



IMPORTANCE OF A FRIENDS' WEBSITE

And keeping it updated



Presented by Judy Hills

- President of Friends of the North Carolina Public Libraries
- VP of Friends of the New Bern-Craven County Public Library
- Maintains two nonprofit websites
- Editor of four monthly newsletters and one bi-monthly newsletter
- Former college adjunct faculty—taught business education
- Taught grant writing, grant management, and other nonprofit courses
- Former Executive Director of a quasi-governmental regional organization that provides planning, aging program oversight, and other services to nine counties and 62 municipalities in central eastern North Carolina
- Contact info: jahnbnc@gmail.com



Why bring this topic up?

- In 2020/2021 Friends of the North Carolina Public Libraries conducted extensive research to identify existing Friends groups in the state
- Appalled at the difficulty in obtaining even the most basic of information (e.g., current officers with contact information)
- Appalled at number of Friends with no email contacts listed
- Some Friends web page made it difficult to locate the information (e.g., only contact information provided was on a membership application)
- Some Friends websites were merely a single page on the library's website
- Existing website/web page lacked any real information providing transparency (e.g., bylaws, budgets, annual reports, projects or programs, plan of work)
- Interested public needs information—your mission, your leaders, your plan of work, etc.



What is the purpose of a website for Friends?

- Broadens your reach—presents your mission, projects and programs to interested parties as well as the general community
- Attracts and engages new members, and new donors --if they can't "find" you or they don't know who you are, they can't support or engage with your Friends
- Helps build a relationship with potential advocates, other nonprofits with aligned missions and volunteers—well populated website plays a key role in social sharing and connecting
- Builds a case for your legitimacy and reputation—transparency
- Nonprofits (Friends) succeed or fail on the strength of their ability to communicate their message and build an audience—websites help achieve both goals
- Makes your Friends appear “approachable”
- Independent charity analysis companies use your website to evaluate your performance



Why should your Friends have their own website?

- If your web page is a part of the library's website—they have control—you do not
- More difficult and cumbersome to get needed changes made—must submit to library website manager and possibly wait for changes to be made
- Changes may not be made in a timely manner—Friends may not be a priority
- Library may or may not agree with content you wish to post
- Library's website may have limited space and may not want to share it with Friends
- Library may have website policies that are too stringent for needs of Friends
- You do not have your own URL which is part of your identity
- Public may have difficulty “finding” your page using search engines



We have a Facebook page. Why do we need a website?

Facebook Cons:

- Lack of Control—Facebook sets the design
- Distractions—ads and irrelevant posts detract from page
- Limited ability to post relevant material
- Privacy breaches

Website Pros:

- Control over look, feel and content
- Ability to add more content and archive data
- Multiple contact channels (how the public contacts you)



What scary website mistakes do nonprofits make?

- Your website doesn't have contact information
- Your website lacks details about your nonprofit's mission and vision
- Your website doesn't feature your nonprofit's latest news
- Your website navigation doesn't make sense
- Your website isn't mobile-friendly
- Your website doesn't have a clear ask for donations
- Your website doesn't have social media links or newsletter sign up
- Your website's content uses too many words to demonstrate your work
- Your website doesn't feature endorsements and third-party reviews



<https://www.networkforgood.com/resource/nonprofit-websites/>



What are the elements of a strong Friends website?

- Name, logo, location
- Organization and Board contact info (address, email, social media links)
 - Email addresses are a must in today's society
 - Don't be afraid to use email addresses
- Mission statement—what you are about
- Details on what matters to you—your programs and projects
- A blog or news section—keep people apprised of your activities
- A calendar of events—what's coming up and when
- Headshot and bios of officers and directors
- Compelling imagery throughout the site



What are the elements of a strong Friends website? (Cont'd)

- Storage of key documents (e.g., newsletters, bylaws, budgets, plan of work, financials)
- Ways to join
 - Print out a hard copy of membership application to be mailed
 - Online
- Ability to accept cash donations online
- Information on book donations and sales
 - Where, when, how to donate books
 - What not to donate
 - Where and when to buy
- List of what is needed by organization
- Links to the main library, branches (if any) and other pertinent sites
- A call to action (sign up for newsletter, volunteer, donate, support, join, etc.)



How to build a Friends website?

- Decide whether to:
 - DIY—using a member or volunteer
 - Pay a student
 - Pay a professional
- Choose your platform (e.g., a website builder program like WordPress).
 - Don't let the professional talk you into a complicated platform--needs to be simple
 - WordPress is used by many
- Register a domain name—your site's URL (and keep it updated or you will lose it)
 - GoDaddy is an example of a registry, but there are others
 - Should be ICANN-accredited (group coordinating URL assignments)
- Select a hosting plan—needed for:
 - Backups
 - Security
 - PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliance to accept donations online
 - Some hosting plans will provide email accounts as well
 - WordPress recommends Bluehost
 - These are not free, but are not expensive.



