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## Creating a Standardized System for Evaluating the Health, Hazard Risk, and Structural Development of the Trees in the Morris Arboretum.

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**Creating a Standardized System for Evaluating the Health, Hazard Risk, and Structural Development of the Trees in the Morris Arboretum.**

**Title: A Transformation of the Education Web Pages**

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**Date: March 2005**

**Abstract:**

In collaboration with the Education Department and the Marketing Department, the internship and student tour web pages on the Morris Arboretum web site were redesigned and updated. Research was done comparing and contrasting the Morris Arboretum's web site to other organizations web sites. This allowed for the observation of effective techniques and formatting that would later be incorporated into the new web pages. My goals for both web pages were to create a clearer presentation of the information, build consistent and succinct web pages, include more comprehensive information, make the web pages easy to navigate, and include fun pictures.

The internship pages incurred the following changes: the layout and order of the web pages was drastically changed, the number of colored pictures increased, the intern programming was highlighted in a new way, content about intern experience was augmented and the Morris Arboretum's web site was incorporated to give a sense of the organization as a whole.

The student tour pages incurred the following changes: all of the tour programs were finally represented in the web pages with new descriptions and curriculum standards, the navigation of the web pages was altered and improved, fun colorful pictures were added, the scheduling information provided is more helpful, and the pre-and post- visit activities for tours are now available online.

Suggestions for further improvement were made and hopefully they will be carried out in the future. The new web pages will require an annual evaluation and update by intern supervisors and the Internship Coordinator.

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## INTRODUCTION

When I first became an intern at the Morris Arboretum, I relied on both my supervisors and the Arboretum web site to teach me about the programs that were offered through the Education Department. After being an intern for a few months, I began to see discrepancies between the information I received from my supervisors and the information that was presented on the Arboretum web site. Soon I realized that the information on the web site just scratched the surface of the in-depth programming I was witnessing in the Education Department. Something had to change! A web site is an invaluable marketing tool that should be used to entice the public to come and take part in what the Arboretum has to offer. With this in mind, I decided that the internship program pages and the school tour pages were most in need of a makeover.

## PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### **Internship Program Web Pages**

My initial impression of the internship web pages was that they are long and boring. Nothing on the pages really grabbed your attention and the important program information got lost as you scrolled through the lengthy layout. There were two pictures, both in black and white, and a humongous chart depicting each internship position. As an intern, I knew that the program really was one of the most respected in the country, as stated in the opening paragraph on the main page, but you didn't get that sense when viewing the web pages.

Goals for the internship program web pages:

- Create a clearer presentation of the information
- Make the web pages easy to navigate
- Include fun pictures
- Highlight intern programming
- Build consistent and succinct web pages
- Incorporate the Arboretum web site into the internship web pages
- Give examples of former intern experience

### **Student Tour Web Pages**

My initial impression of the "school tour" web page was that the name and the content weren't indicative of the tour program at the Morris Arboretum. Tours are given to more than just *school* groups – we've worked with Girl Scout troops, home school groups, summer camps and church groups, just to name a few. Even though they aren't formal school institutions, they all have education as a common bond. Also, these student groups have participated in more than just two tours and two special programs at the Arboretum; it was imperative to change our tour web page to our tour web pages. The web page did have five color pictures but they were nothing impressive or eye-catching.

Goals for the student tour web pages:

- Present all tours and special programs online
- Create new descriptions including curriculum standards
- Make the web pages easy to navigate
- Include fun pictures
- Have clear policies and more comprehensive scheduling information
- Put pre- and post-visit activities online

## **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

### **Web Site Transformation**

After Jan McFarlan, Education Coordinator Liza Hawley, Youth Education Coordinator and I decided that re-doing the internship program and the student tour web pages would be my project focus, I met with the Marketing Department to iron out details. Kate Sullivan, Director of Marketing, and Rose Koch, Morris Arboretum Webmaster, laid out guidelines for me as my project progressed. While I created my project I attempted to adhere to the rule that information on the web pages should be no more than 3-4 clicks away from the user. I kept in mind that in order to submit my project to Rose, all text should be clearly typed in Microsoft Word and all submitted pictures had to be in a 72 DPI format. I also spent a significant amount of time researching what other organizations were doing with their web sites before I began the conception of my project. Through researching, I was able to observe techniques and formatting that would become sources of inspiration for my project, as well as finding web page designs that were not effective.

### **Intern Program Web Pages**

The first thing that needed to change was the layout of the web pages. The never-ending scroll needed to be broken up into main categories of information. This way potential applicants can easily access the important information in order to decide if they want to apply to our internship program. The main categories that I thought were the most important to highlight include: payment and housing, benefits, core curriculum, academic credit, internship positions, and the application procedure.

