

Web Site Initiative The Creation of a New, Improved Web Site

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ABSTRACT

This paper is going to describe the vision and goals set up for the International Association of Maritime Universities (IAMU). In today's world, a well functioning web site, along with high quality content, and a focus on the lowest common denominator lays a solid foundation for a web site that will succeed in the long run. The objective for this web site is to develop a "community" among the member universities / colleges, as well as to be a source of reference for the students attending them.

IAMU has decided to accentuate the web site as one of the means to deepen and strengthen the ties between the numerous universities / college in the different continents in the world. The web site will provide a means for teachers, as well as students, to interact, deepen their knowledge and ask for advice in different areas where they might need help. Vikberg.net aims to be an integral part of this process and deliver an above industry standard web site that will meet all the requirements the organization might have; past, present, and in the future.

The overall goal is to provide the member colleges / universities with another means of introduction to the world, a marketing agent, as well as a tool for education and community building among the students / faculty, to promote borderless friendship.

1. Introduction

The overall goal is to provide a custom, total web solution for the IAMU organization, that will be paramount for the interaction among the universities / colleges around the world. The web site will be built on the latest web standards to the greatest extent possible, without forsaking a certain backwards compatibility, to ensure that virtually everyone can gain access to the web site if desired. This, in essence, means that the current website has to be significantly reorganized and improved upon.

The speed in which the world has changed, with the Internet as one of the biggest catalysts, has changed the way in which students are taught, and the way we correspond with one another. The visions for this web site are set high, to try to achieve the goal to be an informative, up-to-date, and user friendly site, with great potential for the future. In the center, you have what we call the 'lowest common user', which in today's high-speed internet world, is considered a modem user at the top speed of 56 Kb. This standard is expected to last for a

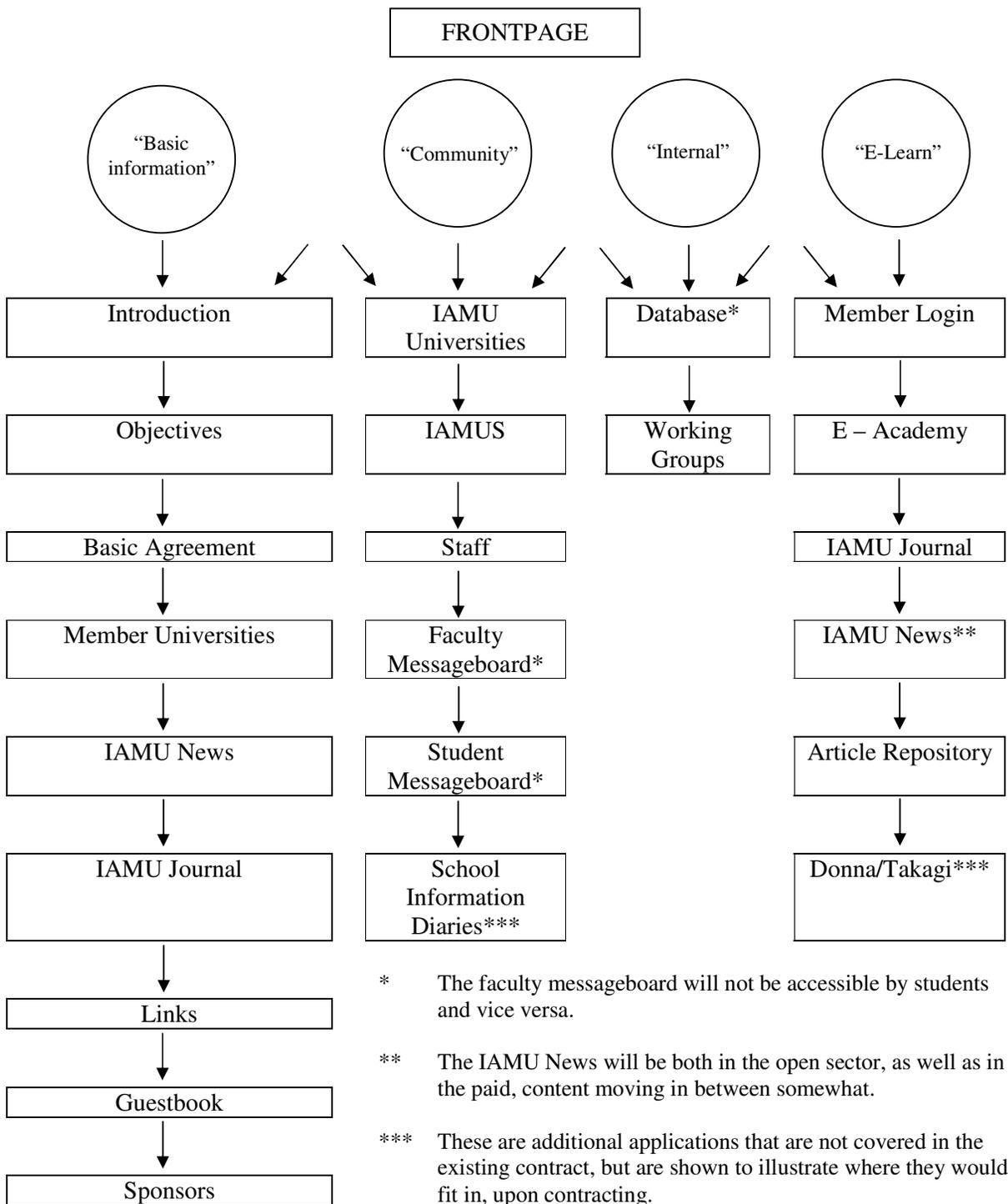
long time to come. With this in mind, we could create a web site with all the bells and whistles, Flash intros, movie clips and extensive sound loops, but then we will miss our goal- the goal to be informative and easy to access for students as well as faculty and the general public at large.

