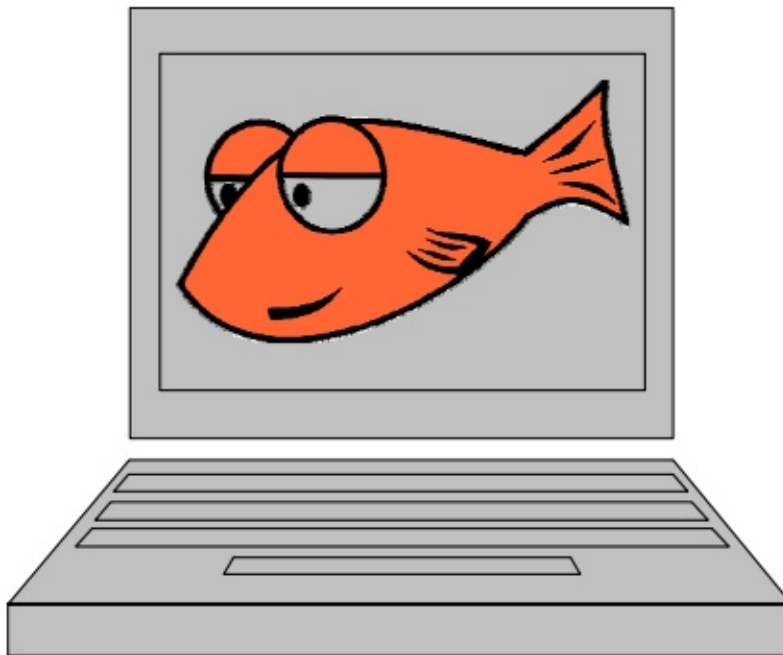


SO, YOU WANT TO CREATE A WEBSITE FOR YOUR AFS STUDENT UNIT?



Here's everything you ever wanted to know and more!

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Student Subsection, Education Section, and Membership
Committee of the American Fisheries Society

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Getting Started

Where will the hosting site be located?

Hosting services for AFS subunits are numerous. The servers that store webpages can be found on university campuses, private companies, state agencies, and at AFS headquarters. Choice of a hosting site may depend on cost, ease of access for adding and updating webpages, and storage space. Student units will need to research all options. Most universities offer free or low-cost server space to campus organizations. Some student units are provided space within the state chapter's webpage. The Divisions of AFS may host website space at no cost as well. The Parent Society offers free space to any AFS unit. Private company hosts typically charge a fee for this service. Determine which option is the best for your student unit based on your unit's needs.

Creating Webpages

Now that your student unit has decided where the website will be hosted, it's time to create and upload the content!

What programs are available for creating and editing webpages?

The number of programs available for creating and editing webpages are almost limitless! And you don't have to know HTML programming language to create webpages. Creating pages is as easy as creating a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. Some programs will cost money and others are free or are included in your Microsoft Office bundle.

Commercial programs include DreamWeaver, Microsoft FrontPage (for Office 2003 and older), and Microsoft Expression Web Designer (for Office 2007). These packages offer a "drag and drop" format that automatically writes the HTML code as you create and edit your webpages. FrontPage and Expression Web Designer *may* already be on your computer or on a computer at one of your university labs, depending on the Office bundle. Microsoft Word and PowerPoint can be used to create HTML files. Simply create the layout of the page and save the file as a .html file rather than a .doc or .ppt.

DreamWeaver must be purchased and does not come as a standard package with most computers. If you are interested in any of these programs, universities will often offer discounted prices on computer software.

Be advised - commercial programs or Microsoft Office products often include large amounts of "hidden code" that affect how your webpage is displayed once its published. For this reason, Microsoft ceased the sale of FrontPage after 2006. Further, the use of Microsoft Word or PowerPoint is often not recommended for creating and editing webpages. If you know HTML code, you may be able to skirt these issues and edit the excess code yourself. If not, these programs may not be the best solution to your needs.

Fortunately, there are many programs that are free *and* are in a user-friendly format. Many of these programs are "open-access", meaning the programs are constantly edited by actual users of that program. Two such programs are Kompozer (<http://www.kompozer.net/>) and NVu (http://www.download.com/Nvu/3000-2048_4-10412423.html). These programs are small and can be downloaded to any computer. Both offer a WYSIWYG ("what you see is what you get") format that makes creation and editing simple.

