

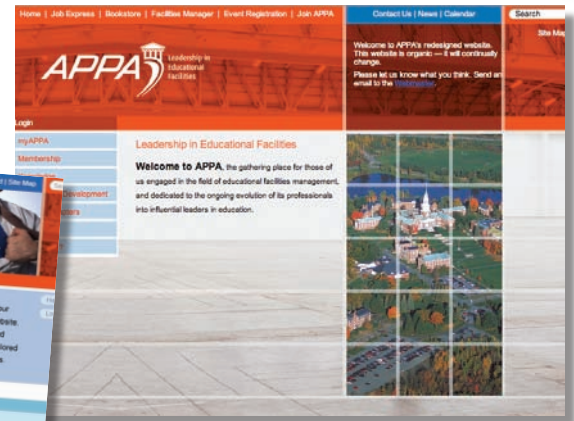


Extreme Website Makeover

By Norm Young and Leslie Young

If you go to www.appa.org, you will see a complete website overhaul. After a great deal of membership demands, the deed is done. APPA staff, Information and Research Committee members, and consultants spent six months evaluating needs, building the framework, and implementing a robust tool for our members to use as the premier resource for enhancing, maintaining, and protecting the quality of their educational facilities, as well as promoting leadership in the profession.

This accomplishment also supports Strategy #2 of APPA's 7 Key Strategies: to "develop and implement an enhanced



website to become the 'go to' resource for facilities questions." Now, members and other users can easily navigate and access desired information on our website—all within a distinct look and feel that incorporates APPA's new brand identity and aligns with the mission, vision, and values of our association. This is a big moment for APPA.

Features of the New Face of APPA

Ease of Navigation: We have arranged the website so that the content is more intuitively-oriented. There is now a direct link to region/chapters on the homepage to emphasize this symbiotic and collaborative relationship, as these organizations are the grassroots of APPA.

Enhanced Search Engine: The new search engine is located in the top right corner of each page on the site. This gives users the ability to locate desired data and information based on content areas, topics or programs, and returns more results than ever before.

Introducing myAPPA: myAPPA is your personal portal for viewing your history and activity with APPA, including lists of professional development courses you have taken; registration for events and/or educational programs; the ability to change your personal information; access to and tracking of your participation in the annual Facilities Performance Indicators Survey; access to APPA's online Bookstore including the tracking of your publications history, and much more.

Primary Representatives will also be able to renew their membership and pay their dues through myAPPA.

(The target launch date for applying and paying for new APPA memberships will be fall 2008.)

Bookstore Redesign: Stock your shelves with APPA's books by visiting the newly designed online APPA Bookstore. Enhanced features of the new bookstore include:

- A shopping cart that allows you to save your items so that you may view and change upon your next log in.
- Easy-to-use search function by author, title, and topic.
- Ability to check the status of your order.
- Ability to track your shipment.

Message Board: This online networking feature allows you to stay connected through various forums, created based on discussion topics. There will be member- only and general public areas for messaging and information sharing. In these areas, you can chat, post messages, or send an e-mail to a colleague.

Contribute Software: APPA staff use this comprehensive content management software to make changes on individual program webpages themselves. This removes a layer from the updating process and ensures current and relevant information is quickly disseminated to members.

SO WHAT'S IN A WEBSITE ANYWAY?

There are a number of comprehensive and user-friendly features implemented on the new site. These features and enhancements will help you as members build credibility, stay informed, and stay connected.

The website is the virtual front door for all organizations. APPA.org creates an impression to visitors just as we do when we welcome people into our own homes. As guests arrive at our door, they get an immediate sense of APPA, what we do, and what we have to offer. It is critical for us to project an interesting, dynamic, and professional first impression. We want to clearly state our identity on our homepage

through words and images which engage young and seasoned professionals alike.

Of course, first impressions only go so far. There must be substance and relevance backing up those impressions. The ability to provide useful information on a variety of topics with intuitive navigation and continual updates builds credibility and enhances the importance of APPA as a "go to" resource for facilities professionals.

WHAT'S MY MEMBER BENEFIT?

There are many tangible benefits for us as members. The new site is generally more accessible and easier to use. The homepage is much cleaner and more dynamic, providing a quick view of the latest news and events. The navigation is intuitive, and most information can be accessed with only a few clicks. The enhanced search engine is a substantial improvement from previous versions and allows for instant access to

virtually any information on the APPA website. Another substantial improvement is a new content management system which enables APPA staff from various departments to update sections of the website as needed. This software will greatly enhance the ability of staff to keep the site current without relying on technical support.

All of these features will result in a direct benefit to APPA members, as more timely and detailed information and resources will be at our fingertips.

POSITIONING FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

Creating the new APPA website is just the beginning of the transformation. The subtext of Strategy #2 notes:

"As the world shifts technology from information to communication, it will be critical for APPA to compete with other providers by improving the content and delivery of its website."

Now that we have this exciting tool,

we must continue to focus on vision and transformation in the evolution of APPA's site. Thus, the Information and Research Committee has established a standing website subcommittee to work with APPA staff to ensure the site remains comprehensive, collaborative, and credible. A website is a living thing, so as APPA grows, the content will expand and change to adapt to member needs well into the future.

Visit your new APPA home and let us know what you think at webmaster@appa.org. ☎

Norm Young is the executive director of facilities at the University of Hartford in Connecticut and a member of APPA's Information and Research Committee. E-mail him at young@hartford.edu. Leslie Young is APPA's web and database systems manager. E-mail her at leslie@appa.org. This is their first article for *Facilities Manager*.

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