

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

WEB OFFICE

Web Strategy

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Authors	Tim Franklin, YIMS Programme Manager Mike Jinks, Director of Computing Service Hilary Layton, Press and PR Officer William Mackintosh, Web Manager

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1 INTRODUCTION/MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

1.1 BACKGROUND

The University of York's web presence, YorkWeb was launched in 1994. Since inception, <http://www.york.ac.uk> has grown rapidly and now contains in excess of 80,000 web pages. A content rich site has been developed by following a policy of devolved web publishing – local authors in departments create web pages with advice and support from the centre.

From an experimental beginning, YorkWeb has evolved into a key feature of the University. Consequently, there is now a need to set a clear strategic direction for the University's web presence. Encouraging signs of progress to date include:

- The rollout of a series of web-enabled administrative packages as part of the YIMS (York Information and Management Systems) programme. For example, a new Student Records System has been purchased and is under development.
- The appointment of a Web Manager.
- Online learning developments including the University's participation in the eUniversity initiative.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

The purpose of this document is to describe the vision, goals and objectives, relationships with other strategies, provisional implementation timetable and the cost of a proposed pilot study.

1.3 NEXT STEP

On Friday, 22 November, 2002, Information Committee considered the *Web Strategy* and *Web Strategy Tactical Plan* which had been approved by Web Committee. Information Committee requested that the two documents should be combined to form the *Draft Web Strategy* which would be made available for consultation by heads of departments. On Thursday, 30 January, 2003, Information Committee approved the *Draft Web Strategy* subject to wording amendments. The revised document known as the *Web Strategy* will be forwarded to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

2 VISION

2.1 OVERALL VISION

YorkWeb is an important channel of communication. It is a means by which information produced by the University, be it prospectuses, lecture notes or research output, can be published. YorkWeb aims to be a high quality, interactive channel which supports and promotes the University's role as a leading UK academic institution with worldwide links.

2.2 ADDRESSING WEAKNESSES

YorkWeb has three key weaknesses which this strategy aims to address:

1. Publishing on the web requires technical skills which not all information providers possess. Anyone can print a document and post it on a noticeboard or distribute it via a mailshot. We aim to make publishing on YorkWeb as easy as this.
2. It is very difficult to target information on YorkWeb to specific audiences. This is needed to restrict sensitive information, to prevent information overload and to market effectively to our key audiences. We aim to implement systems whereby audiences are identified so that relevant information can be directed to them, irrelevant information filtered out, and sensitive information restricted appropriately.
3. The system is not interactive. All updating of information has to be channelled through authorised personnel, creating a large workload of minor tasks for content providers and a potential bottleneck. We aim to empower individual users to input and update certain classes of information held on YorkWeb about themselves (such as students' contact addresses), with appropriate mechanisms for quality control and security.

2.3 EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES

The University needs to ensure that its web presence provides competitive advantage. It needs to evaluate YorkWeb, benchmark it in the way that it does many other activities, and aim high. YorkWeb should reflect the high quality of the University, be a useful resource for key audiences and present a good visual image of the University. Investing in YorkWeb will ensure that this most public of our communication channels reflects the University well.

Investing in YorkWeb will considerably enhance our efforts to improve internal communications in an increasingly complex environment, in improving our external marketing to a range of audiences, and in providing a supportive environment for the development of online learning.

Failing to seize this opportunity could have serious repercussions in terms of public image, good communication, developing teaching and learning, and supporting the dissemination of research findings. We could lose out to competitors in student recruitment, particularly as prospective students become more sophisticated in their use of web-based information.

3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 STRATEGIC GOALS

The ultimate aim of the Strategy is to develop a web presence which supports:

- Teaching and learning
- Research dissemination
- Promotion of the University of York to the world
- Internal communication with and amongst staff and students
- Access to and integration of process data and resources.

