Madison Area Technical College

Madison College Web Style Guide

February 2014

Table of Contents

Goals

The primary goal of the Madison Area Technical College website is to deliver services and information online in an efficient and friendly manner that meets audience expectations. In doing so, the website must be accessible to the widest possible range of audiences, browsers, and platforms. This includes compliance with Section 508 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act which requires that information technology is accessible to people with disabilities.

To aid in achieving this goal, the following guidelines and standards have been developed to ensure consistency, accessibility and visual appeal for all content being developed or edited within the modifiable sections of the website.

Questions or concerns about this guide should be directed to the Marketing Web Content Coordinator via clbreunig3@madisoncollege.edu.

A Note About Style

On the web, we cannot completely control how the text will display to users. Users can set their web browsers to display text the way they want it to look. The best we can do is set a style so that text will display as close to the way we want it to look in as many browsers as possible. These styles have been pre-set for you in the Content Management System (CMS). **Please use them**. Using workaround methods to control the font size, font face, and font color could cause accessibility issues, and our site needs to be in compliance with the 508 Accessibility Standards.

Text-wise, the college uses 42nd edition of *The Associated Press Stylebook* as its style guide. Exceptions to this stylebook are noted on p. 7 of this document. For words or phrases not covered by the AP stylebook or the Madison College exceptions list, please refer to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary at http://www.merriam-webster.com.

A Few Notes About Writing for the Web

Users read text differently in a web browser than they do on a printed page. They scan headlines, subheads and links to quickly find the information they are looking for rather than reading every word. In addition, search engines, such as Google, index and rank web pages based on the pages' content. Therefore, content must be written differently for the web than it is for printed materials.

To help readers quickly find the information they are looking for, content should be written in short, concise paragraphs called "chunking". Descriptive headings, subheads and links should be used, not only to help readers find what they are looking for, but to help indicate to search engines what the content on the page is about.

Less is more. Copy should be kept as short and simple as possible and written in a "top down" style with the most important information at or near the top of the page ("above the fold") to ensure that it is visible to a reader who does not scroll.

When writing for the web, it is also important to remember that users might arrive on a given page in many different ways. Therefore, each page should be written to work as a stand-alone page and should not presume that the reader has arrived via a certain path. Keeping each page focused on a specific topic also aids with search engine ranking.

Please use only one space after the end of a sentence. Bold or italics, not underlining, should be used to emphasize information within paragraphs.

If you would like your page to be found using Google Search, make sure to include common search terms in the copy of your page. If you do not include a common search term in your copy, your page will not appear in the search results for that term.

General Guidelines and Recommended Best Practices

The following general guidelines and recommended best practices should be observed to ensure maximum website usability and accessibility:

- **College Name** – All references to the college should be Madison College or Madison Area Technical College, not MATC.

- **College Email** – When listing an email address on the website, users should use the "user@madisoncollege.edu" email address in all lower case letters.

- **Current Browsers**—Web pages and edits are created using Drupal CMS software which is accessed via a web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Opera, etc.) To ensure that you are working with the most current version of the browser, always let your browser check for updates before beginning your work in the CMS.

- **Page titles** should reflect the content of the page, both to ensure that the URL generated by the CMS is user-friendly and to optimize the page for search engines.

- **Heading tags** should be used to help prioritize information on the page as well as to indicate its importance to search engines. For example, the most important information should use Heading 1 which generates an <h1> tag through the Drupal CMS.

- **Links** should be descriptive of the information that they are linking to. (For example, "Use our Online Application Form" not "Click here to apply", "Wisconsin Technical College System website" not http://www.witechcolleges.com) or "Registration Form (PDF, 100 KB)" not "Registration Form (PDF, 100 KB)".

- **Linking** should be done from fac/staff pages to the primary pages of the site, not the other way around. This will prevent links from becoming broken if the fac/staff pages are made secure in a later phase of the website project.

- **Links** to pages outside the Madison College website should be set to open in a new window so that users aren't taken away from the Madison College site. Links to pages within the Madison College website should open in the same window. Links to documents should open in a new window.

- **Tables** should be used for tabular data only. They should not be used be used to create layouts as they hinder accessibility.

- **Captions** should be used to describe any important information conveyed through visuals or sounds in multimedia content to aid accessibility. Be careful when providing identifying information about students, as too much information can sometimes be dangerous.

- **Images** should not contain important text, such as headlines, as this limits accessibility.

