

Online barriers

Nonprofits need to examine the accessibility of their Web sites

Efforts are under way to make Web sites more accessible to people with disabilities.

By EMILY BREWER

For millions of deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind or visually impaired computer users, Web pages with special graphics and uncaptioned audio and video features are virtually inaccessible and may be in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"Any organization using the Web for advertising or sharing information with the public at large, and under the umbrella of the American Disabilities Act must make their Web page accessible to the disabled," says Allison Bowen, assistant director of the Disabilities Governors Advocacy Council in Raleigh.

The American Disabilities Act

requires all businesses with 15 or more employees to make reasonable accommodation for employees or potential employees with disabilities. The law allows individuals to sue their employers or prospective employers if the software they use is not accessible. The law recently was interpreted to require commercial Web sites to be accessible, according to an e-mail recently sent by U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa.

In an effort to increase awareness of the need for greater online accessibility for the disabled, numerous organizations are working to spread the word about online barriers and are suggesting ways to improve homepages and Web sites.

With some online guidance, Webmasters and designers can break down virtual barriers and reach a broader cyber-audience.

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Allison Bowen,
Disabilities Governors
Advocacy Council

"A lot of people with disabilities do use the Web, which is often their link to the public at large," Bowen says. By not making Web sites accessible, nonprofits are blocking many potential users, she says.

People without disabilities can easily scroll down a page of blinking

text, attractive graphics and columns of words on a computer screen without realizing how that same screen might appear to someone with visual impairments who relies on a screen-reading device to read aloud what is on the screen.

Nor are people without disabilities likely to realize that computerized audio features they take for granted are inaccessible to the hearing-impaired.

And Web sites that are poorly organized or contain confusing directions can be especially difficult for individuals with learning disabilities, those who speak English as a second language and younger users.

"We are finding that sometimes technology can be a great barrier," Bowen says, "especially as everything gets more graphical. Web pages are becoming more accessible for

parts of the community, but for others, it is getting much worse.

Says Richard Ford of the N.C. Industrial Commission: "As a blind person, by the time I've finally worked out a new software program so that I can use it, they've come out with something different and I have to start from square one figuring out how to use it. It is a process of adjusting technology geared to the sighted to something I can use."

Lee Davis, Jr., a visually-impaired systems analyst with the U.S. Postal Service, says that advances in technology have been a blessing, but technology must be adaptable to those with disabilities.

"I could not do the job I do now without computers and computer

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Volunteers aim to spread word about animals

By TODD COHEN

For a nation of animal lovers, Americans kill a lot of animals.

According to AnimalKind, a new Raleigh group, more than 15 million healthy animals are killed at U.S. pounds and shelters every year, a dog or cat is put to sleep every 1.7 seconds and only one in nine dogs and cats born in the United States will find a home.

The cost to destroy dogs and cats in the United States is more than \$1 billion a year, it says, and the factor that contributes most to the killings is the lack of spaying and neutering.

In Wake County shelters, an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 dogs and cats are put to sleep each year, the group says.

AnimalKind aims to raise awareness in the Research Triangle area about animal rescue efforts and the importance of spaying and neutering. Consisting of volunteers from the advertising and marketing business, the group plans to produce marketing materials and place them in the news media.

What it needs to carry out its ini-

tiative are volunteers, particularly professionals with expertise in fundraising and public relations.

Joan Williams, a Raleigh marketing professional who is spearheading the effort, says a key aim of AnimalKind is to help bring together the region's animal rescue groups, including about 100 independent rescue organizations, three county shelters in Wake, Durham and Orange counties and the SPCA of Wake County.

"The most important thing we can do is to help unify the animal organizations that are already out there doing a good job. We need to amplify their message and give the message a more powerful voice."

Leslie Mann, president of Triangle-based Independent Animal Rescue Inc., calls the founding of the new group a great idea, saying that AnimalKind's work should fill a void.

"Most of the animal rescue groups are so busy doing the hands-on rescue work that their publicity needs and organizational building blocks tend to fall behind as a priority," Mann says.