3.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE WEB STRATEGY

All the objectives in the Strategy underpin the strategic goals. The objectives of the Strategy are to create a web presence that:

3.2.1 Supports publication of high quality content

- Streamlines publishing of material
 - Facilitates the publishing of information in an easy manner without a requirement for in-depth technical knowledge. For example, publishing information to the web will not require an understanding of HTML.
- Has effective content which is well presented and addresses audience needs.
- Presents a coherent image of the institution via a corporate visual identity.

3.2.2 Allows ease of use for site visitors

- Allows quick and easy information retrieval
 - Internal and external visitors should be able to retrieve information. For example, through clear navigation, meaningful web addresses (URLs) and/or via the search engine.
 - Content irrespective of its format should be searchable. For example, Word files, .pdf documents and web pages should be indexed by the search engine.
 - Site navigation should reflect the needs of the visitor as opposed to the formal hierarchy of the institution.

3.2.3 Has a support infrastructure for web content providers

- Advice and strategic direction from the Web Office.
- Software support and training from the Computing Service.
- Integration with departments.
- Improved recognition of the role of the Departmental Web Officer.
- User groups. For example, the Web Forum provides an opportunity for multi-directional communication between the users, student representatives, Web Office and Computing Service.

3.2.4 Has appropriate technical underpinning

- Can be scaled to meet the growing needs of the institution.
- Exhibits resilience
 - Data must be regularly backed up.
 - System downtime is minimised. For example, through duplicated systems.
- Exploits technical advances
 - With regard to the web, the only constant is change. Consequently, it is important that York is proactive in the evaluation of new technology which may be of benefit to the institution.
- Improved integration and co-ordination with departmental systems.

3.2.5 Facilitates internal and external communication

- Effectively markets the services of the University to external audiences.
- Promotes a sense of community and provides a strong basis for developing internal communication with and amongst staff and students. For example, a revised staff home page (portal) will be introduced which will provide a focal point of information for staff. YorkWeb also helps to foster multi-way communication between the University, students and student bodies.
- Integration with communication in other media to internal and external audiences.

3.2.6 Builds a portfolio of online services

- Integrates management information systems, library services and other online facilities.
- The YIMS programme aims to introduce a number of web-enabled packages which will permit online:
 - Ordering by departments via the new finance system, Agresso.
 - Checking of room availability via the timetabling system.

3.2.7 Engenders confidence

- Content needs to be accurate and up-to-date.
- e-commerce solutions need to be secure. For example, credit card numbers must be encrypted when sending financial information across a network as part of a business transaction via the web.

3.2.8 Promotes efficiency

- Minimises duplication of effort and therefore offers cost savings
 - Information redundancy
 - Prevent duplication of effort. For example, information on “How to get to the University of York” should be maintained centrally. This obviates the need for local authors to maintain and update duplicate information.
 - Promote standard solutions
 - Promote university-wide solutions to problems as opposed to local systems. The sharing of systems will significantly reduce costs. For example, the YIMS programme will provide a series of campus-wide web-enabled packages.
- Encourages sharing and repurposing of data.
 - Data should be recorded once so that it can be repurposed many times.

3.2.9 Complies with legislation

- Policies and procedures will be reviewed in respect of legislation which may impact the web. Relevant legislation includes Data Protection, Disability Discrimination, Equal Opportunities, Human Rights and Freedom of Information.
- Rights and obligations under copyright and intellectual property legislation will also be kept under review.
- There will be clear differentiation between official corporate information and non-University information.

3.2.10 Demonstrates effectiveness

Web Committee will investigate ways of measuring the effectiveness of YorkWeb in achieving its goals. For example, web usage statistics shall be used to analyse traffic. User evaluation measures will also be developed.

