



Web Policies and Standards

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I. Introduction

This document is intended to provide a set of guidelines for those members of the St. Mary's College of Maryland (henceforth, St. Mary's or the College) community who will be preparing HTML documents or other Web content for publishing on the St. Mary's Web site.

St. Mary's provides resources on the World Wide Web for several purposes. These include the following: marketing of the College, the dissemination of information to members of the St. Mary's community, both internal and external; providing an easy and accessible way for others (for instance, prospective students) to learn about St. Mary's; affording more efficient alternatives for data collection and management; and allowing individual departments to reach a greater audience.

With these goals in mind, it is important that the technical features, design, and content of official St. Mary's Web documents follow a set of standards to ensure that the end users get the most out of their St. Mary's Web experience.

II. Definitions

This is a quick-reference glossary for some of the terminology used in this document. If you have any questions about any terms in this document that are not defined here, please contact the Web administrator ([Joshua M. Davis](#)).

Authoring tool - Any piece of software that aids in the construction of Web pages. Examples include Ektron eWebEdit Pro, Macromedia Dreamweaver, and Microsoft FrontPage.

Check in/out - When editing a content block using the Web Content Management System, the content contributor will check out that block. Checking it out prevents any other content contributors from changing the content while the block is modified, ensuring that there are no conflicts.

College seal - The official St. Mary's logo, depicting two sailing ships on the St. Mary's River. An example can be seen in the upper left corner of the first page of this document.

College word mark - The official St. Mary's header, which reads "St. Mary's College of Maryland at Historic St. Mary's City." An example can be seen next to the College seal at the top of the first page of this document.

"Complete" coding - The use of up-to-date coding procedures when writing HTML. Most Web development platforms used at St. Mary's (FrontPage, Dreamweaver, and eWebEditPro) automatically produce "complete" code.

Content block - A portion of a Web page that can be changed by a content contributor.

Content contributor - Maintains the Web site content by creating new content or modifying existing content.

Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) - A 1998 Congressional Act that provides an update to copyright law as it pertains to the Internet and other electronic media.

Dynamic images - An image that changes when the page is reloaded. Several images are stored, and a script in the Web page randomly chooses one to display every time the page is loaded.

Functional element - Non-HTML Web content, usually interactive. Often requires "plug-in" software downloaded from another site. Some examples include Flash movies, PDF documents, and JavaScript.

Global navigation - A set of general links that is available from anywhere on the Web site.

Home page - The top-level "entry" page to a Web site.

Link - Text or an image that, when clicked, redirects the user to a different Web page. Also called a "hyperlink."

Local navigation - A set of links to information specific to a particular page.

Official College Web page - Web pages hosted on the St. Mary's server that are developed for academic divisions, departments, and also administrative offices. The information that these sites provide is considered "official" because it is reviewed for and approved as information representing the mission of the College. These pages go through the same review process as if they were printed materials.

Personal page - A Web page built by a member of the St. Mary's community that is hosted on the College server, but does not meet the requirements for an "Official" page.

Privacy statement - A policy statement that assures users that any information they submit will not be shared with any organization outside of St. Mary's.

Publisher - Approves content to be placed on the Web site.

"Splash" page - An introduction page for a department or office.

Streaming Audio/Video - Video and/or audio files stored on a server that can be played over the Internet as they "stream" to the user. They do not require a full download before they start playing.

User agent - Hardware and/or software that allows a person with a disability to use the Internet.

W3C - The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) develops interoperable technologies (specifications, guidelines, software, and tools) to lead the Web to its full potential. W3C is a forum for information, commerce, communication, and collective understanding. On this page, you'll find [W3C news](#), links to [W3C technologies](#) and ways to [get involved](#).

Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) - An effort to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access Web content by standardizing the production of Web pages.

Web administrator - Sets up the site, registers templates, creates user groups and content groups, and adds users to the Web Content Management System.