- **Links to video or audio files** should be followed by a description informing the user of the file format and file size in kilobytes so that they know what to expect prior to downloading.

- **File formats** - The following file types can be uploaded into the Drupal CMS: .JPG, .GIF, .PNG, .TXT, .DOC, .XLS, .PDF and .CSV.

- **File names** for ALL files uploaded to the website (image files, forms in the Forms database, Word documents, PDF's, etc.) should use the following naming conventions:

    o File names should contain ONLY letters, numbers, dashes and underscores.
    o Do not use special characters {such as : . ; & * ( ) [ ] ' " ! # $, etc.}.
    o Dashes or underscores should be used instead of spaces. (Dashes are preferred.)
    o No more than one dash should be used in succession.
    o Lowercase letters are preferred, but uppercase is acceptable.

- **Image sizing** – The Drupal CMS will automatically size images as they are uploaded. However, if you have the ability to size your photos in a photo editing program such as Photoshop or Fireworks prior to uploading them into the CMS, photos should be no larger than 525 pixels wide x 575 pixels high, and the file size should be 30 K or less.

- **Image borders** - The Drupal CMS is set to default to no border. If you feel that your image needs a border, for example, to separate an image with a light background from the background of the web page, please specify a 3-point border or less by entering a 1, 2 or 3 in the "Border" box on the "Image Info" tab in the "Image Properties" dialog box in Drupal.

- **Legal Considerations** – Any images or videos used on Madison College web pages must have all of the appropriate rights and permissions. Any necessary release forms must be signed by the person(s) appearing in the images or videos (or a parent or guardian if the subject is under 18). Appropriate permissions must be obtained for the use of any images not owned by Madison College that are protected by copyright restrictions. Photo release forms can be found in the Forms and Documents Database under "Permission to Publish." Please contact the Marketing Department if you are concerned about the usability of any unsourced or otherwise questionable imagery.

- **Appropriate Images** - Any photos deemed unacceptable by the Marketing Department or Web Strategies Team will be removed from the website.

- **Image Accessibility** – Always fill out the "Alternative Text" field in the "Image Properties" dialog box in the Drupal CMS when adding images to your web page. This not only helps visually impaired individuals who are using screen readers, it also identifies the photo content for sighted users if the image should fail to load. **Animated .GIFs are not allowed.**

- **Accessibility of Information** – Information should be placed directly into the CMS whenever possible to ensure maximum searchability, accessibility and usability. If it is necessary to place information into a downloadable document format such as a .PDF, .DOC or .XLS, a description of the file format and size should follow the file link so that users know what to expect when they download. The descriptive name of the file should be used to create the link, not the file format: ex. "Registration Form (PDF, 100 KB)" not "Registration Form (PDF, 100 KB)

- **Forms and Documents** – Before uploading a copy of a Madison College form into the CMS, check the "Forms and Documents" database (http://intranet.matcmadison.edu/forms-db) for faculty/staff forms, (http://intranet.matcmadison.edu/student-forms for student forms) to avoid duplication as well as to ensure that you are working with the most current version.

- **Microsoft 2007** – If you are using the 2007 version of a Microsoft program, save your documents as a 2003 version to ensure that all users will be able to open them.

- **Approvals** – Those creating content should follow the publishing process set up for their role by their area to ensure that content has the necessary approvals prior to publishing.

Web Author Checklist

Text

- ☐ Page titles are meaningful and reflect the content of the page.

- ☐ Heading tags are used appropriately to reflect the importance of content.

- ☐ Important information displays "above the fold" to minimize the need for scrolling.

- ☐ Links are descriptive of the information that they are linking to. (No "Click here" links.)

- ☐ There is only one space, not two, after the end of each sentence.

- ☐ Information within paragraphs is emphasized with bold or italics, **not** underlining.

- ☐ Spell check has been run.

- ☐ Copy has been also been checked by a human for proper spelling, grammar and style.

- ☐ The page has been added to the A to Z Index as appropriate.

Images and Video

- ☐ All necessary signatures have been obtained from any person(s) depicted in images or video.

- ☐ All necessary permissions have been obtained for the use of images, video or other graphics not owned by Madison College.

Accessibility/Usability

- ☐ Descriptive alternate text has been entered for all images.

- ☐ Downloadable files such as .PDF, .DOC and .XLS are followed by a description of the file format and the file size (Ex. PDF, 100 KB) and the file name, not the format type, is used as the link.

