

United States Marine Corps

World Wide Web Style Guide

Guidelines for Unit Web Sites and Web Pages

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(adjusted version from 2001)

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	5
WEBSITE CHECKLIST.....	6
<i>Web Page Checklist</i>	6
CONTENT	6
NAVIGATION/ORGANIZATION	6
STYLE/MARKUP	7
II. CONTENT.....	8
PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE CONTENT.....	8
<i>Statement of Purpose</i>	8
<i>Approvals</i>	8
<i>Accuracy</i>	8
<i>Timeliness/Currency</i>	8
EXTERNAL LINKED CONTENT	9
<i>Policy</i>	9
III. NAVIGATION/ORGANIZATION	10
<i>Presenting a Unified Picture</i>	10
<i>Home Page Links</i>	11
<i>Dead Links</i>	11
<i>Restricted Access</i>	11
IV. STYLE/MARKUP	12
<i>Titles</i>	12
<i>Headers</i>	12
<i>Body</i>	12
<i>Standard Footer</i>	13
<i>File Formats</i>	13
<i>Links to Large Files</i>	14
<i>Images</i>	14
<i>Considerations for Accessible HTML documents</i>	15
<i>Tables</i>	15
V. ADDITIONAL POINTS.....	15
<i>Security</i>	15
<i>Cookies</i>	15
<i>User Information Collection</i>	16
<i>Copyright and Multimedia Documents</i>	16
<i>"Fair Use" of a Copyrighted Work</i>	16
Incorporating Works into Multimedia (Internet) Documents.	16
<i>Disclaimers</i>	17
<i>Cookies Monitoring</i>	17
Cookies Notice:.....	17
<i>Disclaimers</i>	17
Copyright Status:.....	17
<i>Privacy Act Considerations</i>	18
<i>Electronic Public Disclosure</i>	19

<i>Frames</i>	19
<i>XML</i>	19
VI. PAGE STANDARDS/TEMPLATES	20
STANDARDS	20
APPENDIX A. GLOSSARY OF INTERNET TERMS.....	21

I. Introduction

The Internet started in the late 1980's as a small, simple information-sharing tool within the Department of Defense. Today, the World Wide Web has become a massive collection of servers around the globe that provides information to millions of Internet Users every night and day. In 2000, there was an estimated 10 million users on the Internet. By the end of this year, that number is expected to be 25 million and projected to be over 100 million by the end of 2002. Each user is looking, ever so briefly, for some piece of information. Any organization that is properly positioned to provide that information, in the right format and presentation, will attract the users that may have gone to another organization and/or competitor.

The story of the Marine Corps is a story that all Marines hold dear and love to tell. Through Marines.mil and myriad online tools, the Marine Corps story is communicated to millions each month. Each Base, each station, each detachment and unit within the Marine Corps should tell its individual story of professionalism, history and happenings -- to other Marines past and present, family members, veterans and people across the globe. Each of these audiences has come to expect professionalism and uniformity throughout the Marine Corps from the uniforms Marines wear to the way Marines shoot.

Marine Corps web pages posted to the Internet are subject to rules of standardization and uniformity in much the same way that uniforms worn are subject to the uniform regulations and standards. Marines have always taken pride in their appearance, and the Marine Corps Internet presence represents a collective presentation of all Marines. As such, there is a need and mandate to ensure our online display is as professional in nature as that of our physical uniformity. To ensure this takes place, these guidelines are provided to ensure we provide both quality content and that we provide the best means for users to quickly navigate, view, and understand the manner by which our online presence functions.

Website Checklist

At a minimum, the parameters and guidelines detailed on the checklist below will be adhered to when publishing a publicly accessible website for Marine Corps units / official online entities. For sites currently hosted in the Corps central authoring environment, many of the standards described below are incorporated by default. For all Marine Corps sites not currently hosted within this solution, the guidelines defined below represent the minimum set of standards for compliance.

Web Page Checklist

CONTENT

- ___ Each page contains content that is related to its unit's or organization's function and mission.
- ___ **All** publicly accessible content is reviewed prior to release by an authorized individual with release authority.
- ___ Each page provides a link to the official Marine Corps home page at www.marines.mil.
- ___ Global toolbar navigation is adhered to with local links provided at the left navigation pane and enterprise specific items placed on their correct allocated place holders on the main toolbar.
- ___ Information within documents is accurate and references are cited for applicable data.
- ___ All pages are syntactically correct.
- ___ Spelling and grammar are correct within the document/page.
- ___ Documents and pages comply with approved Marine Corps template and format.
- ___ External links are active, appropriate, and related to the purpose of the document.
- ___ All external links display the title and the URL of the referenced link.

NAVIGATION/ORGANIZATION

- ___ Each page provides a return link to the local / unit home page.
- ___ Each page, as well each subordinate or adjacent page, links back to www.marines.mil.
- ___ Page links are periodically checked for broken and /or inappropriate links.
- ___ Moved or deleted pages provide error handling or forwarding to a working new page or reference page location.
- ___ Standard page layout and template design is used to provide consistency of navigation (including icons, color, fonts, etc.)
- ___ Local and advanced search functionality exists on each page.

