

REPORT TO
THE RSS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
FROM THE
RSS WEB SITE EVALUATION TASK FORCE, *ad hoc*

ALA Midwinter Meeting
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Task Force charge:

“Evaluate and suggest modifications on improving accessibility of RSS web content.”

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RSS WEBSITE

Introduction

The RSS website is our “face” to our members, nonmembers, and potential members. As such, it should reflect high standards of accuracy, currentness, and design. It should be easily navigable, transparent in organization, and very up-to-date. While some aspects of our website are not under our Webmaster’s control but rather are dictated by the template format provided by ALA, everything we do have control over should reflect our commitment to providing quality information both about our section and the activities we support. We should use our website to publicize what we do, to show everyone why they should be a part of our activities, and to tell everyone how they can become an active partner in our section. The ability of our website to give accurate and current access to our resources is directly influenced not only by the capabilities and attention of our Webmaster but also by the attention of our leaders at all levels to the content of webpages directly relevant to their own activities.

Some lapses are evident on our current website and many of these lapses adversely affect our image as a dynamic section with talented leadership and much to offer reference librarians in support of their careers and everyday job duties. These lapses are everyone’s problem and need to be corrected. Corrective action will be needed not only by our Webmaster but also by all committee chairs and the Executive Committee. One corrective action which might prove beneficial to the future of our webpages is to establish one committee within RSS (either the Executive Committee, the Organization and Planning Committee, another existing section committee, or a new section committee) which can serve as an advisory board with oversight to help the Webmaster manage the look and content of the RSS webpages. It is already obvious that committee and discussion group chairs need to pay closer attention to the content and format of their respective committee and discussion group webpages. The timeliness with which changes are made to the website appears to need significant improvement.

After an initial examination of RSS webpages in December 2005 and April 2006, John Hepner revisited all RSS webpages on 17 June 2006 (a few days before the annual conference in New Orleans) and inventoried errors, inaccuracies, and omissions he encountered. His inventory of problems has been the basis for this report. Most of the problems were verified to still exist on the website 30 September 2006. Some problems have been corrected as noted in update notes. See Appendix for the full inventory of problems and recommendations.

Summary of Recommendations for Webmaster

1. RSS Events webpage should be updated much earlier than it has been for both Midwinter meetings and annual conferences. Schedules should be entered as soon as notification of the dates and times of meetings and programs are released by ALA. The schedule also should be updated with room locations when the room assignments are released by ALA. If any changes are made, these should be posted as soon as they are identified. The RSS Webmaster should be included on the mailing list for conference schedules released through ALA.

2. Care should be taken by the Webmaster in formatting pages and correcting formatting problems. All reloaded pages should be checked by the Webmaster as they are posted to identify and correct immediately any inadvertent formatting problems.
3. Navigation links on each page should avoid redundancy. We should be linking to the forms webpage for all forms. We should be emphasizing clean navigation through the RSS webpages, using only enough links relevant to the webpage on which the links appear.
4. In general, all links on all RSS webpages should be checked regularly for accuracy but especially when any reorganization of pages, editing of pages, or changes in the server are made.
5. Check alphabetizing in lists before and after loading webpages. Correct any mistakes immediately upon discovery.
6. The Webmaster should be making corrections promptly on committee webpages when committee names and/or descriptions change. The Webmaster should be receiving and reviewing all RSS minutes and annual reports both from the Executive Committee meetings and from the individual committees to identify when changes are made. Webmaster attendance at all Executive Committee meetings also should alert the Webmaster to changes.
7. All meeting minutes should include the year as well as the month and day in the “Dates” section when they are submitted. Meeting minutes for each committee should be updated as soon as new minutes are received by the Webmaster. The Webmaster should be included on the mailing list to receive all minutes as they are submitted. Minutes should be retained indefinitely on the RSS website to serve as an archive documenting all activities of the section.
8. Historic documentation from MOUSS and its reorganization to RSS should be provided on its own webpage to which other webpages can refer. Also, because the RSS and MOUSS documents relate to the section as a whole, they should be linked on the RSS section webpage. “RSS Documents” should link to our current documents relating to RSS.
9. The textual list on the committees webpage arranges committees alphabetically by keyword in the committee name but the navigation bar on the left does not. Match committee lists in both sections. The keyword arrangement seems more useful for browsing. Navigation bars should reflect the order in the webpage text.
10. The Webmaster should alert committee chairs when resources on their webpages are potentially out of date and might need revision. The Webmaster should be reviewing committee webpage content for accuracy and currentness.
11. If committee webpages are supposed to be uniformly formatted, the Webmaster should check labels on each page to confirm that the format is consistent among all pages.
12. The Webmaster should remind committees annually to check their external links. The Webmaster should review whether links are correctly placed and identified on webpages. The Webmaster should check the accuracy of labels for document links.

