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Digital Communications Newsletter, Oct 2018

University of Maine Digital Communications

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UMaine website managers

Community update • October 2018

You are receiving this email because you have an account in UMaine’s public website system, WordPress. If you no longer manage web content, please contact us at um.weboffice@maine.edu

In this email:

- Website tool — Monsido
- Upcoming training dates
- Using "shortcodes" to make buttons
- Feedback needed: Social sharing buttons
- Best practices: Accessibility and videos

If you have a question you would like to see answered, let us know.

Website tool — Monsido

The University of Maine System has provided a website tool to aid in the important
task of managing the quality and accessibility of web content. Monsido has been scanning UMaine websites, and interactive reports are now available:

- Quality Control: Identify broken links
- Search Optimization: Find duplicate page titles
- Web Accessibility: List images that need alt text

Digital Communications can set you up with an account in Monsido; email mike.kirby@maine.edu to get started, and review your site's scan results.

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**Upcoming training dates**

*Training is conducted in the Marketing and Communications conference room on the second floor of Alumni Hall (next to Fogler), suite 213*

**UMaine WordPress Basics:** Thursdays, 10 - 11:30 a.m.  
October 18 & 25, November 1, 8, 15 & 29  
Do you have new students working on your website? Need a WordPress refresher? Digital Communications offers training in the basics of our WordPress system every week. This 90-minute session covers the basics of WordPress—how to log in, create pages, and edit header, footer and sidebar elements. We welcome anyone and everyone to join us for an orientation or refresher. Walk-ins are fine, but if you can let us know you are coming that’s always a good idea. Just email um.weboffice@maine.edu to give us a heads up.

**SEO Workshops:** Alternating Thursdays, 2 - 3 p.m.  
November 1, 18 & 29 — *participants booked, wait list available.*  
Taking participant reservations for December 13 & 27  
What is SEO? This jargon is an abbreviation for “search engine optimization,” and our SEO workshops will explain what you should focus on to improve how your web pages are found by users of Google, Bing and our own UMaine site search. For each workshop we will focus on a participant’s website, identifying changes to content and structure that can have a positive impact. These workshops are intended for small groups, so please email mike.kirby@maine.edu to express interest and get your spot saved for an upcoming date.

**NEW UMaine Map Training:** Alternating Wednesdays, 10 - 11:30 a.m.  
November 7 & 21  
Our most recent new feature: maps for your websites. If you need to depict points of interest on campus, across the state, or around the globe, our new map feature is worth exploring. In this training you will learn how to create individual map points, categorize map points together in a single map, and customize the map points by...
adding icons for easy visual identification. Please email um.weboffice@maine.edu to schedule one of the upcoming dates in November.

[button url="https://umaine.edu/"] Button Example [/button]

Using "shortcodes" to make buttons
A shortcode is a WordPress-specific code that lets you embed content or create objects that normally require complicated HTML code in just one line. For example, you can use a shortcode to make link text look like a button.

The basic button shortcode
To create a button you will place the following text into your page editor:

[button url="https://umaine.edu/"] UMaine home page [/button]

- The square brackets [ ] tell WordPress that this is a shortcode, and the text immediately after the first bracket identifies the specific shortcode. In this case, 'button' specifies that this shortcode is for a button.
- Any other content [inside the brackets] is considered an "attribute." In this case, 'url' is an attribute that specifies the link destination for the button, and the URL of the link appears afterward: url="https://umaine.edu"

There is an optional attribute, caps, which is used to control capitalization. If not specified, the button text will be all caps. (see documentation)
- For the button shortcode, text after the first set of [brackets] will display in the button, and another set of brackets, [/button], is used to tell WordPress that the text for the button is complete.

The result of the above example will display on your page as this:

UMAINE HOME PAGE

For more button options, and other shortcodes we provide, please see our User Guide.
Feedback needed: Social sharing buttons and "Jetpack"

When the current generation of UMaine websites launched in 2015, we chose to adopt a set of features (a "plugin" in WordPress terms) that included social sharing buttons for posts. As an administrator for your site, you may have noticed a link in your dashboard for "Jetpack" that includes many features that can be enabled for a site.

In the last year, we have come to realize that Jetpack is not a good fit for every site on umaine.edu. As umaine.edu has grown to include over 350 websites, each activation of this Jetpack feature has required additional overhead to maintain server performance. Of greater concern is that Jetpack is a large and complicated set of features that mostly go unused, and it has required updates and analysis to ensure our site is secure from exploits.

In the coming months, we will be de-activating Jetpack on most umaine.edu websites. For many sites this will be a seamless transition. The most commonly used feature that will disappear are the social sharing buttons at the bottom of posts (see above image for an example of this). Our own research into current best practices has shown that these social sharing buttons are not used as much as they had been years ago, and we do not plan to replace this feature.

If you use your website for posts (news and updates, usually) and are concerned about this change, we want to hear from you. Please email um.weboffice@maine.edu to share your thoughts.

Best practices: Accessibility and videos

Web accessibility has always been a requirement for UMaine websites, and Digital Communications will be increasing our efforts to improve the accessibility of web content on umaine.edu in the coming year. The term "accessibility" refers to our efforts to remove barriers that prevent access to websites by people who have a disability. This month, we focus on video, and the accessibility considerations you should make for your website.

What is "accessible video"?

All video shared publicly on a UMaine website should be made accessible, but what
does that mean? An accessible video should include features that allow everyone to understand the contents of the video. This means that a transcript should accompany the video, and captions are available through the video player controls.

Offer a transcript
A transcript is a text version of the video content. It will include all spoken audio, identifying the speaker of each line. On-screen text and descriptions of key visual information should also be provided where they occur in the timeline of the video. If the video was shot from a written script, that can be a great source for the transcript. In addition to abiding by accessibility requirements, a transcript is indexed by search engines and can improve search traffic to your video. Transcripts can be made for a video through third-party services, and typically cost $1 per minute of video.

Provide captioning
Captions are provided on-screen, synchronized with the video. Offering captions is useful for a variety of reasons outside of accessibility—some of your audience may want to watch the video on mute, and captions can help non-native English speakers understand the video. Captions can be made using free tools from YouTube, and there is a captioning service available through the University of Maine System’s Kaltura video platform.

Audio Description
The latest web accessibility guidelines advise that videos should also have a secondary audio track available that provides descriptive audio. We do not currently have an available platform to serve videos with descriptive audio tracks, but once that capability becomes widespread, we will update the community.

If you have questions about video you want to embed on your website, please contact us at um.weboffice@maine.edu for advice on transcripts and captioning.

We hope you have found this update from Digital Communications helpful. Feel free to forward this newsletter to a colleague:
status in employment, education, and all other programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies: Sarah E. Harebo, Director of Equal Opportunity, 101 North Stevens Hall, University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469-5754, 207.581.1226, TTY 711 (Maine Relay System).

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