STYLE/MARKUP

- ___ Every page has an associated, logical title.
- ___ The title and top level heading for each home page are the same.
- ___ A header comment stating which HTML version (or equivalent comments) is provided in the page source code.
- ___ Meta description tags are included in every page or associated template.
- ___ The page title/heading clearly references the theme of the page.
- ___ Paragraphs are clear and concise.
- ___ Text highlighting (italics, bold, underline) is not overused.
- ___ Page footers are separated from the body by a horizontal rule or similar spacing.
- ___ Footers provide logical navigational aids equivalent to main level toolbar items.
- ___ The page footer displays the URL for www.marines.mil
- ___ The page footer includes the 'mail to' and/or contact information for the applicable point of contact or Webmaster for that unit (or the site overall).
- ___ The brand icon (Marines logo) is placed at the top left of each page and links to www.marines.mil.
- ___ Page elements used are standard types including gif, jpg, mpeg, wmv, etc.
- ___ Thumbnail images are provided and link to larger size images where appropriate.
- ___ Images are not wider than 472 pixels. High resolution images are provided via links vice page load images.
- ___ The width and height of each image is specified in the associated HTML IMG tag.
- ___ Every graphic has an associated and meaningful (ALT) text tag.
- ___ Image maps have alternate text-based selection mechanisms.
- ___ Audio clips have text transcripts or descriptions.
- ___ Every page has been tested against at least Internet Explorer 6.0 and greater

II. Content

Publicly Accessible Content

Content is the bread and butter of the Internet. All users are searching for this commodity. All sites provide content in different manners, and some sell content in the form of products or services, and others, like the sites within the Marine Corps domain, provide straight information. It is imperative that the information on all Marine Corps pages is brief, pertinent, accurate, grammatically correct and timely. The following paragraphs provide additional information on rules that govern the content on Marine Corps web pages.

Statement of Purpose

The handling of publicly accessible information, whether printed or electronic, regarding the Marine Corps is the staff function of the Public Affairs Office. The Marine Corps has a “Maximum Disclosure with Minimum Delay” policy regarding publicly accessible information. This guidance is accomplished by providing the best, most expedient publicly accessible information possible. As such, Internet information transfer, release, approval, and posting must be accomplished from every base station and unit according to the guidelines in MCO 5720.26 and this style guide.

Approvals

Each Public Affairs Office (PAO) falls under the cognizance of Commanders with Release Authority for publicly accessible content. All content, prior to being released over the Internet must be reviewed and approved by authorized Release Authority. The mechanism for review and approval can be automated via a hosting software solution or accomplished based on local policy.

Accuracy

Accuracy of all online information is imperative. The accuracy extends beyond the actual content to the structure of the coding for the page. The construction of HTML syntax for content should comply with standards, network expectations and netiquette. However, in terms of content, exercise vigilance in the following areas:

- Information upon which Internet users (and the public in general) may base important decisions or considerations (e.g., joining the Corps, policy guidance, Congressional understanding of issues important to the Corps, etc.).
- Inaccuracies that compromise meaning (e.g., missing text, misaligned table cells, etc.).
- Cosmetic flaws (e.g., titles not italicized, missing dashes, etc.).

Before releasing a web page to the public, the syntax and spelling should be checked and all links verified.

Timeliness/Currency

Information, such as press releases, must be posted as promptly as possible. Out-of-date information must be removed or updated promptly. News Releases and page content, as a general rule, should include dates on the story or page.

External Linked Content

Policy

The authorization and ability to post links to external information is based on DoD, Secretary of the Navy, and Marine Corps Policy. At a minimum, the [excerpt from the] DoD policy provided below is a guideline to consider when placing links on web pages within the Marine Corps domain:

Links to non-DoD Web resources should support the organization's mission. External links should be reviewed periodically to ensure their continued suitability. If the content of a linked external site becomes questionable or objectionable, remove the link.
In accordance with DoD 5500.7-R (reference (k)), no product endorsements or preferential treatment shall be given on publicly accessible official DoD Web sites.
No payment of any kind shall be accepted in exchange for a link placed on an organization's publicly accessible official DoD Web site.
In accordance with DoD 5500.7-R , publicly accessible DoD Web sites shall not require or encourage users to choose any specific browser software. Only text or hyperlinked text shall be used to direct visitors to software download sites. Graphics or logos depicting companies/products shall not appear on publicly accessible DoD Web sites.
DoD Newspapers. The policies and procedures in DoD Instruction 5120.4 (reference (n)) apply to all DoD newspapers and civilian enterprise publications, whether printed or electronic. DoD funded newspapers and editorial content of civilian enterprise publications may be posted on DoD Web sites without advertising. Commanders and heads of organizations are authorized to link to a commercial/civilian Web site carrying the authorized civilian enterprise publications, which include advertising, provided the standard disclaimer for external links is given.

Units, commands, detachments, and facilities are encouraged to link to additional authorized activities that support their mission, such as the Marine Corps Exchange. However, if these sites contain commercial advertisements or sponsorships, the appropriate disclaimer shall be given.

