

Web Presence and Beyond

(Proposal)

<http://mgdissi.aub.edu.lb/AUBweb-98.html>
(via authenticated access only)

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Purpose of the Proposal

The American University of Beirut World Wide Web site (AUBweb) supports the mission and purposes of the university by promoting AUB's regional high academic standing and by providing on-line access to university information resources in support of learning, teaching, and the institutional administration of the university.

Through the development and maintenance of an integrated web site accessible via the campus intranet (AUBnet) and over the Internet, AUB seeks to:

- Promote itself as a reputable regional institution of higher education, research and development.
- Promote and highlight the quality of its programs and the accomplishments of its community.
- Promote and publish its activities, news, etc.
- Promote its alumni activities and heighten the alumni sense of community.
- Facilitate students' recruitment.
- Facilitate fund raising.
- Publish its rare collections, threatened analog material and other scholarly and cultural resources for use by the wider academic community and general public.
- Expose AUB as a center for electronic publishing of scholarly material.
- Improve its programs of teaching and learning by taking advantage of new media and increasing opportunities in online learning.
- Facilitate online collaboration initiatives on campus and globally.
- Improve the management of the university.

AUBweb Scope

AUBweb is the collection of officially recognized web sites published partially or fully by the American University of Beirut and hosted on AUBnet including the faculties' web sites, the Medical Center web sites, the Digital Documentation Center, etc.

Key Strategic Issues

If AUB is to maintain and strengthen its position as an institution at the forefront of the Middle Eastern academic community, its presence on the Internet must be developed to be a major supporting pillar of that position. That web presence is not only measured by the quality of its web and scholarly material published, but also by quantity which reflects its usefulness.

AUBweb strength as a communications medium is its openness to widespread participation, it is of utmost importance to encourage the various schools, departments, divisions, units, centers, clubs, committees, faculty members and students bodies to assume ownership of their content and publish their content on AUBweb.

While publishing on AUBweb is decentralized as in many other academic institutions, the university does retain a direct interest in both the content and presentation of material on its web site. As with print publications, the reputation and image of the university are manifested in the quality of information published on its web and the same high standards as for print publications must be observed.

History

AUB's web presence <http://www.aub.ac.lb> and <http://www.aub.edu> was established in March 1994 based on the initiative of Mr. Nabil Bukhalid, manager of the Personal Computer Support Unit (PCSU). AUB's web site was the first Lebanese web site under the Lebanese country domain (.LB) and was also published under the US educational top level domain (.EDU). The web site was hosted on layla.aub.ac.lb for local network access and mirrored on a host space provided by Dr. Fadi Kurdahi at the University of California at Irvine (UCI).

The web site was developed by Dr. Ayman Kaysi, Mr. Khaled Tabbarah, and Mr. Nabil Bukhalid. AUB web site replaced AUB gopher and consisted of a main page (AUB home) and under it four major structures providing information about AUB, Lebanon, the Internet and PCSU. The site hosted very little graphics to preserve AUB's Internet access bandwidth.

In April 1995 www.aub.ac.lb was replaced by www.aub.edu.lb.

Between 1995 and 1998, AUB web site developed quickly relying on the eagerness and enthusiasm of individual members of the AUB community to publish scholarly

and Lebanese content attracting a fairly significant number of hits per day from around the globe.

During the first quarter of 1997, PCSU conducted an overall review of AUB web site and obtained expert support from Dr. Borrel Ludvigsen. During that Summer Dr. Ludvigsen redesigned AUB web site and initiated the Digital Documentation Center (DDC) as a subunit to the Personal Computing and Networking Services (PCNS). This was AUB web site major planned expansion and within less than one year AUB web site hosted around 7 Giga Bytes of scholastic and digitally archived content.

The much cheered 1997-1998 web sites and content explosion revealed to be a management nightmare, leading to a series of consultations and proposals. See Appendix B "Digital Documentation Center – memo 980513"

Summary of Recommendations

After a series of consultations with the faculties and administrative units, and long deliberations with Dr. Borre Ludvigsen, and in order to ensure that information officially provided on AUBweb is both timely and accurate, PCNS is recommends the following:

- Run AUBweb as an "electronic journal" managed by a Presidential assigned AUBweb Editorial Board or Steering Committee.
- Develop and plan for AUBweb full time staffing, job descriptions, roles and responsibilities, etc.
- Identify, train and officially assign departmental and/or business service web authors/publishers.
- Develop and adopt an AUBweb policy statement.
- Develop and enforce AUBweb standards, design styles, etc.
- Develop and enforce copyright, advertising and content disclaimer policies.
- Develop a centralized digital media center and man it with a professional support team to provide adequate guidance, support and training.
- Restructure AUBweb based on the dewey decimal cataloging system, and develop a site map and index, information expiry mechanism, etc.