Secondly, the order in which things were presented on the pages needed to be reworked. In the old web pages, the order was introduction, the long chart of internship positions, and then the application procedure. After the application procedure came the core curriculum, stipend/housing and benefits information. The natural place for most applicants to stop reading and decide if it's a worthwhile program or not is at the application procedure. The old format had the important information at the end so most applicants probably didn't even realize what great opportunities could come from the Morris Arboretum internship program. In the new format, I took the main categories that I chose and put them in an order in which applicants would be able to see the full picture before making a decision. The order is core curriculum, academic credit, internship positions, additional information (which includes payment, housing, and benefits) and then finally the application procedure. With this new order of information, I felt that a sub-navigation bar would be key in successfully executing the new web pages. This made it really easy to navigate, which was one of my top goals since the beginning of the project.

The third change that needed to be made was more pictures and more color. The drab pictures in the old web pages left room for great improvements. I arranged a photo shoot with each one of the interns. I wanted each of these pictures to tell a story since space is limited on the web pages. With this in mind, I took pictures out in the field while they worked and even staged some pictures of duties that interns commonly perform. Each intern ended up with a horizontal and vertical picture. I also used pictures that Paul Meyer and Jan McFarlan had of past interns.

The fourth transformation was to highlight the outstanding intern programming that has made the internship program flourish for as long as it has. Now that the web pages are easier to navigate, the main topics of information are laid out in a logical order, and there are pictures to entice the eye, I felt that the content needed a bit of sprucing up. I remember that when I started as an intern at the Arboretum I didn't realize all of the benefits that I would reap by being a part of this program. I immediately went back to the internship web pages to check the information that I had read approximately 6 months prior to my start date. I was surprised to find that all the wonderful benefits were, in fact, included in the web pages but definitely under-played. It was just casually stated that we get credit at UPenn each semester, we receive insurance, and we are supposed to attend these seminars and practical sessions. I think that's why my eyes skimmed right over it! There are so many perks about this internship that I felt were an automatic marketing bonus for the internship program that had to be expanded on.

The fifth important aspect that I incorporated into my project was having consistent and succinct web pages. I definitely wanted to expand on the information that was presented on the web pages, but I didn't want it to get too wordy or too long. Finding that balance was a challenge that I encountered numerous times as I reworked the web pages. Consistency also played a huge factor in the creation of the new internship position descriptions. I created a template of what I wanted to see as the new format and showed it to the intern supervisors for approval. The new template includes: description, duties and responsibilities, qualifications/requirements, work environment, and past project topics. I wanted to highlight the differences and uniqueness that each internship position holds but also maintain the common responsibilities that a Morris Arboretum intern has to fulfill. I think this new template allows potential applicants to get a better sense of what each internship entails and gives them the opportunity to easily compare and contrast positions that they are considering.

The sixth change I wanted to make answers a question I felt was vital to the success of the web page – “will an applicant get a full sense of the organization that they will potentially be working for?” I wanted to make sure that an applicant for the Education internship understands the breadth of the Arboretum's living collections as well as an applicant for the Rose and Flower Garden internship sees how intertwined horticulture and education are at the Arboretum. This is why I felt that internal links throughout the web pages of the internship program were so important to include. For example, when it mentions interns' participation in living collections sessions, there is a link to the living collections web page on the Arboretum web site. Or when it mentions keeping to the Arboretum's mission in our independent projects, there is a link to the Arboretum's mission web page on the web site. This is also a sneaky way to include more information about our organization with keeping to my goal that all web pages will be succinct and not too long and wordy.

The seventh addition to the internship program web pages was content about intern experience. I added two quotes, one from the current Flora of Pennsylvania intern and one from current Rosarian and past Rose and Flower Garden intern, Mike Tuszynski. This is an area of the

web pages that I feel as though I didn't get to develop as fully as I would have liked to. Expanding this topic is essential to the effectiveness of the web pages (see Suggestions for Further Improvements).

## **Student Program Web Pages**

The first change that needed to be made was to include the entire list of available general tours, curriculum based tours, and special programs that we offer in the web pages. Before this change, our tour program web page wasn't representative of what we actually can offer to student groups that come and visit the Arboretum. After the transformation, all nine tours and three special programs are receiving equal publicity on the new web pages.

Secondly, now that all of our fabulous tours and special programs are incorporated into the web pages, they needed equally fabulous descriptions to go with them. The descriptions before were in individual boxes, telling the reader what grades the tour was appropriate for and a little bit about what the student would be doing. Our Education Department and volunteer guides have dedicated immeasurable amounts of time developing fun curriculum based tours adhering to national and state standards, but no one who visited our student tour web page would have any clue that that was true. So I created a new layout for the student tour descriptions: title of tour, brief one line description, grades, tour length, "students will," curriculum components, and classroom activities (if applicable). I also created a new layout for the special programs that includes: title of program, brief one line description, grades, program length, program dates, and "students will."