When providing connections to external links consideration and great care must be made when deciding what and where the links take the user. At a minimum, a disclaimer for external links must be displayed whenever connecting to a site that is a non-official Marine Corps site/page or resides outside the DoD.

The disclaimer below shall be displayed when linking to external sites. This disclaimer may appear on the page or pages listing external links, or through an intermediate "exit notice" page generated by the server machine whenever a request is made for any site other than the official DoD Web site (usually the .mil domain).

"The appearance of hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the U.S. Marine Corps. For other than authorized activities such as military exchanges and Morale, Welfare and Recreation sites, the U.S. Marine Corps does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations."

In addition to providing disclaimers for external links, it is advisable that units establish objective and supportable criteria or guidelines for the selection and maintenance of external links on web pages for which they hold responsibility. For example, it may benefit users to link to commercial resources that complement and enhance the value of an Unit's/Command's internet presence, or to internet sites operated by government contractors, universities or others with whom the unit has established an affiliation or agreement. Alternatively, in some cases it may be decided that links to external web pages, or specific categories of external links, do not add value to a site or are not appropriate, and will not be permitted. In any case, it is good practice to provide a statement that establishes basic guidelines for selecting and maintaining external links at the local level.

In some instances, it may be necessary or appropriate to place external links in context for the user by including statements explaining the purpose of the link. It is important to avoid giving a user the impression that a unit is endorsing a commercial product. It is also important that units avoid linking to frivolous (or objectionable) sites. Prior to establishing links to external web pages or sites, their purpose and content should be reviewed carefully to ascertain if they are consistent with stated guidelines.

In summary, practical due diligence, common sense, and a stated guideline are essential to establishing and maintaining external links that tap appropriately diverse resources on the Web. All external links should be clearly identified as such by including the page title (or appropriate description) as well as the URL. Displaying the URL provides the added benefit of allowing users who are working from a printout the ability to locate the referenced source.

III. Navigation/Organization

While content is the "bread and butter" of web sites, users can only obtain this substance through a clean web site architecture that allows easy navigation. This is accomplished through careful planning and thoughtful organization of information - as a result, a clean site architecture can be obtained. The template provided by HQMC provides the foundation of this architecture. The following paragraphs provide additional information regarding site navigation and organization.

Presenting a Unified Picture

The goal for the Marine Corps Web Presence effort is to offer each user wide access to our expanse of information, regardless of the point at which the user enters the system. Reaching this goal of providing the convenience of "one-stop shopping" in a widely distributed system requires that each unit, organization, base and station, in addition to serving its own particular audience, provide links to adjoining and higher units' sites. All units, bases and stations must integrate, through common styles, buttons, environments, tools for the user, etc.

Considerations for design of unit web sites:

- Include links to each organization and unit program.

- Accommodate cross-links among organizations, programs, projects, and individuals.
- Highlight unit initiatives.
- Provide a comprehensive catalog of the unit's publications and products.
- Host a collection of links to unit-sponsored web sites and related external resources.
- Sponsor topical forums on important unit initiatives and subjects.
- Help users identify unit resources and services available to them by subject, role or geographical location.
- Provide a key-word searching capability on large sites.

Home Page Links

Documents should be designed to minimize users' reliance on the navigational aids using Internet Browsers (e.g., back and forward buttons, history lists). The back button, particularly, tends to retrace a path through every page the user has visited rather than logically backing out of a collection. Therefore, it is often useful to provide links, which move logically forward and backward through a document or collection, as well as to the table of contents or index.

There should be explicit links on each page within a document or collection back to the entry home page for that document or collection. The home page for each document or collection should include an explicit link back to the sponsoring unit / command. Each unit home page should include an explicit link back to the unit home page as well as the global link back to marines.mil.

Dead Links

Dead links inevitably occur on web servers as pages are modified, moved, or deleted. However, dead links can quickly damage a web site's credibility. The Webmaster or web author for each unit, command, or location should be responsible for monitoring and maintaining the content of their site. They should also correct or remove dead links as soon as possible.

When changing URLs on unit servers, coordination may be required with external servers, which point to those URLs. When moving a home page to a new URL the author who made the change shall ensure there is a pointer or note forwarding the user or link to the new location.

Restricted Access

Sensitive, confidential, or privacy information shall not be placed in publicly available directories as per DoD and SecNav policy. The exception to this is information that require password authentication to retrieve, regardless of whether the use is coming from a dot mil domain or an external (public) domain such as dot com or dot org.

Documents and collections that are not public (i.e., not yet published, not fully marked up or tested, internal working group notes, etc.) shall not be linked to publicly accessible documents or placed in publicly available directories. The same exceptions as listed in the previous paragraph apply here as well.

Postings to unit web sites are official unit disclosures and must be consistent with other unit disclosures of the same or similar information. For example, if requests for draft unit documents are routinely denied from Freedom of Information Act requesters as pre-decisional to protect the

integrity of the unit's deliberative process, then it would be more appropriate to post draft documents on the unit intranet server rather than on the public web site.

It may be necessary to coordinate with the Webmaster to explicitly exclude restricted access documents from site-wide full-text indexes.