Call (919) 528-4371.

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Joan Williams

Stamp of approval

Philanthropy stamp promotional kit helps nonprofits make the most of their mailings

Tips on using the new "Giving and Sharing" stamp are available from the Philanthropy Stamp Consortium.

By JOAN ALFORD

Nonprofits nationwide may request a free promotional kit about the new philanthropy stamp that describes ways to use it in mailings and as a publicity tool.

The stamp, to be issued Oct. 7 during the National Committee on Planned Giving convention, celebrates the spirit of philanthropy with the words, "Giving and Sharing: An American Tradition" above art of a bee pollinating a flower on a green background.

Included in the stamp's promotional kit:

- 10 ways to use the stamp in your mailings;
- ideas and data to integrate news of the stamp with an organization's media releases, speeches and other communication;
- first-day cover instructions; and
- information on ordering merchandise featuring the stamp.

Although as many as 70 stamps have been issued in the past publicizing causes and nonprofits, this is the first stamp to honor philanthropy itself.

Commemorative stamps typically are on sale for one year and have a limited printing. Approximately 25 million philanthropy stamps will be printed -- a lower than average number for a limited edition, collectible stamp, says a spokesperson for the United States Postal Service.

Still unknown at the Journal's press time was whether the stamp would reflect the proposed first-class postal rate of 33 cents. If not,

users of the stamp will have to add a one-cent stamp to their mailings.

Kits will be distributed while they last. National organizations may request as many as 20 promotional kits, while smaller nonprofits will be limited to one kit. More information is available at the

Independent Sector's Web site at <<http://www.indepec.org>>.

To order a kit, call the Philanthropy Stamp Consortium at (703) 519-8442.



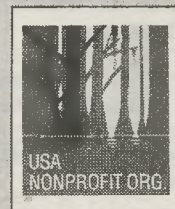
New nonprofit stamp commemorates wetlands

A new stamp for nonprofit use has been issued by the U.S. Postal Service. The "Wetlands" stamp, selling for five cents, is the third in the American Scenes series.

The stamp was dedicated at a stamp show in Virginia in early June.

The stamps, available in gummed rolls of 10,000, are intended to help add a personal touch to bulk mailings.

Nonprofits may receive first-day issue postmarks until the end of August by mailing pre-addressed envelopes in a larger envelope to: Wetlands Stamp; Postmaster; 6841 Elm St. McLean, Va. 22101-9991



BRIEFLY

Duke to lease Durham Regional

Beginning July 1, Duke University will pay \$3.5 million per year for at least 20 years to lease Durham Regional Hospital's facilities. Duke also will pay \$2.1 million a year to Lincoln Community Health Center and \$1.5 million toward the county's ambulance service.

Technology training expands

HandsNet, a nonprofit organization that provides online information services and training, is launching the Virtual Training Institute to offer technology training to members of nonprofits when they are attending conferences. For information, see HandsNet's Web site, <<http://www.handsnet.org>>.

Nonprofit group support waning

Competition from social causes and programs such as zoos, war memorials, historic preservation funds and medical research has adversely affected the contributions received by Pennsylvania's Wild Research Conservation fund. Donations were down \$278,000 from last year.

Humanitarian missions in Africa funded

The African Environmental Research and Consulting Group, founded and directed by environmental scientist Peter Sam, tackles issues such as providing adequate water supplies and medical care for the people in Africa by coordinating the efforts of 3,000 scientists, engineers, developers, environmentalists, educators and economists.

New health foundation begun

Johns Hopkins Medicine is backing a \$40 million health foundation as part of its purchase of Maryland's Howard County General Hospital. The as-yet-unnamed foundation is expected to fund health promotion and prevention programs that may include teen pregnancy and alcoholism.

Online auction to aid women in film

Women In Film, a nonprofit organization that promotes the fair treatment of women in the entertainment industry, was slated to receive a portion of the proceeds from the fifth Hollywood Memorabilia Online Auction, a weeklong auction held at the end of last month.