

Web Style Guide

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OVERVIEW

The Libraries' voice on the web

When writing text for the website, keep things clear, concise, informal, and approachable.

Concise

- Describe only what the user needs to know.
- Eliminate redundancy, such as titles that restate the body of an information box.
- Keep text as short as possible.

Informal

- Use short words, action verbs, and common nouns.
- Avoid library or other jargon.
- Put the most important thing first.
- Don't try to explain subtle difference to users. This information might be better communicated in a downloadable document.

Approachable

- Use contractions.
- Talk directly to the user. Use "you" to refer to the user.
- Keep your tone casual/conversational.
- Don't use slang.

The appropriate Libraries wordmark

Use this wordmark for the University Libraries. For files, please contact Cindy Carroll.

**Carnegie
Mellon
University**
Libraries

Styles explained

The website uses the following conventions:

Use sentence case for page titles, block titles, and throughout the website.

✘ DON'T

Finding Course Reserves

✔ DO

Finding course reserves

There are exceptions, as follows

- 1) Top-level menu items do not use sentence case (cf. "Using the Libraries" and "Research Support").
- 2) Items joined by an "&" capitalize the second item (cf. "Borrowing & Renewing" and "Printing & Scanning").
- 3) Libraries units retain their capitalization (cf. "University Archives" and "Special Collections").
- 4) The theme of "[verb] Us" capitalizes "Us" at all times (cf. "Support Us" and "Contact Us").

Use Font Awesome icons if you need to apply an icon.

✘ DON'T

© Copyright

✔ DO

© Copyright

For help with icons, refer to the Website icons color classes etc document or the Font Awesome Cheatsheet.

DEFAULT STYLE

Grammar & Syntax

Use complete sentences.

✗ DON'T

Circulation desk to check out items

✓ DO

Visit the Circulation desk to check out items.

Limit the use of semicolons. Break text into multiple sentences.

✗ DON'T

Visit the Circulation desk to check out items; you will need your CMU ID.

✓ DO

Visit the Circulation desk to check out items.
You'll need your CMU ID.

Use shorter sentences whenever possible.

✗ DON'T

If you would like to check out an item, come to the Circulation desk.

✓ DO

Visit the Circulation desk to check out items.

Limit the use of exclamation points.

✗ DON'T

If you need help, ask a librarian!

✓ DO

If you need help, ask a librarian.

Grammar & Syntax

Use "University Libraries" when referring to the Libraries as a campus unit.

✗ DON'T

The Carnegie Mellon University
University Libraries...

✓ DO

The University Libraries...

"University Libraries" is a singular noun phrase.

✗ DON'T

The University Libraries have/
use/offer/are ...

✓ DO

The University Libraries has/uses/
offers/is ...

The first use should be "University Libraries" with "Libraries" used thereafter.

✗ DON'T

The University Libraries offers
many services.
The University Libraries
welcomes your input.

✓ DO

The University Libraries offers
many services.
The Libraries welcomes your input.

When "Libraries" refers to the campus unit, capitalize it.

✗ DON'T

The libraries need your
feedback.

✓ DO

The Libraries needs your feedback.

Grammar & Syntax

When “libraries” refers to the general noun, do not capitalize it.

✗ DON'T

One may visit any of our
Libraries.

✓ DO

You can visit any of our libraries.

Use “Dean of Libraries” for Keith Webster’s official title.

✗ DON'T

The Dean of University
Libraries invites you...

✓ DO

The Dean of Libraries invites you...

Capitalize the names of library units or offices.

✗ DON'T

You should contact interlibrary
loan if you have questions.

✓ DO

Contact InterLibrary Loan if you
have questions.

Capitalize official position titles.

✗ DON'T

Please contact the library
instruction coordinator, Ethan
Pullman, with questions.

✓ DO

Please contact the Library
Instruction Coordinator, Ethan
Pullman, with quesitons.

Grammar & Syntax

Capitalize library location names.

✗ DON'T

Visit the mellon library
for biology and chemistry
materials.

✓ DO

Visit the Mellon Library for biology
and chemistry materials.

The standard library location names are Hunt Library, Sorrells Library, and Mellon Library or Mellon Institute Library.

✗ DON'T

Come see the newly renovated
Roger Sorrells Engineering &
Science Library.

✓ DO

Come see the newly renovated
Sorrells Library.

Do not use periods/punctuation with bullets. Sentence fragments in a bulleted list are acceptable.

✗ DON'T

You can find
-lots of books.
-lots of articles.
-much more!

✓ DO

You can find
-lots of books
-lots of articles
-much more

Numbered lists should be used for procedures or instructions only.

✗ DON'T

You can find
1. lots of books.
2. lots of articles.
3. much more!

✓ DO

To renew a book online
1. Log into My Account.
2. Select the book to renew.
3. Note the new due date.

Style & Tone

Keep it informal, but don't use slang.

✗ DON'T

You must bring your CMU ID if you would like to check out items.