IV. Style/Markup

Style and Markup are the elements that give the Internet its flare and functionality. Used correctly and these elements provide uniformity on the Internet for the Marine Corps and an enjoyable, easy access experience for the user. Used incorrectly and these elements project a disjointed non-compliant Marine Corps and a confusing, delaying and annoying experience for the user. The following elements of style and markup are requirements of all publicly accessible Marine Corps web sites.

Titles

Every page should have a title. It is generally displayed in the title bar of the browser and is also displayed in the browser's saved hotlist or bookmarks. The title should be as short as possible but fully informative and specific (e.g., "FY 1996 Unit Budget" is preferable to "Budget"). By convention, the title is the same as the heading for the page.

Headers

Every home page should have a top-level <H1> header near the top of the first screen, which clearly identifies the theme of the home page. An <H2> header should be used for continuation pages. Like the title, the header should be as short as possible but fully informative and specific. By convention, the top-level header and the title for each page should be the same. Lower-level headers (e.g., <H3>, etc.) may be used if appropriate to the document. Header markup should not be used to emphasize entire paragraphs.

Documents that are divided into multiple pages should reference the home page's theme in the header of each continuation page. This will help identify the document to users who may arrive at the page without knowing its context, (e.g., as the result of a full-text search) and will make the hotlist meaningful. For example, this document is part of the collection belonging to the World Wide Web (WWW) Home Page Guidelines. It should be referenced in an <H2> heading (and in the title) as IV. Style/Markup

Body

Paragraphs within the body of a document should be clear and concise. Where the audience has a limited knowledge of the subject being addressed, it is often desirable to hyperlink explanatory information. Hyperlinks to a glossary, footnotes, and external documents provide additional information to less informed readers. Other effective uses of hyperlinks include graphics, tables, and indexes.

Care should be taken in separating and emphasizing content within a page. Horizontal rules <HR> can often be used effectively to separate themes within a page. However, the overuse of italics and bold can make text difficult to read.

Consider using functional markup, such as , rather than appearance markup, like <bold>, to give the user more control over the way the final document is viewed.

Talking about mechanics rather than substance is considered to be in poor taste. For example, the sentence "You can read more about this product in the tutorial which is linked here to this home page" is better stated, "The Tutorial will help you learn about this product."

Standard Footer

At a minimum, home pages (all accessible web pages in general) must have footers, which are separated from the body (usually by a horizontal rule<HR>) and contain the following information:

- The URL (for the home page footer).
- The last date the document was updated.
- An e-mail address for the web master or responsible party for that page.

In addition, the footer most often contains navigational aids such as a mapped bar or buttons which allow the user to move logically through the document. For documents, arranged like a book, the end of page links are to the table of contents, to the next chapter, to the previous chapter, and to the entry home page. These links are frequently tied to icons (see Standard Icons below) or mapped graphics.

File Formats

The choice of file formats used should be based on the following considerations: (1) the intended use of the material by the target audience; (2) the accessibility of the format to the target audience; and (3) the level of effort required to convert the material to the format.

In the interest of making information readily available to as wide an audience as possible, web servers should avoid making information available only in proprietary file formats (e.g., WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, SAS, Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format, etc.), except in cases where the target audience commonly has access to such formats. Links to files in proprietary or unusual formats should be explicitly noted.

Material intended to be viewed, read, or browsed on-line should be prepared in HTML or XML format (for text and tables) and GIF (for graphics). JPEG format may be used instead of GIF for photographic material where there is a need to preserve a large number (over 256) of colors. In such cases, JPEG produces smaller files with minor loss of image precision.

Portable document formats, such as Adobe Acrobat, should not be used as the primary format unless converting the material to HTML is not feasible. Although it is easier in many instances to create PDF than HTML, there are drawbacks: the contents of PDF files are not included in site-wide full-text search indexes, PDF viewers are not embedded in most Internet browsers, and PDF viewers require more powerful hardware for on-line viewing than a Internet browser alone.

Material intended to be downloaded for off-line print or display should be prepared in one of the following formats, which are listed in descending order of preference:

1. HTML and GIF or JPEG -- Same as materials for on-line viewing.
2. Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) -- Include link to downloadable free viewer.
3. Microsoft Rich Text Format (.RTF) -- RTF is easily created from most word processors and is more widely usable than native word processor formats such as Microsoft Word or WordPerfect. However, its reproduction of fonts and page layout can vary depending on the user's font set.
4. Proprietary formats (e.g., WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Freelance, etc.) should only be used if: (a) conversion to one of the above formats is not feasible; (b) the intended audience is known to have ready access to software which can handle the proprietary format; or (c) the intended use is data analysis or manipulation (see below). If use of a proprietary format is unavoidable, use an earlier, more widely available version if possible (e.g., MS Word 97 vice MS Office 2000).

Links to Large Files

Links to files larger than 100 kilobytes should include an explicit note of the file size.

