

Museum Web Page Update
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April 26, 2017

I decided I would use the “off-season” to work behind the scenes on the web site and related topics. I spent most of the January ~ April time frame creating documentation for myself and future webmasters and cleaning up the code on the web site. In creating the documentation system, I wanted it to be essentially auto-updating, so I created a weekly site audit tool that explores all the web pages on the website. In addition to creating the documentation for the webmaster, it does things like making sure there are no broken links, all the photos referenced really exist and it does a spell check on every page. It also checks the syntax of the HTML code that comprises the web site.

As the audit tool developed, it found a surprising number of issues throughout the web site that I have gone back and fixed. The audit tool now reports an (almost) clean web site. It flags a few pages that are still under development, but all the public pages are clean. The web pages were previously rendering and looked OK, so why do we care?

I knew that some of the web pages looked different on different browsers; some of this was caused by the different browsers looking at our mangled HTML code and “fixing” it for us in slightly different ways. Now that we have no syntax errors, the pages look much more uniform on different browsers because the browsers don’t have to guess what we really meant to say.

Another advantage of a clean web site is that the various search engines allegedly use a scoring system to rate your web page before displaying search results. A cleaner web site supposedly ranks higher, so people searching may find more results directing them to wplives.org now. That can help our society.

A big side effect for us is since I had to recode almost every page on the web site, I used this as the opportunity to create the missing mobile friendly web pages for our collection pages. We made significant progress towards being a 100% mobile friendly web site. For the period 4/20/16 to 4/20/17 67.75% of our web visitors used a desktop, 22.64% used a mobile device and 9.61% used a tablet. The third of our web visitors that don’t use a desktop are finding a much more pleasant environment than in the past when essentially none of our web pages were mobile friendly.

Of course I have also been trying to keep the web site current with the museum news and events. We added more material to the web site for the April Crew Training sessions. Material for the Reno convention was used to help promote the event.

I am always looking for feedback, content and new ideas. If you have some, please don’t hesitate to contact me at webmaster@wplives.org.