The current web site, apart from the fact that 20% is broken, is also very slow, and not cross browser / operating system compatible. This means that only Internet Explorer (IE) users can access the site adequately, and even then they will encounter erroneous 404 (Page Not Found) pages. This will, and has, had a negative impact upon the organization to date. As studies show, people looking for information will hear or sees a particular name, and will usually go online to find out more. We cannot express strongly enough how negatively a broken web site effects any type of business / organization, and therefore we will design your pages so that this will never happen again. To date, the web site excludes a large number of users, using other browsers and operating systems, from being able to see the page, either as intended or at all. When we rebuild the page, we will make sure that before it is released from our studios it will have passed through a thorough test with over thirty (30) different browser and operating system combinations.

The existing web page also suffers from a long download time, due to an overuse of unnecessary graphics and 'gizmos', as well as proprietary techniques. We will use the latest techniques that are available as long as they are cross compatible, fit into the vision for the web site, and will benefit the Maritime universities / colleges as a whole.

To promote 'community' building among the international, as well as national bodies of alumni and faculty, we will provide the means to communicate in forums. There will be individual forums specifically designed for faculty, and one for students- past, present and future. In these forums knowledge exchange can take place, plus questions about curriculums, lesson planning, simulator difficulties and a variety of other topics be discussed, no matter the time zone in which the teacher / student is in. The time zone differences is the main reason why we are not providing real-time chat, but instead focusing on forums that can enable greater connectibility. Other features will be presented in greater detail further down.

2. Layout of the New Web Site - Tentative



In the flowchart on the previous page, there are only downward flowing links, but as on any web site, it will be crossed linked, so from almost anywhere you can get to any other part of the web site. However, the right hand list, will be for registered users only, since they will only be available after the login for members. Depending on membership there will be different views for the different levels of users.

The message boards will be password protected as well, but fits better into the 'Community building' part of the future web site. Control of the message boards will be part of the duty of the maintenance contract. It will be controlled by a signup page, which will trigger a contact from us to the university where the faculty / student belongs to, for verification of their status at the school. This will be required for inclusion to participate on the boards.

The guestbook is to be open, but will be closely monitored by us, to eliminate misuse and cross posting of links for less serious businesses out there. We will reserve the right to delete on a daily basis what we don't find suitable for this web site.

All the publications of the News magazine, as well as the IAMU journals, will be made web viewable. The three IAMU News publications, as well as the Journal will be made web viewable under the maintenance contract. However, all other major updates and fees are to be discussed further.

