

Building a Better Website: Website Redesign October 3, 2008

By Jennifer Wile.

Kay Cahill, Vancouver Public Librarian II for Website and Community Development, and Cecily Walker, an Auxiliary Librarian at VPL, former User Experience Architect with HSBC and former Usability Analyst for Sage Software, presented the all-day workshop at the Lynn Valley Main Library.

Considerations for designing a user-centered website

The class received step-by-step instructions for designing a user-centered website as well as an introduction to handy (and free!) online tools that libraries may use to enhance their sites. The first step in the process of making a user-friendly page is to gather all the requirements of the intended user. The presenters gave strategies to gather information and to determine who the users are, what they want from our website, and how to combine this knowledge with our objectives for the site. The next stage is designing an interface that actually helps users find their way rather than confuse them. In this stage, designers should consider using clear language, practical font size and navigational tools as well as tried and true best practices. Presenters then discussed content management systems (CMS) which use databases instead of clunky html pages. CMS allows both site users and creators to seamlessly find or update website content. In addition, using CMS automatically imposes a consistent look on the site.

Other tools

The workshop also covered how to use 2.0 tools and technologies for site enhancement. Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, LibraryThing and Twitter are just some of the available blogging, social networking, and new information sharing applications that site designers may use.

Creating websites

Attendees finished up the session by building a website at www.wordpress.com. Instead of giving handouts Cecily and Kay created, appropriate for a web class, a wiki especially for the session with notes on the website building process, as well as links and instructions on how to use site enhancing applications.

Jennifer Wile is a Youth Services Librarian at Guildford Library