How to build a Friends website? (Cont'd)

- Pick out a theme to fit the image you want to project.
 - Create from scratch
 - Chosen platform may have templates
- Build your site's basic pages
- Add a donation plug in
- Optimize your site for search engines



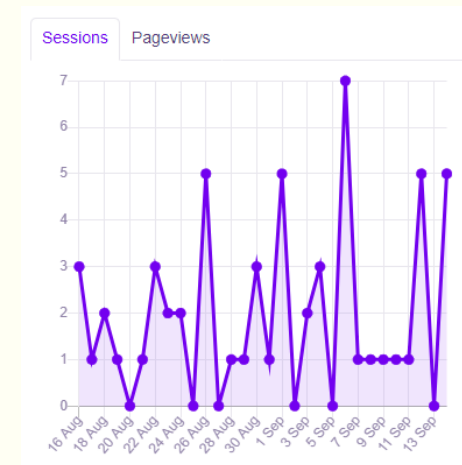
<https://themeisle.com/blog/build-a-non-profit-website/>

<https://themeisle.com/blog/how-to-make-a-website/> (WordPress for beginners)



What comes next?

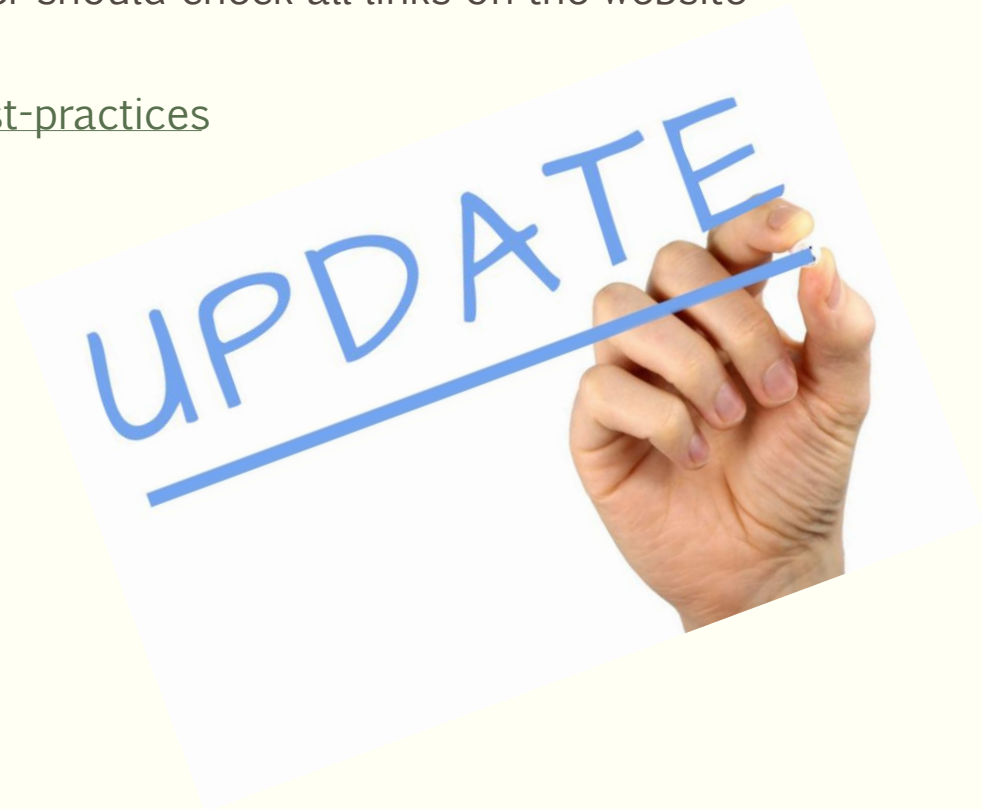
- Get a member to agree to do website content updates including:
 - Contact information
 - Event calendar
 - News updates
 - Posting current newsletter and reports
- Webmaster to regularly update:
 - Platform
 - Security
 - Plugins
- Work with the Treasurer so fees for website domain and hosting will be paid on time
- Keep changing the home page so visitors will return
- Review website metrics (if set up) and use them to make decisions on your page



What comes next? (Cont'd)

- Publish your URL in your newsletter (each time) and on all printed material (flyers, business cards, letterhead)
- Ask Board members to visit the website frequently and report any issues (e.g., broken links, problems with site loading, site can't be viewed properly on a smart phone)
- At least once a year the designated webmaster should check all links on the website
- **KEEP THE WEBSITE UPDATED!!!**

<https://morweb.org/post/nonprofit-website-best-practices>



Examples of NC Friends websites

These websites may not contain all the elements of a great website, but they are a good start

Friends of the Chapel Hill Public Library

<https://friendschpl.org/>

Friends of the Durham Library

<https://fodlnc.org/>

Friends of the Alamance County Public Library

<https://alamancefol.org/>

Friends of the Orange County Public Library

<https://focplnc.wordpress.com/>

Friends of the Henderson County Public Library

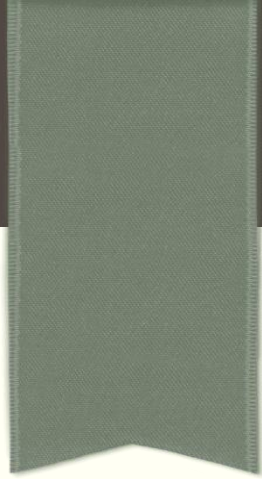
<https://www.friendsofthehcpl.org/>





EVERYONE STARTS THEIR JOURNEYS
THESE DAYS—ONLINE





YOUR WEBSITE IS YOUR CALLING CARD.

WHAT DOES YOURS SAY ABOUT YOUR
FRIENDS?