13. All current committee rosters, including the Nominating Committee, should be accessible on the committee webpage. Rosters for prior years are not particularly useful and should not appear on committee webpages. The Webmaster should update roster links as soon as new rosters are created.
14. The Webmaster should insure that revision dates accurately reflect when additional work has been done on webpages.
15. The Webmaster should check with the Standards and Guidelines Committee periodically to be sure the editions of guidelines posted on the RSS website are current.
16. The template “Professional Tools” label is not clear. A member reading the label has no idea what they will find here. Either we are not using the section correctly or a better label for it should be proposed to the ALA Webmaster.
17. Titles and descriptions of RSS and subunit publications should be corrected as soon as they are changed. The Webmaster should be informed of all such changes through minutes or direct notices from the creators of the publication.
18. The Publications webpage fails to link to any additional publications originating within RSS, its committees, and discussion groups as would be expected when going to this page. It fails to document our publishing contributions and our output of guidelines and standards. The Webmaster should redo this page to more accurately reflect RSS publication output.
19. On pages for conference programs, the “Related Links” section is redundant when the items are linked in the program description section of the page. Remove the “Related Links” section of the page in such situations.
20. Documents should be posted as clean, readable textual versions on our website.
21. Links to prior *RSS Review* (*MOUSS Tales*) columns should be provided to serve as an archive on the *RSS Review* webpage.

Summary of Recommendations for RSS Officers

1. The RSS Webmaster should be included on the mailing list for conference schedules released through ALA.
2. The Webmaster should be included on the mailing list to receive all minutes as they are submitted.
3. Be sure the Webmaster is promptly notified of changes in committee names and/or descriptions.

4. All meeting minutes should include the year as well as the month and day in the “Dates” section when they are submitted. Committee chairs should submit the minutes of all their meetings by the RSS deadlines. The RSS Secretary should be sending reminders immediately after the deadline to all committee chairs from whom committee minutes have not been received. In addition to committee minutes, all committee reports should be sent to the Webmaster for posting on the committee website.
5. Committee chairs need to examine resources like old guides and information about a committee and revise them to reflect current information.
6. Committees which include external links on their webpage should check the links regularly to establish that they are still relevant and current.
7. Committees should not list anything as “forthcoming” on their webpage that will not be completed and posted within a year.
8. Committee chairs should check that the committee’s webpage is current and accurate. Guideline documents information should be updated regularly.
9. The Webmaster should be informed of all changes in titles and descriptions of RSS and subunit publications by direct notices from the creators of the publications.

Appendix

PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED WITH THE RSS WEBSITE

1. RSS Homepage

a. Link to “RSS Events at Annual 2006” in “RSS Spotlight” still brought up “Schedule of Meetings and programs coming soon!” (“M” in “Meetings” should have been lowercase “m”) on the “RSS Events” webpage on 17 June 2006, just before the conference.

Recommendation: RSS Events webpage should be updated much earlier for both Midwinter meetings and annual conferences. Schedules should be entered as soon as notification of the dates and times of meetings and programs are released by ALA. The schedule also should be updated with room locations when the room assignments are released by ALA. If any changes are made, these should be posted as soon as they are identified. The RSS Webmaster should be included on the mailing list for schedules released through ALA.