Appendix-A offers some guidelines that might help the AUBweb Editorial Board or Steering Committee initiate the AUBweb restructuring process.

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Appendix-A

Draft Guidelines

AUBweb Editorial Board

AUBweb Editorial Board is responsible for coordinating AUB's presence on the Web and developing policies and procedures governing AUBweb. In keeping with its mandate to provide direction for the development and continued growth of AUBweb, the Editorial Board is responsible for the information structure of the site and the approval of any changes thereto.

The editorial board may for instance, be composed of representatives from each faculty, libraries, Information and Public Relations Office, Student Affairs.

AUBweb Information Structure

AUBweb official information structure consists of AUB home page (www.aub.edu.lb) or (www.aub.edu) and associated top-level pages providing the nucleus of AUB's Web presence. Material presented on the AUBweb information structure may include sponsored pages, non-sponsored pages, and personal pages. Refer to [Appendix – D](#) for a suggested AUBweb information structure.

Sponsored or official pages are those specifically identified as part of the AUBweb official information structure. They are created and maintained according to guidelines developed by and under the supervision of the University Web Editor and the Web Editorial Board, and they are governed by AUBweb standard design templates and information review, update and deletion procedures.

Non-sponsored pages are produced independently by academic departments, administrative offices, and recognized student organizations. Content and layout of non-sponsored pages are the responsibility of the sponsoring department, office, or student organization. Such pages may be monitored periodically by the University Web Editor for compliance with university policies and conformity with professional norms of content and presentation. Authors/publishers of such pages who choose to use the AUBweb standard design templates must adhere to the same standards and review processes as for sponsored pages.

Personal pages are created by individual members of the AUB community and are hosted on AUBweb subject to minimal review, content control and stipulations. The

American University of Beirut assumes no direct responsibility, legal or otherwise, for the content of personal pages, and the standard design templates may not be used for them.

Any complaints received concerning or claims asserted against an author/publisher or sponsor for the material contained in a non-sponsored or personal page shall be the responsibility of the sponsoring organization or individual author.

Material published on AUBweb must comply with all official policies of the university, including AUBnet code of conduct, copyright policies, non-discrimination, confidentiality of records, and appropriate use of computing facilities. AUBweb Editorial Board reserves the right to refuse or delete information that violates these policies.

Guidelines for University-Sponsored Pages

Each academic and administrative department that has officially presented information published on AUBweb shares responsibility for developing and maintaining that information. An information provider (departmental web author/publisher) shall be identified and officially assigned to that responsibility; these information providers shall be responsible for making accurate and timely updates.

Sponsored pages shall conform to technical and style guidelines adopted by the AUBweb Editorial Board, and shall use the approved standard design templates. AUBweb logos, header, footer, disclaimer, copyright templates will be placed in a centralized Web directory for use by web authors/publishers. Each page shall contain the date the page was last updated and the contact of the information maintainer. Links to the AUB home page and appropriate top-level pages in the information structure shall also be provided.

Prior to being published on AUBweb, all sponsored pages must undergo editorial and technical review. The AUBweb Editorial Board might appoint a Web Redesign Task Force consisting of the University Web Editor, Web Coordinator, representatives of the offices of Publication, PCNS, the Libraries, and DDC and charge it with developing and implementing procedures and processes for editorial and technical review.

Information providers should review links and update pages at least monthly. If, through random checks, a problem in content or design is discovered, the page author/publisher will be contacted with a request that the problem be corrected.

Guidelines for Non-Sponsored Web Pages and Personal Home Pages

Non-sponsored Departmental web pages may be created by academic departments, administrative offices, student organizations, and other organizational entities on campus for publication on the AUBweb. The university also extends to faculty, staff, and students the privilege of establishing a presence on AUBweb by creating and maintaining a personal home page.

Departmental non-sponsored web pages that employ the AUBweb standard design templates will be subject to the AUBweb review and editorial control. In all other cases, the web authors/publishers of non-sponsored pages bear full responsibility for their contents and maintenance, though the university reserves the right to monitor such pages and their associated links for compliance with university web publication policies.

