



Spring Cleaning

After a long, cold winter, the first signs of spring bring excitement, hope, and the urge to clean! Okay, maybe not everyone will have the urge to clean, but tradition holds that part of welcoming the newness of life in the spring season is to spruce up our homes. Personally, I spring clean, because I know that once summer arrives, I'll never want to be in the house! Regardless of when or why we take the time to go through cupboards and closets and clean them out, it is important that we do.

Web sites need a little spring cleaning, too! I know—you're saying, "But I just got my site up and running, and have the content loaded, and now you want me to change it!?" Well, yes. You see, a Web site that looks the same all the time implies a sense of being out-dated and neglected, even if you have been adding pages or changing messages. Re-visiting your Web site's design will retain returning visitors, because they recognize that there is new information or a new format, and it will keep your site en vogue with the swiftly changing site styles.

"So you want me to start all over!" Not at all! Spring cleaning your site does not require that you start from scratch. It does, however, encourage you to consider a change in the layout of your information, a new image or graphic, updated text or resources, a new background

color or font, or adding a bit of flare with *flash images* or *rollovers*. Unless you have completely altered your organization's mission, your message will not change. It is HOW you present that message that needs to be modified.

Did your original design use up all of your creative juices? Browse other sites, and see what some of the new features are. Commercial and retail vendors' sites are useful,



because their products are always changing, and part of their survival is dependent on attracting customers. Or subscribe

to a Web design publication. You can find a multitude of them by doing a Google search. A final suggestion would be to ask someone else to look at your site and give feedback about what is most and least appealing—this is a good starting point for addressing specific areas that need updating.

How often you update your Web site is up to you, but a good reminder is the changing of seasons. Each season has holidays, special events, associated symbols and colors, and images that coincide with it. If time and resources are limited, choose two seasons, instead of four, to use as markers for updating your site. And remember, you DO NOT have to start all over! Just dust a few shelves, get rid of some cobwebs, and maybe put a fresh coat of paint on your design.

Creative Content

But the LORD said to Samuel, Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV)

Isn't the Lord creative!? Genesis 1 describes how the Lord created the heavens and the earth and all life within it, and He declared that it was good. What makes God's creation good? Is it the variety of colors, shapes, and sizes found therein? Or is creation good because GOD made it? The things 'created' by men are lifeless and meaningless, but God gives life, and His life is abundant and eternal (John 10:10, Romans 6:23). The character of the Creator is what makes creation good. As those who have Christ in us, we also have the Spirit of God working to produce His fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5). It is the prayer of the Web Site Task Force that the content found within the LWML Web site is a reflection of God's love and mercy, despite being created by imperfect beings.

The Web contains billions of pages full of content. Some is valuable; some is harmful. Our LWML Web sites serve a dual purpose in this sea of information: first, they are a resource for our sisters in Christ, and second, they are a means for reaching the world with Christ's Gospel message. To that end, it is important for us to take great care in selecting the content of our sites.

In this issue, we will address the two primary components of content: text and graphics.

The Power of the Written Word

Communicating with the written word is powerful and effective, not to mention that the World Wide Web provides a means for reaching millions of people with your message. And you thought giving a speech to your eighth grade classmates was nerve wracking! As you choose what to say on your site, it is important to consider how you will say it. For example, the average Web site visitor will not remain on a site if they cannot understand the site's purpose within the first 10 to 15 seconds. And, a visitor is likely to become bored by text that carries on and on. It is important, then, to consider these suggestions when filling your site with text:

- Make your **home page's** header clear, descriptive, and concise.
- Provide 'teasers', or highlights, about your organization and its mission to catch a viewer's attention. You are attempting to 'hook' your viewer so

that they will read more

- The home page should NOT contain detailed descriptions; provide **hyperlinks** to additional pages that can expound on the 'teasers' on the home page
 - Each page of your Web site should be no longer than two page-downs
 - The human eye will naturally follow a 'Z' pattern when perusing a Web site, so put your most eye-catching information on the top, left-hand quadrant of your page, and emphasize your

message with strong text or images in the bottom, right-hand quadrant

- Use language that is easily understood; avoid jargon and geek, I mean, technical terms
- Adhere to rules of grammar and punctuation
- Cite sources of information that are not your own
- Use a **serif**-based font for the main body of your text, as it is easier to read. Use **sans serif**-based fonts for 'fancier' aspects of your site, like headings.

Font Examples

SERIF	SANS SERIF
Georgia	Arial
Times New Roman	Comic Sans MS
Century Schoolbook	Verdana

Working with Images and Graphics

Children's books are good examples of what an effective Web site should look like; they communicate with pictures as much as with words. You can enhance your 'audience appeal' through tactful and strategic use of images and graphics. What is the difference between an image and a graphic? An image is a photograph or picture. A graphic is a computer-generated image. For example, if you visit the photo gallery on the LWML Web site (http://www.lwml.org/photo_gallery/lutheran-women-in-mission-photo-gallery.htm), you will find photographs of the 2007 National Convention, as well as the February 2008 Board of Director's meeting. These *images* were taken with a digital camera and uploaded to the site. If you look at the Friends Into Serving Him home page (<http://www.lwml.org/resources/lutheran-women-in-mission-teens.htm>), you

will see the Friends *graphic* at the top of the page.

As the adage goes, a picture can say a thousand words, and when you are limited on space, they are invaluable for getting your message across. Using images that you have taken with a camera or graphics that you have created is an impactful way for you to show your visitors what you are trying to say! And, when using your own material, you do not have to be concerned about copyright issues. Difficulty can arise if you choose to use an image or graphic that you have obtained from someone or somewhere else. Consider these suggestions when using an image or graphic on your Web site:

- Be aware of copyright restrictions — even if an image is marked as free, you must still obtain permission to use it unless the Web site specifies you may use it free of

charge. Even then, most free graphic sites require you to put some notification of who created the graphic at the bottom of the page. Some even require a reciprocal link.

- Search for "free graphics" on Google
- Save graphics as **.jpg**, **.gif** or **.png**

You can also create your own images and graphics with the aid of software like Adobe Photoshop, Windows Paint, or Macromedia Flash or Fireworks. Images and graphics that you create will need to have a minimum resolution of 72 **dpi**. Also consider the size of your image or graphic; you will want it to be large enough to catch a viewer's attention, but not so large that it detracts from the rest of your site.

Portions of this content taken from "Building Blocks for Website Creation," by Wendy Greiner, 2005