Images

The appropriate use of images is to help convey information or to create a consistent and recognizable "look and feel" for a collection as well as to convey meaningful information which is not easily conveyed by words. The judicious use of images will help users remember your home pages and will attract frequent usage by the community. The following hints will help make pages effective:

- Images should be as small as possible. Use thumbnail images or text to link to pages with large images. Image resolution may often be reduced without compromising the information conveyed. An example of the typical use of a thumbnail image is:



(Iwo Jima Memorial, 8 Kbytes)

- As a general rule, images should be no wider than 472 pixels, in order to display on the most basic Internet browser's 500 pixel wide viewing window on a 640 by 480 monitor. If an image is required to be considerably larger, a thumbnail should be used with a link to the larger image and a text note of the size of the image.
- Image file size can often be significantly reduced (without compromising the information conveyed). This can be accomplished by the following: reducing the color depth, (especially for non-photographic material such as charts and graphs), cropping unnecessary background imagery, and compressing the image by 15 to 20 percent.
- Avoid long, thin images such as specialty horizontal rules. These are not effective for users who do not have image capabilities.
- Provide a brief textual alternative description for each image that can be used by text-only browsers.

- Specify the width and height of each image within the HTML <image> tag. This will speed up document formatting on many browsers.
- Avoid background images because of the difficulty it presents in the reading of text. All publicly accessible web sites within the Marine Corps Domain must not include background images.

Considerations for Accessible HTML documents

The following guidelines have been offered by the General Services Administration (GSA) and/or Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, in order to provide solutions that can communicate to the broadest possible audience.

- Every graphic image shall have associated text.
- When image maps are used, there shall be an alternate method of selection options.
- Include detailed descriptive "comments" with JPEG images.
- Provide text transcriptions or descriptions for all audio clips.
- Make link text descriptive but not verbose.
- Provide alternate mechanisms for on-line forms.
- All pages should be tested using multiple viewers.
- Do not use proprietary procedural format markup.
- For simple images, such as icons performing the function of bullets, use simple ALT attributes (e.g. "*" or "-"). It should be noted that many users find the use of image bullets annoying, since they take up space and time, and add very little to functionality.

Tables

Tables, like images, can be an extremely effective way to present information. However, like images, they can hamper access to information by visually impaired individuals or those with character-only browsers. <TABLE> markup should be used when it significantly enhances the effectiveness of information presentation. It should be accompanied by an alternative presentation for those whose browsers or disabilities prevent them from using table markup.

V. Additional Points

The following points are added as important items for each developer to consider and apply in designing a unit web site.

Security

Operation of a web server opens up numerous potential security issues that must be addressed. The Webmaster has primary responsibility for the server's security. Contact the Network Operations Center, web hosting center, and/or security policy to the most recent details concerning Internet security and proper coding of the web site to avoid compromise.

Cookies

Cookies are used by the server to track user information across several web pages or Internet sessions. Web site users, as mandated by DoD, SecNav, and Marine Corps policy must be notified of the use of Cookies and the purpose for their use. At this time only session level cookies are authorized.

User Information Collection

Units must exercise caution when collecting information users. As stated previously, users must be notified of any user information collection activities and the purpose for its use.

Copyright and Multimedia Documents

A copyright is the 'rights' of an author or publisher to the 'copy' (text of an article) that that author or publisher produced. This has come to mean the right of intellectual property, whereby authors obtain, for a specific time, certain exclusive rights to their work.

In the United States, copyright protections are exclusively granted under federal law, which derive from Article 1, Section 8, Clause 8 of the U.S. Constitution which provides Congress with the power "to promote science and the useful arts, by securing for a limited times to authors ...the exclusive right to their...writings".

In the United States, and most other countries, a work is copyrighted automatically upon creation. No notice is required nor is registration required with a government unit.

Works that do not enjoy copyright privileges are considered to be in the public domain. Common examples of public domain works are:

- Works for which the copyright has expired. Expiration of a copyright depends on a number of criteria and can run from 28 to 100 years.
- Non-copyrightable works such as titles, names, short phrases and slogans. (However, these may be trademarks.)
- Works for which the copyright has been forfeited or abandoned. The most common form of copyright forfeiture is the lack of specific copyright notice on materials published before March 1, 1988. (After that date posting of notice was no longer required to affect a copyright.) Abandonment requires specific language and intent to place copyrighted works in the public domain by the author.
- Works of the U.S. Government. These works cannot be copyrighted. However, it appears that works that have been created for the Government by a commercial entity may have some copyright protection from commercial use.

"Fair Use" of a Copyrighted Work.

In light of the restrictions on Copyrights listed above, Copyrighted works can be "fairly used" without fear of copyright infringement for such purposes as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, or research. Whether the use of a work is fair is determined by balancing these factors:

- The purpose and character of the use.
- The nature of the copyrighted work.
- The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the work as a whole.
- The effect of the use on the potential market for, or value of, the copyrighted work.

Incorporating Works into Multimedia (Internet) Documents.

For Copyrighted multimedia works the following should be considered:

- Extreme caution should be exercised in using digital material downloaded from the Internet because there is a mix of works protected by copyright and works in the public domain on the Internet. Access to these works on the Internet does not automatically mean that these works can be reproduced and reused without permission and/or royalty payment.
- Proper credit should be given for all copyrighted material. When in doubt, credit should be given as if the material was copyrighted.
- In general no more than 10% of copyrighted textual, motion, music, or collections of illustrations or photographs should be included. In the case of independent illustrations or collections, no more than 5 images of an artist or photographer should be included.
- If any alterations are made to copyrighted material, then care should be taken to explain the specific changes.