✓ DO

To check out items, you'll need your CMU ID.

✗ DON'T

Yinz totally need to bring your CMU ID to check things out.

✓ DO

To check out items, you'll need your CMU ID.

Use first-person plural pronouns: "we." Don't use "I" or "me."

✗ DON'T

If you need help, I can help.

✓ DO

If you need help, we're happy to help.

Talk directly to the user using "you."

✗ DON'T

Users can find all types of materials at the library.

✓ DO

You have access to books, journals, CDs, DVDs, and more from the Libraries.

Use contractions.

✗ DON'T

cannot/will not/we are

✓ DO

can't/won't/we're

Style & Tone

Use “can” rather than “may.” See policy persona style for exceptions.

✗ DON'T

Uses may eat on the first floor of Hunt library.

✓ DO

You can eat on the first floor of Hunt Library.

Use questions as “hooks” for your page/content. This is a suggestion only.

✗ DON'T

[Redacted]

✓ DO

Do you need to check out a book?

Use Arabic numerals.

✗ DON'T

Use may borrow up to fifty items at a time.

✓ DO

You can borrow up to 50 items at a time.

Use friendly language. Avoid loaded or negative terms.

✗ DON'T

abort, kill, terminate

✓ DO

stop, cancel, end, exit

Put the user's goal first.

✗ DON'T

Login to submit ILLiad requests.

✓ DO

To request interlibrary loan items, log in to ILLiad.

Style & Tone

Use “&” in titles and headers. Use “and” in body text.

✘ DON'T

Go to Borrowing and Renewing
for fine information.

✔ DO

For fine questions, go to Borrowing
& Renewing.

✘ DON'T

Hunt library has a cafe & a nap
pod.

✔ DO

Hunt Library has a cafe and a nap
pod.

PROCEDURE/INSTRUCTION STYLE

Grammar & Syntax

Use complete sentences.

✗ DON'T

Circulation desk to check out items

✓ DO

Visit the Circulation desk to check out items.

Use natural language to describe procedures and outcomes.

✗ DON'T

Verify that a book circulates.

✓ DO

Check to see if the book you want is "Available."

Use active voice. Avoid passive voice.

✗ DON'T

The button should be clicked.

✓ DO

Click the Submit button.

Number the steps in the procedure/instructions.

✗ DON'T

Go the website, click My Account and log in.

✓ DO

1. Go to the library homepage.
2. Click My Account.
3. Enter your Andrew ID and password to log in.

Grammar & Syntax

Put each action in a new step.

✗ DON'T

1. Click My Account and log in.

✓ DO

1. Click My Account.
2. Enter your Andrew ID and password to log in.

Avoid jargon or define terms.

✗ DON'T

Some eBooks use DRM.

✓ DO

Some eBooks use digital rights management (DRM) software.

Use consistent terms for webpage/link names, button names, etc. Match the name as it appears on the website.

✗ DON'T

Use your account to renew books.

✓ DO

Go to My Account to renew books.

Put webpage names, button names, etc. in bold face.

✗ DON'T

Click on my account.

✓ DO

1. Click My Account.

ADDING CONTENT

Databases

Databases need the following information

Title

This should be the name of the database itself, without anything added.

Previous title

This should indicate a previous title for the database over the last 2 years only. Anything older should not be included.

Alias

This should be an alternate title (e.g. the expansion of an acronym or an acronym that is often used for the database).

Date covered

If there are particular dates covered by the database, they should be indicated. Style parameters are given below.

Metacollection

If the database is part of a larger collection (e.g. Alexander Street Press) indicate which larger collection and the URL for that metacollection.

Description

The most important part of the database entry.

Please use full sentences that provide context for the database; consider including what it covers, material types, and other relevant information. Please note that subject areas are a separate field, but descriptions can and should include subfield coverage and specifics not covered by the subject tags.

Subject areas and types

There are two lists to select from: subject area and material type.

Subject areas are as before: Arts, Computer Science, etc.

Material type is new and includes options like Streaming, Newspapers, Free.

Databases

The style for these fields is below

Title

Be sure to include the official name of the database only in this field.

Previous title

Be sure to include the previous official name of the database only in this field.

Alias

Be sure to include the alias only in this field.

Date covered

Dates should be entered in this format only : #### - #### .

Metacollection

Include the name of the metacollection (e.g. [Alexander Street Press](#) and the URL - these two pieces have separate input boxes in the form.

Description

Use plain text only. This field does not support HTML.

Subject areas and types

Simply check the appropriate boxes for the database. You check as many subjects and material types as you feel apply to the database.

A note about the database theming (display)

Our site is configured to display these fields in a particular way. Some text is standard and added by the system; please do not add these terms or characters when entering database information. Standard additions include parentheses around coverage dates, "previously" before a Previous title, "Search all of" before a Metacollection, and "More like this:" before the subject and material type terms.

If you have questions, please refer to the A-Z list of databases or contact Andrea Cohen.