UTL Mobile Group.
- Consider how a move to the cloud will impact resource management (with a move to Universal Resource Management). What other impact might cloud based technologies have?
- How will touch screens, mobile devices, responsive design, etc. change information and the way we search for / display / find information?
- Develop a better search mechanism. The "Search all" option we currently have does not search all -- we need a web crawler. Building on this, should we have only one search box on our page instead of multiple search tabs? Would this simplify or complicate the search process for our users?
- Usability will change over the next five years -- but how?
- We should continue to explore tools which can be used to collect / analyze data -- we currently have Google Analytics installed; what other tools could we use to gather a more comprehensive picture of how our users are interacting with the site?
- Explore how trends in gamification may impact the website.
- What impact will gesture-based computing and augmented reality have on web development and the way our users interact with the UTL site?
- Should we collaborate more frequently with other institutions and / or departments at UofT? For example, is there software that could be provided elsewhere?
- How can we best support the growing number of international students (and in many cases English Language Learners) at UofT? Is instant translation possible?
- UTL's digital presence continues to grow in importance as reference services continue to be provided online; online instruction increases; etc.
- How can social media be better integrated?
- Adopt a social media strategy.

Staffing

Increase staffing levels, support staff training, and establish collaborations with other partners across campuses and at other institutions.

- ITS is currently understaffed. As the number of UTL websites, digital projects, and other digital initiatives continues to grow, it is essential that ITS be able to continue to hire talented and innovative full-time staff who can support website development as well as UTL staff training.
- Recommend topics for staff training sessions, based on feedback from Committee members. For example, training sessions on analytics tools and accessibility.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration within the tri-campus community and other institutions, such as Scholars Portal, non-central libraries, UofT ITS department, research office, librarians at other universities, etc.
- Should the work of updating content for the website be more fairly distributed? Should people be designated to update content? Should there be a schedule for updates? Who would create this schedule?
- Continue to create videos and other e-learning objects to support online reference services and instruction -- these take staff time (and training) to create. This is equally an issue for the Reference Services and Instruction in Library Use Committees.

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Respectfully submitted by the Web Advisory Committee.