A Site to See: Law School's New Website Combines Function and Elegance

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol27/iss1/10

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After an 18-month journey of listening, rethinking and remaking, the Law School’s website – its virtual “front door” to the world – has been reinvented for a new generation of users.

Under the guidance of webmaster Kristina Lively, the site has an elegant new look. More importantly, perhaps, its content has been streamlined and reorganized so that vital information is easier to find and the site reflects the dynamism of everyday life in O’Brien Hall.

“A great website is critical to our future,” says Ilene R. Fleischmann, vice dean for alumni, public relations and communications. “The content management system enables University departments, including the Law School, to easily share photos, stories and videos, and creates a framework for timely updates to the website. But the Law School’s site (www.law.buffalo.edu) is unique to its special position in legal education.”

“This is a strategic website to help us primarily with external audiences – to recruit students, recruit faculty, and inform donors and alumni of what’s going on,” Fleischmann says. “It also enables our faculty to publicize their work and helps to enhance our reputation.”

Work on the new site came after a series of focus-group interviews with key stakeholders in the school, who contributed their ideas about what the site should accomplish and how it should work. Lively worked with other web experts in UB’s Office of University Communications to create a design consistent with the Law School’s other marketing communications.

“The website is the mother ship,” Lively says. “It’s the most complete, most up-to-date, most thorough information we can provide.” And so, she says, all the other ways the Law School communicates – SUNY Buffalo Law Forum, the online newsletter SUNY Buffalo Law Links, the school’s Twitter feed and Facebook presence, its LinkedIn and Flickr accounts, and its printed mailings – will link back to the website.

When they get there, web surfers will find an attractive site heavy on photographs and video. Set against an image of the school seal, the page-top banner showcases feature stories about people and events at the Law School. A clickable “carousel” of photographs leads to other feature stories.

Beneath the banner are three major sections:

1. **Rankings and Accolades** reports on positive mentions of the Law School by ranking organizations. “Law School Experience” helps prospective students imagine what their experience would be like at SUNY Buffalo Law, with stories about happenings that involve students.

2. The **Law School News** section points to the most recent news and upcoming events.

3. **Press Mentions and Law School Events** compiles media appearances by Law School faculty and a school event listing.

Farther down the page are links to the Law School’s Twitter feed and a featured video, which will become an increasingly important part of the website. “Prospective students are very curious about what life in law school is like, and videos are very good at portraying that,” Fleischmann says.

“Audience navigation” buttons across the top allow for easy access to major areas of interest – an “about” button with general information, and buttons for academics, educational opportunities beyond the classroom, faculty and research, and news and events. There are also buttons that point to “key tasks” that visitors might be seeking: apply for admission, give to the Law School, post a job and contact the school.

A user favorite, “Did We Miss Something?” is an interactive dialogue box that enables users to make suggestions.