Disclaimers

Unit web sites and most unit multimedia documents should carry a Disclaimer of Endorsement and a Disclaimer of Liability. These disclaimers address references to commercial products and services, as well as merchantability and fitness for purpose. Sample disclaimers and notices are provided below:

Cookies Monitoring

This notice has been designed to warn web site users that the cookies feature is being employed. One possible approach to a cookies notice:

Cookies Notice:

This site uses a technique known as cookies to provide better services to our users. Cookies allow us to keep a record of a your activities while visiting our web site. If you object to this monitoring, you may wish to exit the web site at this time.

Disclaimers

These disclaimers are styled after many government disclaimers on the Internet... they are not intended to be used as they are... but rather a starting point for thinking about your own disclaimers.

Copyright Status:

The U.S. Government retains a nonexclusive, royalty-free license to publish or reproduce these documents, or allow others to do so, for U.S. Government purposes. These documents may be freely distributed and used for non-commercial, scientific and educational purposes. Commercial use of the documents available from this server may be protected under the U.S. and Foreign Copyright Laws. Individual documents on this server may have different copyright conditions, and that will be noted in those documents.

Disclaimer of Endorsement:

Reference herein to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the United States Government. The views and opinions of authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the United States Government, and shall not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes.

Disclaimer of Liability:

With respect to documents available from this server, neither the United States Government nor any of its employees, makes any warranty, express or implied, including the warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose; nor assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed; nor represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights.

Notice:

Information from this server resides on a computer system funded by a U. S. Government unit. The use of this system may be monitored for computer security purposes. Any unauthorized access to this system is prohibited and is subject to criminal and civil penalties under Federal Laws including but not limited to Public Laws 83-703 and 99-474.

Privacy Act Considerations

Issue One: Electronic Mail Addresses

Because most electronic mail addresses are personally identifying or are at least associated with a specific individual, their compilation into a database or mailing list presents valid privacy concerns. To allay public fears of inappropriate use and loss of control, agencies should generally treat electronic mail addresses as personal identifiers and personal records under the Privacy Act.

The accumulation of electronic mail addresses presents at least two separate issues: 1) the intentional accumulation and compilation into a database, and 2) the incidental collection as a by-product of a software application or otherwise during the normal course of business.

The intentional collection of electronic mail addresses and compilation into a database presumes the intention on the part of the unit to maintain the database (mailing list) in some up-to-date condition and then retrieve and use it in the future. Such a list is a system of records covered by the Privacy Act and is subject to the Act's protections and requirements that your Privacy Act officer will tell you about, e.g., you need to notify the public that you are compiling them and why. But, please note that this discussion pertains to a unit list not your own Rolodex.

The incidental collection of e-mail addresses does not have the same Privacy Act implications as does the intentional collection and therefore you don't need to notify the public. For example, the automatic accumulation of electronic mail addresses by discussion group software does not have Privacy Act implications so long as the accumulation is maintained automatically by the software and not used by unit employees. Another example of incidental collection is the unit keeping the entire text and header of electronic mail messages where the sender's electronic mail address is located in the header. This type of accumulation is analogous to a unit's maintenance of routine paper correspondence and should be handled in a similar fashion.

Issue Two: Using cookies and accumulating a web site visitor's session information.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the use of cookies and the collection of session information pose even greater privacy concerns to web site visitors than does the accumulation of electronic mail addresses. This concern is fitting as over time the accumulation of this data can reveal a visitor's personal preferences and particular interests. Agencies should always notify the public when they collect this type of data. Depending on the circumstances, notification may explicitly required by the Privacy Act or provide a beneficial service to the customer. For example, if the session information is associated to an Internet Protocol (IP) address (which is generally held as not a personal identifier) then notification isn't statutorily necessary. But, again, as service to the customer, notice should be given anyway. Consult with your Privacy Act Officer.

Electronic Public Disclosure

Postings to unit web sites are official unit disclosures and must be consistent with other unit disclosures of the same or similar information. For example, if requests for draft unit documents are routinely denied from FOIA requesters as pre-decisional to protect the integrity of the unit's deliberative process, then it would be more appropriate to post draft documents on the unit intranet rather than on the public web site. To facilitate release of information, agencies may want to develop an Internet statement of responsibility that reminds Web authors of release criteria and then rely on the professionalism of content developers.

Frames

Frames should not be used when constructing web sites and web pages.

XML

XML is a meta-markup language that provides a format for describing structured data and allows developers to easily describe and deliver rich, structured data from any application in a standard, consistent way. XML facilitates more precise declarations of content and provides more meaningful search results across multiple platforms. In addition, XML is enabling a new generation of Web-based applications for viewing and manipulating data.