Web Content Management System (CMS) - A database-driven software package that allows content contributors to directly manage their portion of a Web site without having to learn HTML code so that the process of updating is more efficient. In addition, keeping the content in a database allows fast, easy, global changes and a more organized infrastructure.

Web page - A single document, usually in HTML format, that is hosted by one computer (the server), but can be viewed by others using a Web browser.

Web site - A collection of linked Web pages maintained by one person or organization.

WYSIWYG - Pronounced "whizzy-wig." Acronym for "What You See Is What You Get." In this case, it refers to a program that allows the user to create a Web page in an authoring tool with familiar text and graphic layout commands while never having to modify any HTML code. Some examples include FrontPage, Dreamweaver, and eWebEditPro.

III. Technical Policies and Standards

The following are some technical guidelines to follow that will help ensure that the St. Mary's Web site runs as efficiently as possible.

Images

- Any image files for display should be no larger than 35 kilobytes, unless approved by the Web team or Web administrator.
- Most images on the Web are stored as compressed bitmaps, the most popular formats being GIF and JPEG. The two formats are relatively similar, but some situations produce better quality or smaller file size when one is used rather than the other. The following guide should be used when trying to determine the proper format for image files.
 - **GIF** - This format should be used when dealing with images that contain line art and large areas of solid color. In addition, GIF images should be on a white background.
 - **JPEG** - This format should generally be used for photos, paintings, and images that include color gradients (places where one color gradually changes to another).
 - **Other formats** - If you feel that the image could be better stored or displayed in a format other than GIF or JPEG, contact the Web administrator.
 - Source images must reside on the Web server.
 - No images that are copyrighted may be used without prior consent of owner.

Functional Elements

- Any additional software other than a Web browser needed to display or run functional elements should be conspicuously noted on the same page as the element. When possible, a link should also be provided to an appropriate download site for the required software. It should never be assumed that the user already has the appropriate software.
- Functional elements which are supported on the St. Mary's server include the following:
 - Common Gateway Interface, Active Server Pages, JavaScript, Cold Fusion and Open Database Controls
 - PDF, Flash, Shockwave, and other plug-ins as long as a link is provided as stated above
 - Streaming media (Currently we have a Windows 2000 Streaming Server)

Coding

- Anyone using a text editor (as opposed to a WYSIWYG editor) to create HTML files should make sure that they use complete coding procedures. The details of "complete" coding change occasionally, and the best way to make sure that the code is up-to-date is to check the latest HTML specification (the most recent version as of now is 4.01) at the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web site (<http://www.w3.org>). Some general guidelines include the following:
 - Closing all tags. If you start a paragraph with `<p>`, you must end it with `</p>`. Many browsers will ignore unclosed tags and display the page as intended, but others may not be able to open it. In addition, many "user agents" may not understand unclosed tags, rendering the page useless to people with disabilities.
 - Avoiding the use of deprecated tags. Many HTML tags have fallen out of use as more efficient ways of doing the same thing have come about, especially in text formatting. Refer to the most recent HTML specification if you are unsure about a tag.
 - Contact the Web Administrator for questions.

IV. Policies and Standards for Design & Usability

In order to maintain an attractive and useful site, the following guidelines should be met.

Basic Style Guide

- Although the templates provided through the Content Management System help maintain a somewhat consistent design for the site, content contributors have a great deal of freedom within the content blocks. Keeping that in mind, it's important that the content contributors follow a few guidelines in order to maintain the professional look of the site.
 - The background color used in the content block should match that of the template (usually blank white). Background designs and images should not be used.
 - Text fonts shall be selected from Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, or Tahoma.
 - Text size and color should be consistent throughout the site.
 - Text should be a color that provides significant contrast to the background color. Lightly colored text is difficult to read on a white background, so make sure you use a dark color for your text.
 - The use of flashing, "marquee," and other animated text should be avoided. They tend to be distracting and cause slower page loads.
 - Pages should be designed to minimize scrolling. If a document is more than two pages in Microsoft Word you should use anchors and a table of contents on the web page or split the document into multiple web pages.

