

CRM and the WWW

The World Wide Web presents significant opportunities for cultural resource managers by enabling distribution of information to diverse and new constituencies; allowing electronic publication of timely news regarding critical legislation and organizational information; and by encouraging communication and collaboration among peers through e-mail and listservs. To assist managers in capitalizing on these new and expanding opportunities, this article will provide an overview of existing cultural resource management Web sites, describe the range of information available, identify the characteristics of successful Web sites, and suggest ways the Web can be used to further organizational missions.

For those unfamiliar with the Web, information is located by conducting key word searches, typing in known Web addresses, following links at sites called up by searches, or through electronic resource directories. The two most prominent cultural resource management-related directories are Internet Resources for Heritage Conservation, Historic Preservation and Archaeology (National Center for Preservation Technology and Training) and PreserveNet (Cornell University). Cyburbia, Dan Tasman's planning-related directory, is another good starting point.

Some idea of the Web's growth was provided in the January 6, 1998 issue of *PC Magazine*, which reported that more than 42 million of approximately 100 million US households owned personal computers, and of these households, approximately 18 million were connected to the Web—five times the number of households online in 1995. IBM has estimated that by 2001, 550 million people will have access to the Web. Since 1995, America Online® nearly doubled its subscriber base to 11 million users. Most people can now access the Web via home-based computers or in their office, at school, or through friends and relatives. Many public libraries offer Web access. With the introduction of high-speed telephone lines and faster modems, the current rate of growth will continue.

To put these statistics in the context of cultural resource management, *Preservation* magazine recently reported that the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Web site is getting approximately 80,000 visitors a week. Since 1995, Web sites have been established by many government agencies and private organizations concerned with

cultural resource management, including UNESCO and ICOMOS, as well as the Advisory Council, National Park Service (NPS), National Preservation Institute, and Preservation Action. These sites provide a wide range of program, reference, support, and contact information to professionals, while offering information to other constituencies such as tourists and educators. The NPS National Register site includes information on teaching and heritage tourism. The National Trust's site provides extensive information to the casual visitor; specialized information is available to members with passwords. Features include a preservation timeline, action items, member e-mail directory, listserv, and a database of publications.

State-level cultural resource management sites have been developed by state historic preservation offices (SHPOs) and statewide preservation organizations. As of January 1998, approximately 36 out of 50 (or 72%) of SHPOs had Web sites; 10 statewide preservation organizations also had sites. The following are some SHPO Web site highlights: the Alabama site includes an illustrated list of threatened historic properties for sale; Connecticut's site includes its quarterly newsletter and links to state-owned historic sites; Florida includes press releases, links, employment opportunities, departmental publications, state history and facts, and a detailed schedule of training programs; North Carolina lists county summaries of historic preservation activities and resources; and Kansas has links to census data, "cool things," publications, and a "behind-the-scenes tour." State-level sites are excellent tools for educating the public and raising awareness of cultural resources.

At the local level, Web sites are being developed by municipal governments and historic preservation organizations, museums, historical and archeological societies, main street organizations, and business improvement districts. These sites typically contain information on local resources and preservation efforts; many feature "virtual tours" of historic districts, rehab project reports, design guidelines, and information designed to promote local resources. Web sites have been or are being developed by professional organizations such as the Society of Architectural Historians, the AIA, and conservation organizations. There are commercial sites established by a range of consultants, craftspeople, and suppliers. Special interest sites abound: for example, Anthony Cohen's, "The Walk to Canada: Tracing the Underground Railroad" site offers an excellent example of how Web sites can make cultural resources come alive. Some sites focus on historic house museums, such as the Monticello Web site.

Some Web sites focus on architecture: Cameron Newham is attempting to photograph every building listed in Pevsner's *Buildings of England*.

Ian Evans' "World of Old Houses" is an extensive Web-based guide to caring for and restoring old houses.

The growth of the Web has enabled us to locate and download CRM legislation; search the National Register and HABS/HAER databases; find employment, internship, and grant opportunities; review program information; conduct library catalog searches; and, communicate with distant colleagues. As with traditional library resources, careful users must evaluate the reliability of Web-based information. The most effective and useful Web sites have the following characteristics in common:

- They provide a site index and are easily navigable; they are not graphics intensive.
- They are continually updated and improved.
- They provide pertinent contact information.
- They focus on a wide and diverse audience, not just CRM professionals.
- They make preservation relevant for the average person.
- They make connections and integrate issues such as conservation, transportation, fundraising, etc.

While the majority of cultural resource sites use the Web mainly for publication of program information, some organizations are beginning to

utilize the more dynamic character of the Web. In the near future, cultural resource sites will offer distance learning opportunities, facilitated discussion groups on local issues, promotion of action items and daily updates such as the ISTEA Reauthorization site, and teleconferencing.

Although some of the most technologically sophisticated sites were expensive to develop, it is fairly easy to learn the programming language (HTML) used to create Web pages. In short, by introducing new audiences to cultural resource issues, facilitating remote communication between peers, reducing the cost of information distribution, and significantly expanding the range of easily accessible information, the World Wide Web is an increasingly powerful educational and promotional tool.

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The author's list of relevant WWW resources is presented on the back cover of this issue.

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Amoeba—NPS Technical Information on the Web

The Technical Information Center (TIC), Denver Service Center (DSC) is the oldest and largest information system in the National Park Service (NPS). TIC contains materials from all over the NPS including drawings and documents on the infrastructure of the NPS dating back to the 1800s. Parks and regions routinely send copies of materials to TIC for micro-filing and inclusion in the TIC database; the collection exceeds 800,000 drawn images and a larger number of document images.

TIC is the only service wide collection in the NPS that houses technical information images in an organized, easily retrievable manner. The collection contains such important documents as the original drawings for Ellis Island, a 1930s vegetation map of the Great Smoky Mountains, and images of Alcatraz and ships in San Francisco Harbor (these drawings were borrowed from the museum there, filmed and returned). Just as we have ensured during the past 28 years that an institutional technical memory of our park infrastructures has been preserved, we need to ensure that the new electronic files/memory are preserved; by preserving these, a new age of self-delivery of information will result.

The Amoeba Project is a document and imaging project being conducted by TIC. The vision for Amoeba is that it will be the central repository/single point-of-access for NPS-wide data stored in Denver. Increasingly, there has

been a demand by the public and the NPS to make these documents readily available. In order to move toward an integration of electronic files and images (i.e., CAD files linked with drawing image, GIS files linked with map images, word-processed files linked with document images), the TIC system was converted to Lotus Notes® in December 1997. An Intranet (local area network) server has been set-up. This allows TIC to publish data to the Internet while linking scanned images and electronic documents to database entries. Denver-based NPS employees, parks, and members of the general public will soon be able to view these documents with Web browser software, print copies of drawings, and conduct research. TIC is used by park personnel, central office personnel, and the public to accomplish the following:

- Identify NPS plans for use as models or standards for new projects and resource management.
- Develop descriptions of the cultural and natural context of a site.
- Obtain information to assist in disaster recovery
- Preserve legal documents.
- Increase public understanding of NPS resources.
- Provide research materials for scholars and writers.
- Furnish historical information to readers of history.

Our scanning and database conversion is a major undertaking in making TIC's wealth of information available to greater audiences across the nation.

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