



5 November, 2007

To: Jeanne Boyle, Chair  
VALE Assessment Committee

From: Ann D. Hoang  
Kurt W. Wagner, Co-Chairs  
VALE Website Committee

RE: Website Committee response to 2007 VALE Assessment Survey Report

From <http://www.valenj.org/newvale/about/governance.shtml>

*The [VALE Website] committee is responsible for reviewing the interface design of the VALE homepage, and VALE's Virtual Union catalog to ensure that the presentation of VALE resources is clear and user friendly. The committee provides advice to VALE's technical support staff in the implementation of the Sitesearch software to enhance access to VALE databases, member library holdings, and other resources as appropriate.*

After reviewing the 2007 VALE Assessment Survey Report (June 2007), the Website Committee has several responses and recommendations that it feels addresses the points relevant to the Committee's areas of responsibility. The Committee is excited about the potential of bringing new, Web 2.0 technologies to bear that will make the whole VALE website more dynamic, responsive to user needs, easier to update, and a source for accurate and up-to-date information about VALE resources and services

In the category of "VALE's Value to the Institution," "Maintain web site for easier access to VALE resources" received 68% of the responses in the 1 or 2 (out of 7, with 1 being the highest) level. The Website Committee feels that this confirms that VALE users regard the VALE website as an important contributor to VALE's overall value. The website is mentioned throughout the report, meaning that it is viewed as being an important user interface for VALE. In particular, the report noted that the website is valuable for conference registration, looking up information about the organization, and obtaining information about reciprocal borrowing. The survey results show, on the other hand, that the Website Committee is rated "high value" by only 13% of respondents. Anecdotally, a person mentioned that it was hard to find a piece of specific information on the website. Clearly, feelings are that the website is important, but that the Website Committee should do more to improve existing functionality and to bring more current and timely information to the VALE community. Such improvements would address comments that the website is "...out-of-date and static" and "boring". The Website Committee ranks the work of reengineering the VALE web pages as its highest priority in the coming year. The committee recognizes the internet is producing a generation that expects a seamless convergence of online tools into a product that entertains and is easy to use to stay informed and collaborate on group projects. In summary:

#### **2006-2007**

- July 2007 - Website Committee co-chairs Hoang and Wagner reported to the VALE Executive Committee that the VALE Virtual Catalog will be continued, actively promoted as a statewide discovery tool, and assistance given to libraries who wish to participate. Although not specifically mentioned in the Assessment Survey Report, we feel that the committee's work to recommend continued support of the VVC to be significant and that it will have significant positive impacts on VALE services to its users. Also at that meeting Hoang and Wagner reported that their committee will gather web log statistics on the use of the VVC to be included in their Annual Report at the end of FY2008.
- Entire VALE web site was redesigned using cascading stylesheets to create a unified appearance.
- Created a web styleguide to ensure uniformity in web authority and editing practices and production.

- Implemented professionally designed set of logos and images that help establish VALE's "brand". We feel that these are not only improvements to the website but also to VALE's image and our committee's policies.

#### **2007-2008**

- We have had a presentation by Matthew Winkel of TCNJ on Drupal, a web authoring tool with the potential for making the site easy to update without web authoring or programming skills. Using this technology, VALE committee members or administrators would be able to update their committee pages, news, event calendars or other information directly and without using html or programming language. This will make the pages dynamic, up-to-date, and a better source for current information.
- We have embraced the idea that Web 2.0 tools, namely blogs and/or wikis are a necessary part of the future of VALE's web presence. As with a Drupal-powered site, blogs and wikis are by definition able to be updated by a decentralized group of users. This is in keeping with VALE's diffusion throughout the state. To prototype the use of a blog by VALE, the 2008 VALE User Conference committee is making use of a blog in the course of their planning activity. The Website Committee will assess its use and bring lessons learned to the conversation about a more widespread use of blogs by VALE. The 2008 conference attendees will also have the ability to upload their digital photos of the event to the site's Flickr plugin for viewing on the conference web page. We have also incorporated the popular video portal You Tube on the front VALE webpage to market advocacy for preserving the NJKI program.
- The Conference Planning Committee has obtained permission to video the keynote speaker in order to podcast the speech. VALE members who are unable to attend the conference will be able to view and listen via this podcast.
- Related Web 2.0 tools can be adopted by VALE to create a more useful, dynamic website. RSS feeds can be incorporated to bring information from journals or other websites to the VALE page. This information will update itself dynamically as the origin site's information is updated. A VALE del.icio.us account can be created and linked to from the main website. Authorized editors will then be able to post links to the VALE website directly from their browser without having to use web programming.

#### **2008-2009**

- Bring all elements together: Drupal infrastructure, blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, podcasting, Flickr, del.icio.us to redesign VALE web page.
- Conduct usability testing to ensure that the new pages meet the needs and expectations of users.

The VALE Website Committee is excited to bring new energy to bear in order to improve the usability and quality of VALE's website. In the past year we have welcomed nine new members to the committee whom we know will be instrumental in implementing the changes discussed above.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions or for more information.

Sincerely

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