

# New Jersey Library Association Web Design Standards

Adopted by the Publications Subcommittee, November 12, 2002

## A. Purpose

The New Jersey Library Association's presence on the World Wide Web is rapidly becoming one of the primary ways in which the Association presents itself to both internal and external audiences. Given the growing importance of this medium, it has become essential to elaborate some principles to guide the creation of Association Web sites.

The New Jersey Library Association, while acknowledging the value in its diversity, is also committed to its existence and image as "one Association." It is important that Association Web pages, despite their diverse origins, clearly convey a relationship to the whole Association. It is also important that such pages adhere to standards of quality and professionalism appropriate for the Association. Finally, attention to accessibility and user-friendliness are critical to effectively carrying out the Association's missions. The following requirements and recommendations are intended to promote those results.

The following guidelines apply to all New Jersey Library Association Web pages that are intended as official, public information.\*

These design standards have been established to help ensure:

- The maximum amount of users of the New Jersey Library Association website will be able to see documents quickly and in the same way regardless of their type of platform, browser, or equipment.
- That users of the New Jersey Library Association website will be able to identify when they are on an "official" New Jersey Library Association webpage.
- Improved navigation of the New Jersey Library Association website, by using visual consistency.

## B. Specific Areas

**Association Identification** - The main page of each site must include clear identification of the New Jersey Library Association. The preferred choice is to have the Association logo on the page. In cases where the Association logo conflicts with the design of the page, the inclusion of the words "New Jersey Library Association" in an easily seen location is acceptable.

**Standard Information on every page** — The following should appear on every page on the New Jersey Library Association website - date page last updated, initials of developer/maintainer, link back to main page(s); and, e-mail link to the NJLA Webmaster.

**Color** — As computers and browsers vary in their treatment of color, effort should be made to constrain images, banners, and font colors to the "browser safe" palette of 216 colors. See <http://www.lynda.com> for palette. Additionally, as some libraries use non-graphical browsers the use of color for navigation should not be mandatory.

**Fonts** — As computers and browsers vary in their treatment and availability of fonts, effort should be made to either make no adjustments in font type, to ensure that the font type is common amongst platforms and operating systems, or that the design works when the font is not available.

**Page Title/Meta Tags** — The title of each page should consist of a reference to the library. To allow adequate space for descriptive titles, the title of each page should appear NJLA: \_\_\_\_\_ when impossible for all words to fit, however, New Jersey Library Association: \_\_\_\_\_ should appear for the main level pages. On at least main pages, Meta Tags for keywords and descriptions should be used to improve Search Engine access. As Search Engines often use the titles of pages as links, and META tags as descriptions, identification of the organization is very important

**Use of Frames** — Given the confusing nature of the use of frames to some users, difficulty with printing and bookmarking/favoriting, and browser support issues, effort should be made to use design approaches other than frames. If frames appear to be the only option, the page design should first be discussed with the Webmaster before proceeding. If frames are used, provisions must be made for non-frames browsers, such as the use of a <noframes> tag and proper linking

**Page Width/Resolution Checking** — All pages should be fully viewable on an 1024x768-pixel screen without horizontal scrolling. However, to allow for the maximum "viewability" pages should be designed to display on a 800x600 screen. For those pages where "printability" is paramount, width should adhere to 535 pixels.

**Alt Text and Size tags for Images** - To facilitate use by text-only browsers and screen readers, every image should be accompanied by an ALT tag with descriptive text explaining the image. Bullets, spacing gifs, or other incidental images should use an empty alt tag (alt=""). Additionally, to allow text to load first on a page each image should have its height and width determined. Example: . Allowing text to load first helps the appearance of a page that quickly downloads.

**Browser checking** — Before a page is published it should be viewed in both Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer. The baseline for checking should be Netscape Navigator 4.7 and Internet Explorer 5.5. As each browser may handle certain html tags differently, the page should be checked to make sure the page could be viewed in each. Additionally, for those pages consisting of "vital" information (library hours, locations, etc.) the page should be checked with an accessibility checker such as Bobby (<http://www.cast.org/bobby/>) to ensure for the least possible amount of errors.

**"Printability"** — Pages should be created so that the user can easily print them and utilize them in a text environment. Therefore, reverse text on darker color backgrounds, wide screens (wider than 700 pixels), or anything which makes printing difficult, should be avoided. Optimally, pages should be sized to a width of 535 pixels or created as .pdf files when printing is of paramount importance.

**File Size** — As the majority of home users of the New Jersey Library Association website are using phone lines and modems for access, it is strongly recommended that individual pages be designed to keep download time on a 56 modem to a maximum of 30 seconds. This would generally be a maximum of 50k for a page, including images.

**Client side programming (Java/Javascript) and Plug-ins** — As Java and Javascript are

not universally supported in all browsers and as users can choose to not enable Java and Javascript in their browser, Java and Javascript should be used at a minimum if at all. Additionally, as many users are uninterested or unable to work with Plug-ins (Shockwave, Flash, and Acrobat), these technologies should be used sparingly.

**Spelling/Grammar** — Each page on the NJLA Website should be run through a spelling/grammar checking program and then through a human editor to ensure words are spelled and used correctly.

**Link Paths** — Whenever possible links to internal pages (pages on the NJLA server) should be relative path links versus absolute links. Also known as soft linking versus hard linking, this allows the computer to find pages more quickly and easily. Example - pages linking to the main site would be coded with the proper directory path, such as `<a href=" ./document.html">`, rather than `<a href=" http://www.njla.org/xxxxxx.html">`

**Link Integrity** - Pages must be free of non-working links. The Webmaster will test each link manually or use a link checker (such as [Dr. HTML](#) or [Dr. Watson](#)) to check the entire page. Link status should be rechecked regularly, particularly for high profile or widely-viewed pages.

**Information Integrity/Updates** — Information on the NJLA website will be periodically reviewed by the Webmaster and representatives of the Publications Committee to ensure accuracy and timeliness. The schedule for reviews will be coordinated by the Webmaster and proper representatives of the Publications Committee. Pages created by Committees and Sections will be reviewed principally by Committee or Section representatives, with oversight by the Webmaster and/or Executive Director. Any information given to the Webmaster should be in electronic format in a timely manner.

**Site Statistics** — Using a log file analyzer or some other type of statistical tracking tool, the NJLA webmaster will provide statistical information on the website. Details and frequency of the report will be determined by the Webmaster and Executive Director, as to best develop the website for future purposes and determining needs of website users.

## C. Review

As the Internet/World Wide Web is a constantly changing medium this document should be updated once per year to ensure relevancy.

\*NOTE: These standards are meant to pertain to sites designed for external audiences. Sites designed for internal use will not necessarily have to work within these guidelines as issues of bandwidth; etc. will be less prevalent.