3.2.11 Has clear governance

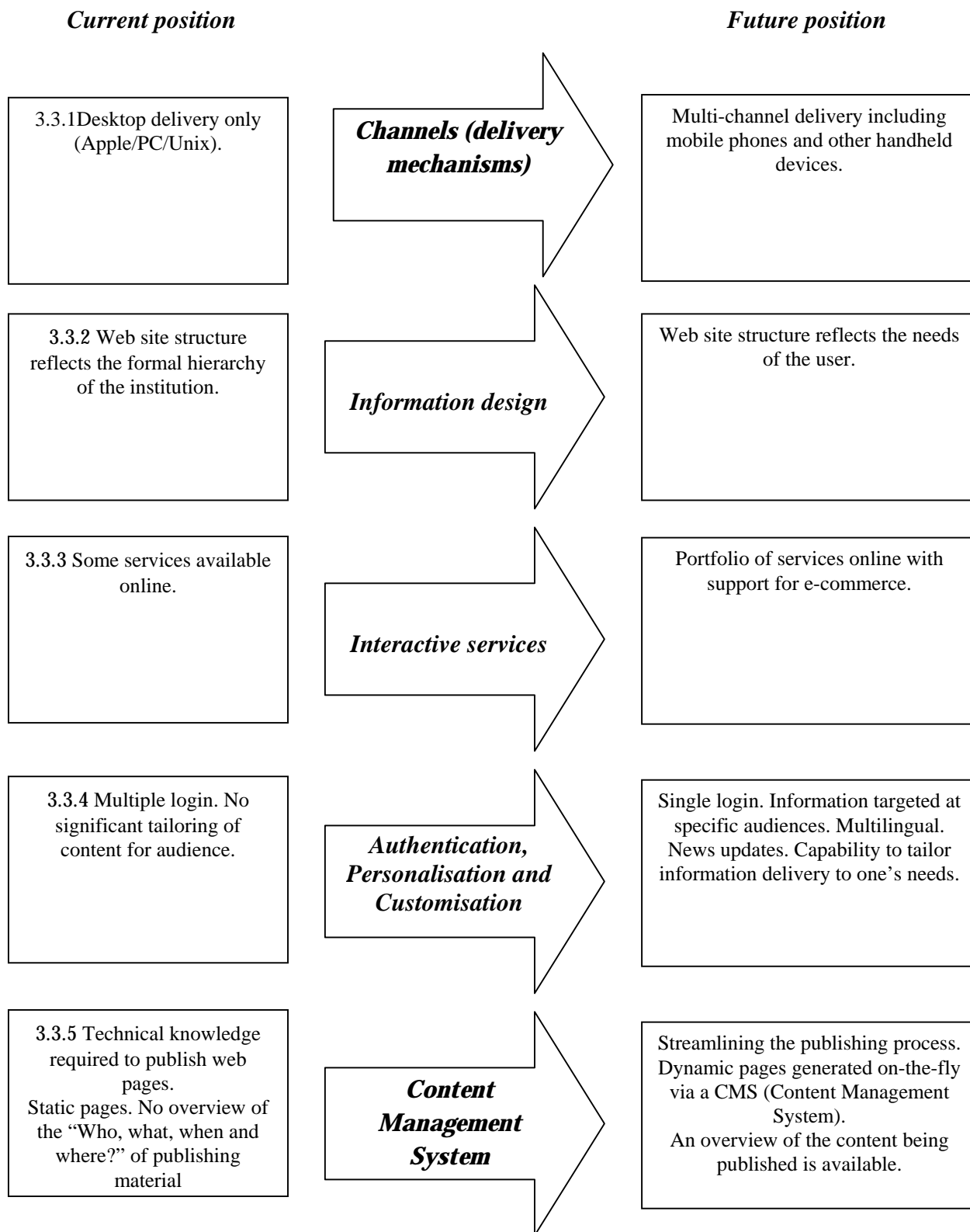
The responsibilities of individuals ranging from the Departmental Web Officer (DWO) through to the Chair of Information Committee need to be clearly defined.

3.2.12 Supports the development of the Online Learning Strategy

An environment in which staff can appreciate the technical and workflow implications of online learning will be promoted. For example, easy to use tools which integrate with the existing portfolio will be provided so that online learning becomes a natural extension of current provision.