The power and beauty of XML comes from its maintaining the separation of the user interface from the structured data. While Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) tags can display a word in bold face or italics, XML provides a framework for tagging structured data. An XML tag can indicate that the data associated with the tag is a retail price, a sales tax, a book title, an amount of precipitation, or any other desired data. As XML tags are adopted by organizations for their intranets, and by others across the Internet, the ability to search for and manipulate data, regardless of the applications within which the data resides, will increase. Once an application locates XML data, the application can deliver the data over the network and present the data in a Web browser (such as Internet Explorer) in any number of ways, or the application can hand off the data to other applications for further processing and viewing.

XML, which provides a data standard that can encode the content, semantics, and schemata for a wide variety of cases ranging from simple to complex, can be used to mark up the following:

- An ordinary document

- A structured record, such as an appointment record or purchase order

An object with data and methods, such as the persistent form of a Java object

A data record, such as the result set of a query

Metadata about a Web site

A graphical presentation, such as an application's user interface

Standard schema entities and types

All links between information and people on the Web

Once the data is on the client desktop, it can be manipulated, edited, and presented in multiple views without return trips to the server. Servers can now become more scalable, due to lower computational and bandwidth loads. Also, because data is exchanged in the XML format, it can be easily merged from different sources.

VI. Page Standards/Templates

Standards

The basic elements of the global toolbar, as directed by the Marine Corps Web Standards Committee board can be seen at the Corps' official home page at marines.mil. Units may maintain their own local links along the left side navigation pave of their respective pages. What follows is a current list of the items to be contained on a standard, official Marine Corps Web page:

Unit/Command/Location title	located in the top portion of the page above the global toolbar
Logos	Standard MC Brand – “The Few The Proud” will be displayed in the top left of every page Unit Seal/Logo – displayed as necessary in the body of the page
Page Background	White
Horizontal dividing lines	Red or black
Additional page elements (text, links, header font, caption text, body text)	See current Marines.mil pages for set standards.

Appendix A. Glossary of Internet Terms

Absolute Universal Resource Locator or Absolute URL

An absolute URL contains all of the information necessary to reach a resource, including the protocol, the system, the path, and data file name.

ASCII

ASCII is an acronym for American Standard Code for Information Interchange and is an international standard in which numbers, letters, punctuation marks, symbols and control codes are assigned numbers from 0 to 127. It is plain text without style or font specifications.

Browser

A browser is a program for reading hypertext. Since this is the primary function of an Internet client, they are generally called browsers. Common browsers include Mosaic, Netscape, Microsoft Internet Explorer and Lynx.

Client

Client software requests information from another computer or "server". Examples of client software used to browse the World Wide Web are Netscape Navigator, NCSA Mosaic, and Microsoft Explorer.

Cookies

A "cookie" is a small piece of information, which a web server (via a CGI script) can store with a web browser and later read back from that browser. This is useful for having the browser remember some specific information across several pages; for example, when you browse through a "virtual shopping mall" and add items to your "shopping cart", a list of the items you've picked up is kept in your browser's cookie file so that you can pay for all the items at once when you're finished shopping.

Dissemination

Dissemination is government distribution of information to the public. Information not considered dissemination is distribution limited to government employees or unit contractors or grantees; intra- or inter-unit use or sharing of government information; and responses to requests for unit records under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C 552) or Privacy Act. (OMB Circular A-130)

Document

A document is a set of information designed and presented as a discrete entity. A technical report is a good example of a document. It may contain logical sub units such as parts, sections, or chapters; but it is typically created, updated, and presented as a single unit. The Internet presentation of a document may consist of one or many web pages.

Document collection

A document collection is a set of documents that are logically related, usually by their content, target audience, or origin (e.g., a collection of studies produced by a program, project, or organization).

Federal Records

Federal records are "...materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an unit of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that unit or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of the data in them." (44 U.S.C. 3301)

GIF or .gif

Graphic Interchange Format is commonly used to compress and transfer graphics files to and from on-line services.

Government information

Government information is information created, collected, processed, disseminated, or disposed of by or for the Federal Government. (OMB Circular A-130)

Government Information Locator Service

The Government Information Locator Service (GILS) is essentially an electronic card catalog. It identifies public information resources throughout the U.S. Federal Government, describes the information available in those resources, and provides assistance in obtaining the information. Ultimately, GILS will consist of a decentralized collection of unit-based information locators and associated information services.

Government publication

A government publication is information, which is published as an individual document at government expense, or as required by law. (44 U.S.C. 1901)

Home page

A home page is the entry point to a web site or a grouping of related pages commonly referred to as a "document collection." It is the first page of information received by a visitor to the site or document collection.

Hotlist or Bookmark

A stored list of Internet URLs which an individual may save in order to expedite rapid access to that site. The name on the list is the Title associated with that URL.

HTML or HyperText Markup Language

The HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is a simple markup system used to create hypertext documents which are portable from one platform to another. HTML is the most frequently used language when creating documents for the World Wide Web.

HTTP

HyperText Transfer Protocol is the primary protocol used on the Internet. HTTP performs the request and retrieves functions necessary to display documents stored on remote computers.

Hyperlink

Highlighted text or images that contain links to other information or documents.