Update 31 October 2006: Corrected.

b. Formatting of the lists of “Committees” and “Discussion Groups” is faulty: the first entry in each list does not match the other entries.

Recommendation: More care should be taken by the Webmaster in formatting and correcting formatting problems. All reloaded pages should be checked by the Webmaster as they are posted to identify any inadvertent formatting problems and any found should be corrected immediately.

Update 31 October 2006: Corrected.

2. Our Section webpage

a. In the navigation bar on the left, the link to “Meeting Minutes Form” is redundant: a link to “RSS Forms” appears just above it.

Recommendation: Navigation links on each page should avoid redundancy. We should be linking to the forms webpage for all forms. We should be emphasizing clean navigation through the RSS webpages, using only enough links relevant to the webpage on which the links appear.

Update 31 October 2006: Corrected.

b. RSS Committees webpage

1) The textual list on the page arranges committees alphabetically by keyword in the committee name but the navigation bar on the left does not.

Recommendation: Match committee lists in both sections. The keyword arrangement seems more useful for browsing.

Update 10 January 2007: Committee lists in both sections match with the exception of the alphabetizing for the Executive Committee in the textual list [see 2.b.3) below]

2) In the textual list, the link to the “Bessie Boehm Moore/Thorndyke Press Award” webpage is broken: the URL was not changed when the ALA website addresses were changed.

Recommendation: Correct link. In general, all links on all RSS webpages should be checked for accuracy regularly but especially when any reorganization of pages, editing of pages, or changes in the server are made.

Update 10 January 2007: Corrected.

3) “Evaluation of Reference and User Services” should precede “Executive Committee” in the textual list.

Recommendation: Check alphabetizing in lists before loading and after loading webpages. Correct any mistakes immediately upon discovery.

4) The “Organization” committee name was changed to “Organization and Planning” but the change was never noted on either the textual list or the navigation bar list.

Recommendation: Be sure the Webmaster is promptly notified of changes in committee names. The Webmaster should be making the corrections promptly on webpages on which a committee is listed. The Webmaster should also be receiving and reviewing all RSS minutes and annual reports both from the Executive Committee meetings and from the individual committees to identify when changes are made. Webmaster attendance at all Executive Committee meetings also could alert the Webmaster to changes.

c. Library Services to an Aging Population webpage

1) On 17 June 2006, meeting minutes read “2005 Midwinter Meeting” but is the link to 2005 or 2006 minutes? The revision notice on this page indicates it had last been revised on 27 January 2006. If the minutes are indeed 2005 minutes, the 2005 Annual Conference meeting minutes and the 2006 Midwinter Meeting minutes were never posted. Nor are the 2006 Annual Conference minutes posted as of 30 September 2006.

Recommendation: All meeting minutes should include the year as well as the month and day in the “Dates” section when they are submitted. Meeting minutes for each committee should be updated as soon as new minutes are received by the Webmaster. Committee chairs should submit the minutes of all their meetings by the RSS deadlines. The Webmaster should be included on the mailing list to receive all minutes as they are submitted. The Webmaster should consult with the RSS Secretary about any minutes not received by the deadline. The RSS Secretary should be sending reminders immediately after the deadline to all committee chairs from whom committee minutes have not been received. In addition, all annual reports from committee chairs should be sent to the Webmaster for posting on their committee websites in addition to the committee minutes.

d. Catalog Use Committee webpage

1) Under “Past Programs and Preconferences”, the link to the “2003 Annual Conference Program...” is broken and needs to be corrected.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

Update 31 October 2006: Link restored, but the following problem has surfaced:

2) Links to PowerPoints in the descriptive text for the 2003 Annual Conference Program are broken as is the link to the Bibliography. The links to the PowerPoints are correct in the “Related Files” section of the page.