The third thing that needed to be fixed was the navigation of the web pages. Since the web page became web pages, which are so much longer due to including all of the tours and their new descriptions, a sub-navigation bar was necessary to organize the pages accordingly. This created an opportunity to really expand the information that is included in the student tour web pages. The new categories became general tours, curriculum based tours, special programs, schedule a tour, and classroom activities.

The fourth alteration of the student tours web pages was to include fun pictures of the tours. The hand-made pictures from students were cute but it doesn't get a teacher excited about the tour quite like an action shot does. For this page, I imagined lots of colorful pictures of students being engaged by hands-on tour activities. To achieve this I collected pictures from Liza Hawley, Paul Meyer and also took some myself.

The fifth aspect of the student tour web pages that needed help was the scheduling information. From the old web page, you could ascertain that someone would have to book a tour at least three weeks in advance, one adult chaperone is required for every ten children, and the fees are \$400 a child. This information is not complete and our tours do not cost four hundred dollars per child! I created a new scheduling web page with clear step-by-step instructions on how to schedule a tour at the Morris Arboretum. This is a combination of the student group tour information sheet that Carol Lourea-Black already uses as well as new formatting and more complete information. The scheduling information now has its own page, Schedule a Tour, as well as a comprehensive PDF file with a Morris Arboretum header and footer.

The fifth, and most exciting, change to the student tour web pages was putting the pre- and post- visit activities for tours online. Not only will this save paper and postage for the Education Department, but it will also give the tours more exposure and appeal to teachers. All



of the pre-and post-visit activities were formatted in a similar manner and include a Morris Arboretum header and footer.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS**

As with any project, there just isn't enough time to develop everything that you envisioned as your final product. I definitely feel that there are many more ways to expand both the internship web pages and the student tour web pages on the Arboretum's web site.

With the internship web pages, I know that the intern experience content of the web pages could be greatly improved and would prove to be beneficial. I think that collecting quotes or testimonials from each intern class as they leave would be a great new tradition to start and then be able to include them throughout the web pages. Also, contacting past interns that hold reputable positions in the public horticulture world and asking them for quotes would be a great addition to the intern experience. One of the many outstanding aspects of this internship program is the diversity of interns that go through the program. It might be worthwhile to get each intern class to write bios about themselves in the beginning of their internship and put them in the internship descriptions on the web pages. Maybe make a new web page with the flags from all the different countries in the world that Morris Arboretum interns have come from. You could even create an international applicant page where you include links to the International House, ESL classes and have quotes from international interns (maybe even in their native language).

In regards to the student tour web pages, I wish I had time to make a teacher training page. I think that advertising the teacher training classes from the course brochure in this manner would really help spread the word about our Act 48 credit courses and promote better attendance. Also, I think it would be beneficial to have a link to the guide training web page somewhere within the student tour web pages.

### **CONCLUSION**

My objective was to enhance the existing internship program and school tour program web pages for the Morris Arboretum, but the new web pages completely surpass my initial expectations as my project comes to fruition. The internship program and tour program are now two outstanding features of the Education Department that shine brightly on the Arboretum web site. I hope that these changes will spark an increased interest and participation in our internship and tour programs in the future.

## REFERENCES

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[www.bbg.org](http://www.bbg.org)  
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[www.fi.edu](http://www.fi.edu)  
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[www.scottarboretum.org](http://www.scottarboretum.org)  
[www.usna.usda.gov](http://www.usna.usda.gov)

### **Student Tour Pages**

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[www.awbury.org](http://www.awbury.org)  
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## **INTERNSHIP PROGRAM PAGES**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Check that:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dates and year are current
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intern hourly rate and benefits are up to date
<input type="checkbox"/>	All links to the web page and within the web page still work and make sense
<input type="checkbox"/>	Application procedure for UPenn employment is current
<input type="checkbox"/>	The endowment information for each internship is correct (consult with Development)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Position descriptions are up to date (consult with Intern Supervisors)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internship program information is current and represented online
<hr/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Additional information:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Get intern bios from each intern class when they begin
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take pictures of interns (group pictures, fieldtrips, living collections, at work, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Get quotes/testimonials from each intern class before they leave

## **STUDENT TOUR PAGES**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Check that:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dates and year are current (especially for Special Programs)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tour admission rates are up to date
<input type="checkbox"/>	All links still to the web page and within the web page work and make sense
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scheduling page and PDF file are current (names, phone numbers, policies, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	All pre-and post-visit activity PDF files are working and up to date
<input type="checkbox"/>	All curriculum standards are current for each tour topic
<hr/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Additional information:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take pictures of tour groups in action (share with Development)