- ☐ Important text is not contained in images (which would limit accessibility.)

- ☐ Captions have been used to describe any important information conveyed through visuals or sounds in multimedia content.

- ☐ Links to video or audio files are followed by a description of the file format and file size in kilobytes.

- ☐ Links to other sites are set to open in a new window.

Approvals

- ☐ Pages have been approved for publishing by the appropriate department designee.

Testing

- ☐ All links and forms have been tested by the web author and at least one other person prior to publishing.

- ☐ All links and forms have been tested on the web site after publishing.

Exceptions to the 42nd edition of *The Associated Press Stylebook* and other usage unique to Madison College*:*

- eBusiness
- ecommerce
- email
- instructors – not professors, teach classes at Madison College
- program – the word "program" is not capitalized in the names of programs, but the name of the program is capitalized. Ex. Accounting program.
- username
- web
- web-based
- webmaster
- web page
- web server
- website
- (area code) 555-5555 for phone numbers

Also, for consistency, please use initial caps on all main words in A-Z Index entries.

Other Commonly Used Technical Terms

- desktop
- file name
- home page
- Internet
- log in, login (Two words when used as a verb: "log in to your account." One word when used as a noun: "Enter your login.")
- online
- style sheet, CSS, Cascading Style Sheet
- WWW (World Wide Web)

Definition/Terms

browser   a program used to view and interact with content on the World Wide Web.

CMS   abbreviation for Content Management System, a computer application used to create, edit, manage and publish web content without the need for knowledge of HTML or other web coding to create the pages

Drupal   the Content Management System software used to create and edit pages for the Madison College website.

.GIF   Graphics Interchange Format. This file format is generally used for line art and is limited to no more than 256 colors.

.JPG (JPEG) Joint Photographic Experts Group. .JPG is a compressed format that is generally applied to photos.

.PNG   Portable Network Graphic. A newer compressed graphic format, similar to the GIF format but more flexible with respect to the types of images it can be applied to.

URL   Uniform Resource Locator. The address of the web page, as typed into a browser. (Example: http://madisoncollege.org is the URL of Madison College home page.) The full domain name and path to any given web site or file accessible through the web.

Custom URL A domain name that represents a separate point of entry into a site other than the primary point of entry through the public web site.

Uploading Video

Drupal allows web authors to post videos to web pages using a YouTube URL. Videos should be approved by Marketing and Creative Services before posting.

All videos should be provided to Marketing and Creative Services for review and approval prior to posting on the Internet. Within two days of receipt, the video will be reviewed for content and branding prior to approval. Videos can be sent to Casey Walker via email (clbreunig3@madisoncollege.edu) or via interoffice mail.

Upon approval, the video can be uploaded to YouTube immediately. The preferred YouTube Channel to host all Madison College videos is http://www.youtube.com/MadisonCollegeVideo, maintained by Marketing and Creative Services. This channel is established and branded as the official YouTube Channel for Madison College. If the video is uploaded to another YouTube Channel, the Channel must subscribe to MadisonCollegeVideo.

In accordance with Section 508, all videos must be closed captioned. The YouTube voice recognition captioning satisfies this legal obligation. If a video is not able to be captioned using the voice recognition tool, the video text must be linked from the video description or a captioning file must be uploaded to the YouTube video.

Appendix: Sample Photo Usage Permission Request

Dear _____,

I am writing to request permission to use the following image*(s)* on the Madison Area Technical College website: *insert description or identifying information about image or images you are requesting permissions for. For example, "the iPod nano image appearing on the following page of your website: ttp://www.apple.com/ipodnano/."*

The image(s) would be used *insert information about how you are planning to use the image(s) specifying exactly how you intend to use it/them, including any usages beyond the website. For example, "to show the prizes that can be won through a random drawing by participants in our Graduate Follow-Up Survey. We would like to use the image(s) in an e-mail to the graduates, on the web page that tells about the survey, and on the printed materials that accompany the survey in the mail." Note: if the use is for a non-profit educational purpose, please state this fact as organizations are more likely to grant permission and not charge a fee.*

The images would appear on our website *specify the time frame for which the image(s) would be used. For example, " for one year," "indefinitely," "throughout the promotion period which begins on x date and ends on x date."*

Please let me know by *insert deadline* if this usage/these usages would be acceptable. Please let me know also if there are any special restrictions or specific wording such as photography credits that must accompany the usage of *this image/these images*.

Thank you!

Sincerely,