- As a general rule, less is more. The easier it is to find and read information, the more effective that information will be.

Usability

- In order to better design and target the Web site, an effort needs to be made to gather statistics on Web use. Web statistics software should be purchased and implemented.
- Every effort should be made to maintain consistency of design and navigation.

Design Elements

- Each academic division should have an introduction "splash" page containing general information along with staff and faculty listings. These pages will conform to the general design elements of the rest of the site while expressing the unique identity of the division.
- Each unique constituency to the College shall have its own Web portal. These include alumni, families, prospective students, visitors, faculty and staff, and students.

V. Policies and Standards for Content

Official College Pages

- An official college Web page should contain the following information:
 - Division, department, administrative office
 - Phone number
 - Date of last page revision or review
 - A phrase that reads: "If you have questions or wish to report an error on this page, please contact ____."
- Use of College logo, word mark, and tag are for official College Web pages only and are not to be used for personal Web pages (including student club and organization Web pages). These pages do not represent official College information providers, and use of the logo, word mark, and tag is misleading. However, unofficial pages are free to reference their association with the College on their pages.
- Links from official College Web pages to personal pages or other pages not part of the official College Web site must include a disclaimer similar to this: "The College assumes no responsibility for these personal home pages or for the links from these pages." They must also include a link to the college policy.
- Templates will be provided by the Web administrator. These templates must be used for all official pages, excepting those pages hierarchically below the academic divisions' "splash" pages.

The Content Publishing Process

Detailed information about this process will be provided by the Office of Publications and Web Administration. Each user that updates “official” College pages will be given his or her own unique interface. This is a brief overview of how the process works:

- The Web administrator will provide over the phone or by e-mail a user name and password to the content contributor. Using this information, the content contributor will log into their Web Content Management System (CMS) and create their Web page.
- It is the responsibility of the content contributor to have his or her content edited by the Office of Publications and Web Administration. This can be done via e-mail or or hard-copy submission prior to the content being posted “live” on the College Web site.
- The content contributor can then modify their content using the provided WYSIWYG editor, a plain-text HTML editor, or an outside authoring tool (if using an outside authoring tool, the HTML code generated by that tool should be copied and pasted into the plain-text HTML editor within the CMS).
- Once the edited content has been finalized and approved for posting by the Office of Publications and Web Administration, the contributor then can post it “live” to the College Web site by using the interface provided (Josh, what do you mean by “the interface provided”?).

Privacy Statement

- A link to the following shall be included on the front page of the SMCM Web site:

“Maryland law mandates that State agencies shall not create personal records unless the need for the information is clearly established that personal records are relevant to the purposes for which they are collected, be accurate and current, and will not be obtained by fraudulent means.

State officials who request personal data from citizens must notify the citizens regarding the purposes for which the information is collected, the consequences to the citizen for refusing to provide the personal information, the citizen's right to inspect and correct personal records, whether the information is generally available for public inspection, and whether the information is made available to other entities.

Please refer to the [eMaryland technology Web site \(http://techmd.state.md.us/\)](http://techmd.state.md.us/) for additional information on information technology policies in Maryland. The State of Maryland is committed to providing you with Web sites over which you may securely and confidently transact business with the State.”

Copyright Information

- The following copyright notice shall be displayed on each page of the College Web site; these items are included in the template:

© 2004 St. Mary's College of Maryland, 18952 E. Fisher Rd., St. Mary's City, MD 20686-3001; 240-895-2000 USA

- A link to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act Notice shall be provided along with the copyright information.

VI. Policies and Standards for Compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Initiative

With the emergence of the World Wide Web as a primary source of information, guaranteeing the accessibility of that information has become an issue of great importance. With this in mind, St. Mary's sets forth these guidelines as the minimum requirements to be adhered to in the design of Web sites so as to ensure the accessibility of its Web content.