Creating the look

Your unit may want to consider creating a logo or a brand for your website. This logo can also be used on public documents or unit merchandise (e.g., t-shirts, mugs, hats) that can be sold to raise unit funds. Many AFS units sponsor logo contests to incite creativity with prizes. Competition is often fierce!

Naming files

Naming files is important, particularly for publishing the website. The homepage should always be titled as "index". Other pages are not limited in what you can entitle them. Shorter names are recommended (e.g., "links", "jobs", "announcements"). Check with your website host for restrictions on webpage names. For example, any files uploaded to the AFS server should be titled with only lowercase letters and underscores instead of spaces (e.g., "fish_data.html" but **NOT** "Fish Data.html").

How do we publish our webpages?

Every university, state chapter, and Division is different regarding how to access and upload webpages to their servers. If your student unit decides that the university, the state chapter, or the Division would be the best hosts for your webpage, please contact university personnel or state chapter or Division officers for information on how webpages are published on their servers. If you choose

Other Tips

Planning ahead

We've all spent countless hours browsing the internet and searching for the information we need. There are tons of examples of great and not-so-great websites out there. Take time to plan your content. Decide as a unit or as a committee within your unit exactly what information you believe should be available to your visitors. Gather ideas from other AFS webpages (see <http://www.fisheries.org> for links to Section, Division, Chapter, and student unit webpages linked from the homepage). A little planning upfront will save you hours in avoiding webpage design dilemmas.

Fast pages

It's important to keep the sizes of your webpages small for faster loading. We all want our information quickly and don't want our computers to be bogged down while uploading websites. A good option is to convert large pages whose content won't change (e.g., the minutes from your last business meeting) into PDF files (using Adobe Acrobat or free online services). The resulting PDF files still have searchable content and can easily be linked to your webpages.

Photos and artwork are visually appealing, but often create 'traffic jams' as you travel the Information Superhighway. There are many software applications available to modify image files [e.g., Gimp (<http://www.gimp.org>)], and Farasha Euker is willing to provide advice on how best to post different types of images. Remember, most monitors display at 72 dpi (dots/inch), so any resolution higher than that for an image or object will unnecessarily slow down webpage loading, unless printing the image is important. Also, low-resolution images prevent images from being pirated without permission.

Keep those pages updated!

Your student unit website represents the first impression of your unit for many people, including potential members. In addition, it's a great means of communicating with current members and can help ensure their continued participation in your unit. Editing webpages typically requires minimal time, especially if the website is well-organized and thought-out from the beginning. Dedicate time every couple of weeks or at least after every business meeting to update your website. Working on bits of the website every couple of weeks

makes the task easier and more manageable. At bare minimum, make sure that officer and webmaster contacts on your webpages are updated as these positions change hands. It will help AFS stay in touch with your student unit.

Other Contacts

Many members and staff at AFS may be available to answer your questions regarding your website. Recently, AFS created an Electronic Services Advisory Board (ESAB). The board provides oversight and coordination for electronic services, including those pertaining to AFS communications, publications, meetings, unit functions, content and structure of the AFS website. Its goal is to maintain high standards of technical content and presentation, ease and continuity of membership access, and review of new electronic tools for AFS membership services.

If you have suggestions or questions about electronic services, please contact the chair, Joel Carlin (jcarlin@gustavus.edu), or any of the members listed below:

- Doug Demko, Western Division (dougdemko@comcast.net)
- Bart Durham, AFS Meetings Oversight Committee (bartdurham@yahoo.com)
- Jerry Finke, Southern Division (jerry.finke@ncwildlife.org)
- Bill Franzin, AFS President (franzin@shaw.ca)
- Greg Kozlowski, Northeastern Division (gekoziow@gw.dec.state.ny.us)
- Andrew Loftus, Computer Users Section (aloftus@andrewloftus.com)
- Jay Nelson, Publications Overview Committee (jnelson@towson.edu)
- Ted Treska, North Central Division (ted.treska@wisconsin.gov)