Not shown above are all the sub pages to the boxes listed. One item worth mentioning here is the individual page for each and every participating university / college. This along with the special training vessel issue of the News Magazine will be another asset to each individual school.

We can build this web site to the point of highest technical excellence, which we stand for, but we need your help. To make this site worthwhile, we will need information, pictures and other resources from each and every individual university / college, to include in the web site before it's re-launch in January of 2004. However, this tentative re-launch date would have to be postponed due to lack of sufficient material from the participating colleges / universities. Participation by the universities / colleges is vital in meeting our projected re-launch goals.

After the completion of this web site; with all the branches built, all links active, all the information there; it is up to you, as individual colleges to make sure that it succeeds. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, everything from at the start of each term giving new students their login and password (lists of new students needs to be given to Vikberg.net three weeks prior to start) and include a link on each individual university / college's homepage, for quick and easy access both for staff, and students.

3. Technical Specifications

Dedicated Server:

Intel 1.7 GHz Celeron Processor 128 MB RAM
40 GB HD
100 GB data transfer/month
1 IP address (expandable up to 4)

BSDi operating system
MySQL
PHP4.2X
GD, GTK
Plesk 6.0

In the event of a hardware failure, server will be fixed immediately at no cost to client. Parts will be replaced or hard drives will be moved to a new server.

It is backed up by performance and 99.999% uptime guarantees.

Strong support and optional consulting services (\$99 hr) are always available.

Ready-to-go system deployed with latest patches and fast network connectivity.

Vikberg.net will retain root access/super user access to the server. However, the server itself and hosting is to be subcontracted with another company. This company does maintain 24 hr. staffing to monitor the server and to provide assistance through Vikberg.net.

How will the server be connected to the Internet?

Your server is located in a world-class data center with unbeatable peering and transit connections on redundant fiber loops with no single point of failure all operating at less than 50% of capacity.

Monitoring

Comprehensive automated ping and HTTP requests. Vikberg.net will have instant notification of a failure by Email and our Engineering Staff will be alerted via Pager. Vikberg.net's subcontractor will fix any hardware or network problems at no cost.

Is bandwidth limited?

No, we don't restrict bandwidth but we do measure your monthly transfer in GB. All bandwidth usage over the allocated amount for your server package is automatically charged in 10GB increments at the rate of \$1.99 per GB. Optional dedicated bandwidth packages (Mbps circuits) are available for intensive bandwidth usage. The server will have a 100Mbps Ethernet connection, which we have deemed sufficient for your applications.

Back-ups

In current contract, we will back up the site to our facility weekly. If it is desired by the organization, we can do a nightly backup, for an additional \$59 / month.

Applications

We can, as desired, run almost any type of application on the server. However, for security reasons, we will not support IRC chat. If this is a wish by the organization, we will find a suitable solution for this.

SonicWall Hardware Firewall

For an additional layer of security we can provide Sonicwall hardware firewalls as an available option on all servers. This firewall has VPN capability, can handle unlimited IP addresses, and is easy to set up with a web based administration interface. This is **NOT included** in the present layout of the dedicated server, however if the members feels this would be beneficiary, this can be added to the configuration; for an additional set up fee, plus monthly charge.

4. Conclusion

Rapid changes in the internet industry have inevitably increased the need for a high value, state-of-the-art web site for the IAMU organization. The web site has to appeal it's mature audience, as well as the non-professional and professional maritime / faculty alike.

The new web site will establish IAMU's unique progeny and distinctive characteristics in the minds of priority constituent groups. It will be appealing and intriguing, so visitors will be interested enough to stay and explore. It will provide a sense of relationship (interactivity and community) with the target audiences so they come back. It will directly support the IAMU's aspirations of a revenue generator (Donna/Tanaka et al), reputation, and visibility through communication with the most significant constituent groups. It will demonstrate our understanding of the technological opportunities that our relationship to Maritime universities / colleges implies.

The site architecture and navigation will direct visitors quickly and clearly to the pages where they can get information (service) and interact with IAMU (transactions). It will provide a consistent look and feel, and language that supports the IAMU progeny.