Students, faculty, and staff who want to develop personal home pages should contact Personal Computing and Networking Services (PCNS).

Non-sponsored departmental web pages produced by departments, offices, or campus organizations must identify the page author and provide a contact email address.

Personal home pages must similarly identify the page author and provide a contact email address. In addition, personal home pages must prominently display the standard American University of Beirut personal home page disclaimer.

Material published on the American University of Beirut Web site shall not violate any explicit or implied policy on confidentiality, right to privacy, or personal safety. All published material is subject to existing, Lebanese and US, laws relating to copyright, intellectual property rights, and trademarks.

Based on AUBnet Code of Conduct, the use of university computers and networks for commercial purposes is prohibited.

DDC and Professional Support

On the matter of professional support the Digital Documentation Center (DDC) at PCNS could be developed (equipped and manned) to provide some of the professional services in-house and contract other services to freelance experts.

DDC services will be charged based on clearly defined project plans. It should be clear that the responsibility for initiating and funding such projects would always remain with the schools, departments, or the custodians of the material in question.

Web projects shall be prioritized and material to be published approved by AUBweb Editorial Board.

AUBweb Staffing

To be defined by the AUBweb Editorial Board. Refer to Appendix – C for suggested webmaster positions and responsibilities.

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Appendix-B

Digital Documentation Center (Memo - 980513)

After we consulted with the faculties and administration (already working with the DDC) it has become clear to Barre and me that the focus and functioning of the DDC needs redefining so that it can meet its aims in the interim period between the present state of relative "electronic publishing illiteracy" and such time at which the individual faculties are self sufficient in electronic scholarly publishing.

Barre was kind enough to compile the following suggestions from our email discussions and exchange of ideas:

Given that the aims of the DDC as we defined them a year ago are; a) to provide assistance in digital archiving of threatened analog material and b) to assist in exposing AUB as a center for electronic publishing of scholarly material.

The Digital Documentation Center should be run as an "electronic journal" with the aim of continually publishing scholarly information on the AUB intranet and the academic Internet. The center core staff should be complemented by an executive editor (can be the webmaster) and an independent editorial review board. The DDC may solicit or receive suggestions for content from all departments at AUB or outside sources relevant to AUB's activities and aims. Material to be published shall be approved by the editorial board alone at the suggestion of the editors. The editorial board may for instance, be composed of representatives from each faculty. It should also be clear that the material published may include information, data, research and presentations of controversial and pertinent natures as long as it is not belligerent or compromises the interest of AUB. The preparation of material both real-time and static would be initiated by the editors and approval to publish would be taken by the editorial board much as in any other scholarly printed journal published at AUB.

On the matter of digitizing threatened analog material for preservation, the DDC could provide service or assistance as needed on request or when particular objects are brought to its attention. It should be clear that the responsibility for initiating and funding such preservation would always remain with the custodians of the material in question.

Our reasoning in this matter stems from the gap between the optimal situation where individual departments themselves review, format and contribute ready-made material for the AUBnet web and today's reality which spans from eagerness and enthusiasm to publish, to reluctance in making material

available with a tendency to search for perceived conflicts of interest in all forms of information.

It is our conviction that electronic publishing of scholarly material, particularly on the Internet is particularly beneficial to AUB both academically and economically - and especially at a juncture in time when institutions of academic learning are attempting to address changes both in their relations to their public and the transformation of modern media. If AUB is to maintain and strengthen its position as an institution at the forefront of the Middle Eastern academic community, it's presence on the Internet must be developed to be a major supporting pillar of that position. That presence is not only measured by the quality of scholarly material published, but also by quantity which reflects its usefulness.

With respect to the manning of the center, I will be happy to continue helping both in an editorial and technical capacity subject to clearly formalized agreements between AUB and my employer in Norway. As I understand it, there is an on-going strengthening of cooperation between Norway and Lebanon at the foreign ministry level, which might be relevant in this connection. I am sure that the day-to-day running of the DDC would be of interest to many graduates with multi-disciplinary and multi-media backgrounds. It might be worthwhile probing the Internet for suitable candidates, for example in the Lebanese-American community.

