

9. Promoting the Documentation Service

Introduction

Potential users must know that the documentation service exists, and what it can do for them, so that they can gain full benefit from its services. The management and staff should take steps to publicise and promote the service to encourage the user community to take advantage of its services and to justify the cost and effort.

See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual

- 8 Making links and promoting the resource centre
- 8.1 Involving users
 - 8.1.1 Involving key people
 - 8.1.2 Ideas for involving individual users
- 8.2 Promoting the resource centre
 - 8.2.1 How to plan a promotion
 - 8.2.3 Promotional activities
- 8.3 Networks and networking

Promoting and marketing

The general aims of promoting the documentation service should be

- to encourage people to use it to meet their information needs
- to make users feel welcome and confident that the service exists to serve them

Promoting the service will help users to make better use of documents and information, but it cannot substitute for having adequate facilities and services. The management, financing, staffing and operation of the service should be properly organised before efforts are made to promote it.

When the management and staff are confident that the service is able to meet the needs of users, they should:

- study the various groups of users and potential users
- decide which methods of promotion are most appropriate for each group

The aim of promoting and publicising the service is to explain:

- the objectives of the service
- who it is designed to serve
- what kinds of information resources it can provide
- what kinds of information products and services are provided
- where the service is located
- what are the opening hours
- how to begin to use the service
- how to contact the service by mail, telephone, fax, e-mail or via the Internet

Information products and services described in Chapter 8 may all be used to promote the service. Other methods may include:

- brochures
- posters
- signposting the location of the service
- organising group visits to the service
- giving talks about the service to specific groups of users
- formal training in how to use the service and its facilities
- participation in local exhibitions, fairs, etc.

Developing a web site

A web site is one of the most important and effective means of disseminating information for a documentation service. If the service is not able to develop and maintain its own web site, it may be able to contribute to one maintained by its parent institution or by an information network or other co-operative group of which it is a member. Developing and maintaining a web site is a time-consuming task that requires:

- access to a computer
- access to the Internet
- staff with appropriate technical skills
- staff with time to maintain the contents of the web site

A wide variety of resources are available to help staff develop the necessary skills and generally to support the design, development and maintenance of web sites. Be aware, however, that it is easier to create a web site than to keep one up to date. An out of date site will reflect poorly on the service and may act as a disincentive to use it. It is important to identify the person who has the time and skills to keep the site up to date, and this is preferable to relying on outside consultants. More than one person should know how the system can be updated to cover periods when the site manager is away, or to take over if the manager leaves.

Box 9A: Advice on establishing a web site

The Web Site Management section of the ItrainOnline web site offers the following advice to those considering establishing a web site:

A web site is the product of the entire organisation and requires integrating the knowledge and skills of all staff - not just those in a communications or technology department. Therefore, a Web site can communicate effectively with the world outside your organisation only if you have good communication and co-ordination within your organisation.

Some important questions to ask yourself include:

- Why do I need a site?
- What do I know about my audience?
- What staff do I need to create and to maintain it?
- What equipment do I need to have access to?
- Where will content for the site come from?
- What organisational communications policies might facilitate work on the site?
- What resources have been set aside for ongoing tasks like marketing, evaluation, and maintenance?
- How can I ensure that search engines are able to find and index the site?

Source: <http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/management.shtml>

The ItrainOnline web site includes annotated links to numerous online resources on web development (Box 9B).

Box 9B: ItrainOnline

Web development

http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/web_development.shtml

These sections of the ItrainOnline web site offer resources on the basics of web design and management, as well as more advanced resources on web programming.

Web design

<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/design.shtml>

Resources to take you through the whole process of designing a web site:

- Introduction
- Authoring tool basics
- Working with type
- Online web design communities
- HTML basics
- Working with graphics
- Web site structure and navigation
- General

Web site usability and accessibility

<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/usability.shtml>

Resources to help you make your site easy-to-use and accessible to the widest possible range of users:

- Introduction
- Usability testing
- Validation and testing tools
- General
- Usability
- Accessibility
- Writing for the web

Web site management

<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/management.shtml>

Resources relating to the ongoing management and maintenance of web sites:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• Link checkers• Evaluation and site statistics• Content management systems• General | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hosting and publishing your site• Promoting your site• Database-driven sites• Legal issues |
|--|---|

Web programming

<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/programming.shtml>

Web programming allows you to add greater interactivity to the visitors of your site.

This section will take you to resources ranging from basic topics such as JavaScript and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to programming languages such as PHP and ASP.

The ItrainOnline section on Databases includes annotated links to online resources dealing with building database-driven web sites. See Box 7E.

The IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre makes the software package used to create and maintain the IRC web site available to partners (Box 9C).

Box 9C: IRC Portal Software and System

The IRC portal software and system as used on the IRC web site, together with technical support, are available for partners within various constructions:

- complete hosting
- structure for own use
- limited adaptation look and feel
- logo, pictures and basic colours
- courses on set up and maintenance for webmasters
- courses for contents managers
- backstopping and help desk support

The system design is set up generically in eZ publish, a powerful open source framework for content management, sharing and collaboration. eZ publish CMS is an Open Source Content Management system based on the flexible and powerful eZ publish Content Management Framework (CMF). eZ publish provides ready-made solutions as a starting point for users' web sites. Users can choose from the following solutions included in eZ publish: Webshop, Intranet, News site, Gallery, Corporate web site, Blog and Forum. eZ publish CMS solutions can be used free of charge under a General Public Licence.

Further information on the IRC Portal from:

Documentation Unit, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, PO Box 2869, 2601CW Delft, The Netherlands. Tel. +31-15-219 29 39. Fax: +31-15-219 09 55.

E-mail: library@irc.nl Web site: <http://www.irc.nl>.

Further information on eZ publish from: www.ez.no.