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Makers of the Award-Winning Cascade Server content management software

Survey Reveals Only 14% Of America's Best Colleges Compliant With Web Standards

ATLANTA - SEPTEMBER 26, 2006 - Hannon Hill Corporation, makers of Web content management solutions, today announced survey results revealing only 14 percent of America's Best Colleges ranked by *US News & World Report* are compliant with HTML/XHTML Web standards recommended by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The key benefits to maintaining a W3C standards-compliant Web site include having better accessibility for a wide range of disabled users and improved search engine rankings.

"Given that standardized tests like the SAT and GRE are major evaluation criteria American colleges depend on for selection processes, it only works to their benefit to apply standardized practices to official college Web sites," said David Cummings, founder and CEO, Hannon Hill Corporation. "By upholding W3C Web site standards, colleges take the same approach to making a Web site accessible as they would to making physical walkways and structures accessible to persons with disabilities. And to understand how these guidelines aid accessibility, it's important to understand how individuals with disabilities might interact with the Web."

For example, people with little or no sight must rely on electronic readers to read Web pages to them. Those with severe myopia may use screen magnifiers or text enlarging browser settings. Color defected individuals will miss the nuances communicated by color and must look for other indications which convey the same meaning. People with decreased motor skills generally rely on keyboard shortcuts for navigation. What all these individuals have in common is that they must rely on assistive technology to help them navigate the Web and find the information they need.

University of California, Davis is one school that maintains Web standards. "At UC Davis it's our mission to share widely the fruits of our teaching and research, and we feel very strongly that everyone deserves access to those resources," said Craig Farris, Webmaster. "Our challenge, at this large decentralized university, is to encourage and support everyone's compliance with accessibility regulations."

The W3C is an international consortium that develops Web standards and guidelines to ensure long-term growth for the Web. The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) was developed by the W3C in an effort to improve the accessibility of the World Wide Web especially, but not only, for people with disabilities. The WAI has developed a number of guidelines that helps to make Web sites more accessible, especially from the view of physically disabled people.

WAI was recently appointed to the Advisory Committee for the revision of U.S. Section 255 guidelines and Section 508 standards, which include Web accessibility. In addition to following best-recommended practices, being compliant with W3C standards helps colleges to stay current with federal government requirements under Section 508.

"To a large degree, improving a Web site's accessibility is not geared toward directly assisting the disabled visitor, but toward helping these various technologies better read the site. Conveniently, many of the techniques that make a Web site easier to access for assistive technologies are the same techniques that make it more attractive to search engines, and therefore improve a site's rating," said Cummings.

Web Content Management solutions (WCM), such as Hannon Hill's Cascade Server, can aid in this process by providing automatic checkers to ensure that all content managed with the solution is valid XHTML/XML, and adheres to the requirements for accessible content. One way colleges can ensure their sites comply with the standards set forth by WAI is to select a WCM solution that automatically checks for compliance. For example, with the click of a button, Cascade Server will check Web content for compliance, and alert users to any potential errors.

Hannon Hill also surveyed America's Best Hospitals ranked by *US News & World Report* and found that 99 percent are not compliant with HTML/XHTML Web standards recommended by the W3C.

For more information about the Hannon Hill surveys for higher education organizations and hospitals, please download the free white paper at www.hannonhill.com. Hannon Hill (booth #1606) will also be offering colleges and universities studied in the survey a report card grading their Web standards compliance at the upcoming EDUCAUSE 2006 conference, October 9-12 in Dallas, Texas.

For more information on accessibility Web standards recommended by the WAI, please visit www.w3.org/WAI.

Related Pages:

[Web Standards with Top Colleges and Universities](#)

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