Recommendation: Correct the links in the text section and delete the “Related Files” section as redundant.

e. Cooperative Reference Services webpage

1) Under “Meeting Minutes”, all links to historic minutes of this committee prior to the “Annual 2004” minutes are broken and need to be corrected. This covers minutes from “Midwinter 1999” through “Annual 2003”.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

Update 31 October 2003: Links restored

2) Under “Past Programs and Preconferences”, the link to “Marketing Virtual Reference...” is broken and needs to be corrected.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

Update 31 October 2006: Link restored, but the following problem has surfaced:

2a) Links to PowerPoints in the descriptive text for the program are broken. The links to the PowerPoints are correct in the “Related Files” section of the page.

Recommendation: Correct the links in the text section and delete the “Related Files” section as redundant.

3) Under “Cooperative Reference Service Documents”, the link to “Bibliography of Cooperative Reference Services” is broken and needs to be corrected.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

Update 31 October 2006: Link restored, but the following problem has surfaced:

3a) There appears to be a formatting problem here. The “General Information” appearing before “Title” on the third item appears to be mislocated. I suspect it belongs at the beginning of the section, instead, similar to the “Cooperative Reference Services Projects and Programs” heading which follows.

Recommendation: Relocate and reformat the heading.

f. Executive Committee webpage

1) Under “Meeting Minutes”, the links to all minutes from “1999 Annual (June 26)” through “2002 Annual (June 15)” are broken and need to be corrected.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

Update 31 October 2006: Links restored.

2) All “MOUSS Documents” weblinks are broken and need to be corrected. Also, should we have the RSS Documents linked here and shouldn’t “MOUSS Documents” read instead “Historic MOUSS Documents”?

Recommendation: Historic documentation from MOUSS and its reorganization to RSS should be provided on its own webpage to which other webpages can refer. Also, because the RSS and MOUSS documents relate to the section as a whole, I see no reason for them to be listed on the Executive Committee webpage. They should be linked on the RSS section webpage. See also 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

Update 31 October 2006: Links to RSS documents restored. “Future of MOUSS” needs to be removed to MOUSS historic documents webpage and deleted from this page both in the text and in the navigation bar on the left. “RSS/MOUSS Documents” should be changed to “RSS Documents”.

g. Evaluation of Reference and User Services webpage

1) Under “About the Committee”, the “Guide for New Members” is an old MOUSS document and needs to be updated.

Recommendation: Committee chairs need to examine resources like this and revise them to reflect current information. The Webmaster should alert committee chairs when resources on their webpages are potentially out of date and might need revision. The Webmaster should be reviewing committee webpage content for accuracy and currentness.

2) Under “Meeting Minutes”, the link to “2002 Midwinter (January 19)” minutes is broken and needs to be corrected. Also, the link to “2000 Midwinter (January 16)” minutes actually goes to the “Midwinter 2001 (January 14)” text and needs to be corrected. Also, a blank gap appears in the list where the 2004 Annual minutes should be listed.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

3) Under “Past Preconferences and Programs” (which should be “Past Conferences and Preconferences” if it is to coordinate with labels with other committee webpages), the linked webpage “2000 RUSA National Institute”, under its “Handouts from the Interviews and Focus Groups Presentations”, has broken links which need to be corrected for both “Modified Focus Group Outline” and “Bibliography”.

Recommendation: If committee webpages are supposed to be uniform in labeling, the Webmaster should check labels on each page to confirm that the format is consistent among all pages. See also 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

3a) Why is the presentation by Marie Radford under “Related Files” when the rest of the program files are included in the text above?

Recommendation: Delete “Related Files” and move the Radford resource to the text above.

4) Under “Other Documents”, the linked webpage “List of Related Evaluation and Assessment Websites” does not have a page title that matches the link text and also includes broken links which need to be corrected for “ALSC/ALTA/RUSA National Institute”, “New Measures Initiative” (moved but still forwarding), “Sources of Information on Performance Outcomes...”, “Task Force on Academic Library

Outcomes...” (need to change link to go directly to the report), “Assessment at the RWC Library...”, “Reference Evaluation...”, and “USCD Libraries User Survey...”. These are 7 faulty links out of 11 on the page.