The three student assistants that have been with the center since its inception in the summer of '97 are both skilled and qualified to maintain its infrastructure and to create publications, but under qualified supervision and guidance. They also have an exceptional loyalty to the center's activities and purpose. However, being undergraduates, their presence is necessarily transient and new assistants will have to be recruited thus requiring time-consuming training attention. The same would also be true were particular projects assigned as credit-giving student projects with other departments which obviously would have their own agendas to address in addition to the interests of the DDC.

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Appendix-C

Suggested Webmaster Positions / Functions

Depending on the size of the web site and the frequency of updates and interventions the below suggested job functions, within positions, may be distinct and performed by separate individuals or rolled together and performed by one individual.

The job functions that are technical in nature will typically reside in the Personal Computing & Networking Services (PCNS). The editorial and page formatting functions will typically reside in the Information & Public Relations Office or the University Publication Office.

But like any journal the key players are the web authors and/or publishers and they typically reside in the units and departments responsible for the development, compilation and dissemination of the university information.

As we develop schools might elect to appoint dedicated "Web Editors", "Web Designers/Developers" and "Instructional Development Coordinators". They must work closely with the "University Web Coordinator" and "University Instructional Development Coordinator".

Following are the suggested web functions/positions:

1. University Web Coordinator (University Webmaster)

Responsible for planning, managing and coordinating the university website, including: overseeing web production and application development, developing web standards for the campus and Medical Center and consulting with departments and units about the use of the web, promoting the Web, supporting training efforts. Acts as liaison and consultant with entire campus regarding web-related issues. Reports to PCNS.

2. University Web Editor

Responsible for maintaining the content of top-level pages. May be a group of content people, permanent staff plus students, including individuals with graphics skills. May also create content for other units. Must work closely with University Web Coordinator. Reports to the Information and Public Relations Office.

3. Web Designer

Responsible for graphic design, presentation, usability and navigation features on the website. Creates graphics, images, and photographs for online publications; might produce graphics on demand for other departments; might charge for this service. Reports to the Information and Public Relations Office.

4. Web Server Administrator

Manages web server and/or database technologies, software and security. Usually a portion of a someone's job description. Must work closely with Coordinator. Reports to PCNS.

5. Web Application and/or Intranet Application Developer

Manages and develops database systems and/or applications/scripts that provide dynamic Web pages. Reports to PCNS

6. University Instructional Development Coordinator

Provides support and/or training for faculty for Web-enhanced and online course development. Reports to PCNS and/or the serviced school.

7. Web authors or publishers for units and/or departments

Web publishers (designers and editors) for the websites of administrative units, colleges, departments and offices, faculty sites and other special interest sites. Typically are staffed by program assistants, student developers or other web positions that have these responsibilities added to their current job descriptions.

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Appendix-D

Suggested AUBweb Information Structure

<AUBweb main home page>

[search] [calendar] [help] [feedback] [academics]

[future students] Freshmen/Transfer Sophomore Graduate International

[students] Academic Calendar Clubs Financial Aid Registrar

[alumni and friends] Alumni Association Continuing Education Support AUB

[faculty/staff] News and Information Research News Support Services

[libraries] Libraries and Locations Catalog Libraries Home

[quick access] News & Information

[university medical center] University Hospital Scholl of Medicine

[athletics] Facilities Activities

<Sub pages>

<Locate>

Search
Find People
Advanced Search
Clickable Campus Map

<Prospective Students>

Admission Information
Dorms
Financial Aid
more links...

<Libraries>

Jafet Library
Saab Medical Library
Online Catalogue
University Archives (ddc)

<Current Students>

Academic Departments
Course Catalogue
Financial Aid
Register for Classes
Online Courses
Bulletin
Computing on campus
more links...

<Faculty and Staff>

Benefits
Job Opportunities
Training and Development
Computing on Campus
more links...

<Alumni and Friends>

Alumni Chapters
Continuing Education
Support AUB
Directory
more links...

<Service Units and Services>

PCNS
Physical Plant
Business Services
Digital Documentation Center
more links...

<Athletics>

Facilities
Bulletin
more links

<Public Relation>

News
Publications
AUB Catalogue
AUB Bulletin
more links...

< Quick Facts and Access>

Academic Calendar
Registration Guide
AUBnet guide
FAQ
more links

<Administration>

Board of Trustees
Office of the President
Office of

<Site Contacts>

AUBweb Editorial Board
Campus Web Editor
Campus Web Master
Office of Information
PCNS
About this site
more links....