3.3 USER NEEDS

The diagram below illustrates a number of ways in which YorkWeb needs to move forward:



4 RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER STRATEGIES

4.1 THE CORPORATE PLAN

The University's vision, as defined in the *Corporate Plan, 2000-2004* is *to continue to develop as a major centre for the advancement of learning, whose influence is global; whose research is fundamental, valuable and useful; and whose students are exceptionally well equipped to lead successful lives and to contribute effectively to society. It will seek to raise its international profile as one of the most forward-looking high quality institutions in the HE sector.*

Through its ubiquity within and without the University, YorkWeb's pervasive presence has a major role to play in the delivery of this vision.

4.2 COMPONENT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Section 2.1 of the *Information Strategy* states *Information is not a 'key process' of the University in the same way as, say, Teaching and Learning or Research. Rather information and the media by which it is transmitted are part of the infrastructure of the University, as fundamental to its operation as the physical estate.*

The web is a key information delivery mechanism.

4.3 COMMUNICATIONS TOOL

YorkWeb is a major communications tool for a variety of audiences (internal and external) and is a significant player in information provision. For example, an issue highlighted by the *Human Resources Strategy 2001-2004* is *The University's standing as a leading international institution is at risk unless it can continue to recruit and retain staff of the highest quality in an increasingly competitive employment climate.* YorkWeb supports recruitment through containing a wealth of information about the University and making job application packs available online.

In the context of a number of communications policies, notably the *Public Relations, Internal Communications, Undergraduate, Postgraduate and International Recruitment* strategies, the web is a fundamental tool in achieving the aims set out in these documents.

4.4 PROMOTING RESEARCH

Section 6 of the University's *Research Strategy* outlines information provision requirements in support of research.

6.2 The University's information strategy must be developed in such a way as to maximise the availability of data in terms both of its scope and the speed with which it can be accessed. The more rapidly and readily that data can be accessed the less there is a need to hold it physically at the place where it is needed.

The web is able to provide information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to members of the University of York and visitors from around the world. Consequently, the web is a key component in delivering one of the *Research Strategy's* requirements for the *Information Strategy*.

4.5 SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The *Teaching and Learning Strategy 1998/99 - 2002/3* states:
 - 1.3.1 *The University's principal objective relating to the learning experience as defined in the "Corporate Plan", is as follows:*
 - *to provide a high quality learning experience for students, thereby sustaining demand for the University's programmes of study through ... innovation in curriculum design and delivery allied to rigorous quality assurance*
 - Online learning is a practical example of *innovation in curriculum design and delivery*.
- The *Teaching and Learning Strategy 1998/99 - 2002/3* also recognises the growth of web usage:
 - *3.9 Computer-based learning systems will supplement the learning environment ... where such systems are appropriate to the academic discipline concerned and can be properly integrated within the curriculum. Increasing use will be made of e-mail and the World Wide Web.*

5 PILOT STUDY

5.1 TIMETABLE

The aim is to run a pilot study during 2003/2004 to learn more about the type of software and tactics needed to implement the Web Strategy. In 2004/2005, a procurement exercise would be held with a view to commencing rollout of content management and portal software from 2005/2006 onwards.

5.2 COST OF PILOT STUDY

A pilot study would provide the Computing Service and the Web Office with a good opportunity to learn more about portal and CMS (Content Management System) software. The experience gained would be invaluable when finally deciding which software was required to implement the Web Strategy.

To support the pilot study, £8,876 including VAT is sought for the purchase and maintenance of hardware. There would be no software cost because only evaluation (trial) products would be used. The pilot would not entail the recruitment of additional staff members.

	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	Total
Hardware for Pilot Study						
Hardware	£5,000	£615	£630	£646	£662	£7,554
VAT	£875	£108	£110	£113	£116	£1,322
Grand Total	£5,875	£723	£741	£759	£778	£8,876