Recommendation: Committees which include external links on their webpage should check the links regularly to establish that they are still relevant and current. The Webmaster should remind committees annually to check their external links. See also 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

h. Nominating committee webpage.

1) Both the “Current Roster” and “2004 Roster” are restricted access (“restricted to our members”), but other committee rosters are not. Also, why list old rosters?

Recommendation: All current committee rosters, including the Nominating Committee, should be accessible on the committee webpage. Rosters for prior years are not particularly useful and should not appear on committee webpages.

Update 31 October 2006: Corrected.

i. Organization and Planning committee webpage

1) No minutes after “2005 Midwinter Meeting” are posted.

Recommendation: See 2. c. 1) recommendation above.

j. Research and Statistics committee webpage

1) Under “Websites for Reference Research”, “Doing Qualitative Research – coming soon!” has been listed as “coming soon” for a long time. Is it coming anytime within the next year or has it already come but hasn’t been posted on the website?

Recommendation: Committees should not list anything as “forthcoming” on their webpage that will not be completed and posted within a year.

2) The webpage also has some formatting inconsistencies in the alignment of parts and in the bolding of text.

Recommendation: See 1. b. recommendation above.

3) The “Last Revised” date on the page reads “July 23, 2004”, but the page has obviously been revised since then, otherwise the “2006 Midwinter Meeting Highlights” could not be on the page.

Recommendation: The Webmaster should insure that revision dates accurately reflect when additional work has been done on webpages.

k. Services to Adults committee webpage

1) Under “Meeting Minutes”, all links from “Midwinter 1999” through Midwinter 2001” are broken and need to be corrected.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

Update 9 November 2006: Links restored.

2) All links under “Past Preconference and Programs” (the label is inconsistent with other webpages which use “Past Conferences and Preconference”) are broken and need to be corrected.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above

Update 9 November 2006: Links restored, but labelling inconsistencies have not been addressed.

l. Library Services to the Spanish-Speaking committee webpage

1) Under “Meeting Minutes”, the link to “2003 Midwinter Minutes” is broken and needs to be corrected. Also, more recent minutes are not posted.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) and 2. c. 1) recommendations above.

Update 9 November 2006: Link restored, but more recent minutes still not present.

2) Under “Guidelines Revision”, information is out of date and the link to the 1990 document is broken and needs to be corrected.

Recommendation: Committee chairs should check that the committee’s webpage is current and accurate. Guidelines documents information should be updated regularly. The Webmaster should review periodically all standards and guidelines documents posted on RSS pages to be sure the current editions are posted. The Webmaster should contact committee chairs about any information and documents found which appear not to be current. See also 2. c. 1) recommendation above.

Update 9 November 2006: Link restored, but the following problem appeared:

2a) The version linked is a marked-up editing copy instead of a clean text copy.

Recommendation: Documents which have completed the drafting and editing stage of development should be posted as clean, readable text.

m. RSS Discussion Groups webpage

1) The order of discussion groups in the text does not match the order in the navigation bar on the left.

Recommendation: Navigation bar should be redone to reflect the order in the text.

Update 9 November 2006: Correction made.

n. Ethical and Legal Issues

1) Formatting on page is inconsistent with other discussion group pages and needs to be corrected.

Recommendation: The Webmaster should check that formatting is displaying correctly when a new webpage is loaded and should correct formatting errors immediately.

Update 9 November 2006: Formatting corrected, but the following problem appeared:

1A) The old label is still displaying on the page with the correctly formatted label below it.

Recommendation: Delete the old label.

2) No roster is linked on this webpage.

Recommendation: Webmaster should update roster links as soon as new rosters are created.