HyperText

Text that contains links to other documents, that can be chosen by a reader and which cause another document to be retrieved and displayed.

Icon

A small, pictorial, on-screen representation of an object (file, program disk, document, database, etc.) used in the graphical interface of the Internet.

Information

Information is any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts, data, or opinions in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual forms. (OMB Circular A-130)

Information Dissemination Product

An Information Dissemination Product means any book, paper, map, machine-readable material, audiovisual production, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristic, disseminated by a unit to the public. (OMB Circular A-130)

Information Management

Information Management is the planning, budgeting, manipulating, and controlling of information throughout its life cycle. (OMB Circular A-130)

Inline Image

Graphic that appears as a part of the Web page; inline images are coded into Web documents through the HTML language, and load with the web page itself.

Internet

An Internet is a collection of interconnected networks. The Internet is the largest of the Internets. It has a tiered architecture and supports multiple protocols.

Internet Protocol or IP

The Internet standard protocol that provides a common layer over dissimilar networks, used to move packets among host computers and through gateways.

Intranet

The intranet is the use of Internet technologies within a unit deployed on an internal network based on open Internet technologies.

Imagemaps or Mapped graphics

Image maps are graphic elements that have embedded into them two or more hyperlinks, each hyperlink offering an individual jump to a linked document.

IP Address

The numeric address of a computer connected to the Internet; also called the Internet address.

JPEG

Joint Photographic Experts Group is an image compression format used to transfer color photographs and images over computer networks. Along with GIF, it is one of the most common ways photos are moved over the Internet.

Links

See Hyperlinks.

Mapped graphics

See Imagemaps.

MIME

Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions is a messaging standard that allow Internet users to exchange messages enhanced with graphics, video and voice.

MPEG

Moving Picture Expert Group, an international standard for video compression and desktop movie presentation.

Netiquette

Network etiquette is prescribed social behavior and manners used on computer networks.

Web Page or Home Page

A page, in web parlance, is an individual computer file which can be addressed by a hypertext link. Documents and collections are constructed of linked pages.

Public Information

Public information is “any information, regardless of form or format, which a unit discloses, disseminates, or makes available to the public.” (Paperwork Reduction Act)

Record (as defined by the Federal Records Act)

A record includes all books, papers, maps, photographs, machine readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an unit of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that unit or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data in them. Library and museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience of reference, and stocks of publications and of processed documents are not included. (Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. 3301)

Record (as defined by the Privacy Act)

A record is “any item, collection, or grouping in information about an individual that is maintained by an unit. (Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a)

Records Management

Records Management is “...managerial activities involved with respect to records creation, records maintenance and use, and records disposition in order to achieve adequate and proper documentation of the policies and transactions of the Federal Government and effective and economical management of unit operations. (Federal Records Act)

Relative URL

A relative URL contains only enough information to reach a resource within a server. It includes the path, and data file name. Relative URLs are used to make it easier to move documents and collections among computer systems.

Server

A computer that provides a resource on the network. Client programs such as Internet browsers access servers to obtain information.

Syntax

The syntax is the grammatical rules associated with a language (e.g., HTML).

System of Records (as defined by the Privacy Act)

A system of records is a group of any records under the control of any unit from which information is retrieved by the name of an individual or by some identifying number, symbol, or other identifying particular assigned to the individual.” (Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(5))

Thumbnail Pictures

A thumbnail picture is a small version of a larger graphic. The typical size of these pictures is often in the range of 40 by 60 pixels. These pictures are placed within documents to provide the user with a flavor for the picture. Usually the picture is linked to another page which has the expanded graphic.

Uniform Resource Locator (URL)

URL is an acronym that stands for Uniform Resource Locator and is a reference (an address) to a resource on the Internet. URLs are the doorway to the Internet and the World Wide Web. You provide URLs to your favorite Web browser so that it can locate files on the Internet in the same way as you provide addresses on letters so that the post office can locate your correspondents. The URL includes the protocol, the system, the path, and data file name.

Web author

Web authors are individuals with primary responsibility and expertise in developing home pages for the Web.

Webmaster

Each web server has a Webmaster--an individual with primary responsibility for the server. By convention, each web server maintains a Webmaster e-mail address (e.g., webmaster@www.ed.gov) to which suggestions and inquiries about the site may be directed.

Web Server

A web server is a computer which provides access to one or more collections of information using World Wide Web formats and protocols. Each web server has a main entry point or home page, although numerous files or pages are usually directly addressable.

Web Site

A collection of information, documents, or databases that is provided to a user community using World Wide Web formats and protocols.

World Wide Web

The World Wide Web is a network information delivery system that uses HTML as the authoring language and the Hypertext Transport Protocol (HTTP) as the transport protocol. It is used to find and access Internet resources.

Web Client

Software applications, typically browsers that access information, which is typically distributed over the Internet.

WWW Federal Consortium

The World Wide Web Federal Consortium is composed of multiple Federal agencies. Participating agencies have the opportunity to adopt and influence the development of NCSA World Wide Web technologies and are interested in the strategic use of these and related information technologies to better accomplish their assigned missions. The agencies work together to better use their pooled knowledge base in these areas.