St. Mary's, along with many other institutions and government agencies, endorses the use of the guidelines set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) as the standard for Web accessibility and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The W3C's guidelines for Web accessibility can be found at <http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/>.

Policy

- The St. Mary's Web site will comply with the W3C's AA-level of Conformance for Web content accessibility. This includes the fulfillment of all Priority 1 and Priority 2 checkpoints. In addition, the Web site will include the Priority 3 checkpoints 13.5 and 14.3, the inclusion of navigation bars, and creation of a consistent style of presentation throughout the site, respectively. A checklist of the guidelines to follow can be found <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/full-checklist.html>. As some of the terms may be difficult for the non-technical user to understand, a "plain English" version of the guidelines will be included in the St. Mary's Web FAQ.
- All claims of conformance appearing on a given Web page must meet the standards laid out in Section 5 ("Conformance") of the W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0. The claims should be either in the form of a statement that includes the version, URL of the WAI document, and conformance level (such as "This page conforms to W3C's "Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0", available at <http://www.w3.org/TR/1999/WAI-WEBCONTENT-19990505>, level Double-A."), or as an official WAI icon that is linked according to the guidelines found at <http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG1-Conformance.html>.
- When testing a Web page for accessibility, it is recommended that a variety of Web-browsing software be used. This includes, but is not limited to, graphical Web browsers (like MS Internet Explorer and Netscape), text-based Web browsers (like Lynx and w3m), and Web accessibility user agents (Web content text readers, etc.).

- When compliance to these guidelines is either impossible or would require extraordinary measures to ensure compliance, special exceptions to this policy may be granted by the College's compliance officer.

VII. Changes to Policies and Web Oversight

Web professionals on staff at St. Mary's participate on a Web Core Team. This team is responsible for Web oversight, recommending changes to these policies, and the development and recommendation of new initiatives. Additional positions shall be opened as needed in order to meet the membership needs of the team for Web media and Web marketing specialists, and allow a well-rounded approach to Web oversight. At a minimum, the team shall consist of the Director of Computing, the Web Administrator, a Marketing/Content Editor, a Graphics/Media Editor, and two Web Programmers.

Responsibilities of Team Members

Web Programmer (CARS)

- Take part in the integration of the CARS (campus information system) database into the website.
- Develop solutions for delivering dynamic content through the web site.
- Explore and implement new technologies with the web administrator.
- Provide database driven solutions.
- Third tier backup for the Web.

Web Developer (Publications and Web Administration)

- Take part in the integration of front end dynamic content with the CARS programmer and team.
- Develop solutions for delivering dynamic content through the Web site.
- Explore and implement new technologies with the Web Administrator.
- Provide database driven solutions.
- Become the official backup to the Web Administrator.

Marketing/ Content Editors

- Review content submitted through the approval process and edit as necessary to comply with the College's best interests.
- Supply content, suggestions and participate in the process of content collection.
- Act as a liaison between the Office of Public and Media Relations and Web team.
- Help form the structure of the approval chain for information being posted to the College Web site.

Graphics / Media Editor

- Assist and train content contributors in design elements of content such as page layout, graphics, image selection, and other media elements.
- Supply Web Administrator with new Web-ready media and content as it becomes available for future use.

Web Administrator

- Set up and maintain all user accounts.

- Administrate the content management software and IIS server.
- Oversee the backup of all site data routinely.
- Implement new Web based technologies.
- Implement new templates for content management software.
- Assist staff, faculty and students with Web site development.
- Train faculty, staff, and students on how to develop Web sites using Web development software.
- Work with divisions, departments, and the rest of campus concerning Web-related issues.
- Report statistics and other Web issues to the Web core team.
- Co-lead the Web core team with the Director of Publications.

Director of Publications

- Co-lead the Web core team with the Web Administrator.
- Act a liaison between the College administration and the Web core team.
- Make changes as necessary to ensure all pages conform to this document and conform to visual design standards laid out in the style guide.
- Consult with the Web core team on what type of content is appropriate and may be used on the College Web site.