Update 9 November 2006: Roster is now linked.

n1. Hot Topics in Frontline Reference

1) The Meeting Minutes links for “2005 Annual Meeting Highlights” and “2005 Midwinter Meeting” are run together on the same line.

Recommendation: Separate onto two lines.

2) “Print Reference Dead or Alive?” is the same as “2005 Midwinter Meeting”.

Recommendation: Delete “Print Reference Dead or Alive?” as redundant.

o. Performance Issues for Reference/Information Librarians

1) An email link to “Donald Barkley” appears under “Current Roster”, but he is not currently listed in the roster and, even though he was a founder of this group, is not a current contact for it.

Recommendation: Eliminate the Barkley email link. Current contacts for committees and discussion groups should come through rosters.

Update 9 November 2006: Corrected.

p. Reference Services in Public Libraries

1) Formatting on page is inconsistent with other discussion group pages and needs to be corrected. The discussion group name is incorrectly appearing in the “trail” list.

Recommendation: See 2. n. 1) recommendation above.

q. Reference Services in Small and Medium-sized Research Libraries

1) Under “Meeting Minutes”, links are broken and need to be corrected for all historic minutes from “1995 Annual” through “2003 Midwinter”.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) and 2. c. 1) recommendations above.

Update 9 November 2006: Links restored, but the following problem appeared:

1a) The “2001 Midwinter” between “2002 Annual” and “2001 Annual” is actually the 2002 Midwinter minutes.

Recommendation: Change the “2001 Midwinter” to “2002 Midwinter”.

2) Under “Preconferences and Discussion Forums”, the link to “2002 Discussion Forum” is broken and needs to be corrected. This link actually may belong in the “Meeting Minutes” section as the “2002 Midwinter” minutes or it may have been replaced by a minutes weblink, but until we can see what the document is, we can’t be sure.

Recommendation: The Webmaster should review whether links are correctly placed and identified on webpages. See also 2. b. 2) and 2. c. 1) recommendations above.

Update 9 November 2006: Link restored. Not minutes.

3. Professional Tools webpage

1) Under “RSS Documents”, links are broken and need to be corrected for “Bylaws” and “Future of MOUSS Discussion Documents”

Recommendation: See 2. c. 1) recommendation above.

Update 9 November 2006: All references to these links have been removed from the page.

2) Under “Related Files”, the date for the MOUSS Review document should be “2002”, not “2000”.

Recommendation: The Webmaster should check the accuracy of labels for document links.

3) Historic MOUSS materials should be segregated to a separate webpage to which pages could refer as necessary. “RSS Documents” should link to our current documents relating to RSS.

Recommendation: The Webmaster should reconsider the makeup of this page and the navigation bar links on the left side of the page.

Update 9 November 2006: All references to these links have been removed from the page.

4) On the actual “Future of MOUSS” webpage, all links for documents listed are broken and need to be corrected.

Recommendation: See 2. b. 2) recommendation above.

Update 9 November 2006: All reference to this link has been removed from the page.

5) The template “Professional Tools” label for this type of webpage is not clear. A member (including myself) reading the label has no idea what they will find here.

Recommendation: Either we are not using the section correctly or a better label for it should be proposed to the ALA Webmaster.

4. Publications webpage

1) “RSS Tales” is not the current name of our column in *RUSA Update*.

Recommendation: The Webmaster needs to change the entry to “RSS Review”. Titles and descriptions of RSS and subunit publications should be corrected as soon as they are changed. The Webmaster should be informed of all such changes through minutes or direct notices from the creators of the publication.

2) This webpage provides no access to prior columns. Only the most recent column is linked.

Recommendation: The Webmaster should check on how to link to prior columns and provide such linking on this page.

3) This webpage fails to link to any additional publications originating within RSS, its committees or discussion groups as would be expected when going to this page (it is what I expected as a member when I connected). It fails to document our publishing contributions and output of guidelines and standards.

Recommendation: The Webmaster should redo this page to more accurately reflect RSS publication output.

*--Drafted by John C. Hepner
Revised 10 January 2007*