

Sustaining Carleton: **A Webpage for the Carleton Community and Beyond**

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Background

Carleton sorely needs a single, comprehensive sustainability webpage. At present, there is no easy way to find information on environmental events or groups on campus through the internet. Information is scattered over a variety of websites including the Environmental and Technology Studies Department (ENTS) and Facilities pages. Even the most knowledgeable environmentalists at Carleton have a hard time finding important documents and information. Additionally, we feel that the sustainability movement needs a better, more inclusive, forum for electronic communication, which could be accomplished in the form of a news blog on the site. With this in mind, we began our project with a tangible goal, creating a website. This report explains the steps we have taken to create the site as well as the lessons we have learned in the process and our plan of action for the future.

Procedures

Our first step was to review all Carleton sites pertaining to sustainability. These sites include:

- ACT (http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/act/issue_areas/directory_page/Environment_Sustainability/)
- Cowling Arboretum (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/arb/>)
- Environmental Advisory Committee (<http://apps.carleton.edu/governance/environment/>)
- Facilities, Planning and Management (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/facilities/energy/>), (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/facilities/environmental/>), (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/facilities/sustainability/>)
- Dining Services (http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dining_services/localgrowers/)
- Environment and Technology Studies (<http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/ents/>)
- Many student organization websites

Our goal was to assess what sustainability content already exists and what needs to be created. Since we are interested in increasing communication on sustainability, we also examined other forms of electronic communication at Carleton. The major form of electronic communication seems to be email lists run by groups such as: ENTS, SOPE, MPIRG, Green House, Farm House, and WHOA House. There are no frequently used Caucus groups on sustainability or environmentalism.

Our next step was to examine other college's sustainability websites to develop ideas for our site's content, style and structure. We analyzed websites of many colleges and universities, including the following:

- University of British Columbia (<http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/index.html>)
- St. Olaf College (www.stolaf.edu/green)
- Cornell University (<http://www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/index.html>)
- Middlebury College (<http://www.middlebury.edu/administration/enviro/coordinator.htm>)
- Michigan State University (<http://www.ecofoot.msu.edu/>)

We want our website to be a place that students, faculty and staff visit repeatedly, so our main goal in analyzing other campus' sustainability websites was to discover what makes a website interactive, usable, and attractive to a broad range of people.

We are also interested in learning what characteristics of a website would increase communication and a create sense of community between campus groups. We noticed that Northfield's community website, www.northfield.org, is very successful at creating a sense of community and delivering news and information about Northfield groups and events. We analyzed the site to learn which of its features could be incorporated into Carleton's site.

Having developed a general concept of qualities we liked in other sites, we started to draft a site-map showing all the content and links we feel belong on the site. The major features of our site will include:

- A news blog
- A calendar of events
- Goals and Values
- Partners
- History of Environmentalism at Carleton College
- The Green Map
- The Campus 100-Year Plan
- Resources
- Links
- Archives
- Contacts

See Appendix B for a description of each feature.

While drafting our site-map, we contacted individuals we thought would be important helpers in the development of the site. We contacted Phil Camill, Associate Professor of Biology, because had started to develop plans for the site last year. He directed us to Jaye Lawrence, Director of Web Communications and Development, and Matt Ryan, Associate Director of Web Communications and Development.

We met with Jaye and Matt to discuss our ideas for the site. They were both very receptive to our plans for the site and were willing to assist in its development. Jaye has

trained us in using Reason, Carleton's web development program, and Matt is working with us to develop the site's style and structure.

We have requested various individuals and groups to develop content for the site. At the November 3rd EAC meeting, we asked the EAC to develop a list of environmental goals for the college that could be posted on our site. The committee was receptive to the idea, but did not make plans as to who, when, or how the list would be completed. We plan to attend their next meeting to confirm their plans to create this list.

We have asked Jen Everett, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, to write a short piece on how sustainability fits in Carleton values. This will be part of the Goals and Values page. Jen is interested in the project, and plans to work on it over winter break.

We have contact Gary Wagenbach, Director of Environmental and Technology Studies, about the possibility of having an ENTS student write the history section as a Senior Capstone project or as an independent study. Gary has been receptive to this idea. He suggested that a student might be able to complete the project as an ENTS summer internship.

Lessons

Lesson 1: The site should organize already existing sustainability content so that it is easier for users to find it.

After reviewing Carleton's environmental websites, we concluded that although a great amount of sustainability and environmental content already exists on Carleton websites, it needs to be better organized and more prominently linked so that it is easier to find for a general audience. The existing pages are scattered all over the network and information is not easy to find. If one wants to find news about the green roof project or the wind turbine, there is no obvious place to begin to search. The best way to solve this problem would be to link the sustainability site in prominent locations on all Carleton's main sites such as the Student Gateway, the Campus Information Center, the Admissions site and perhaps even the front page. From the sustainability site, users should be able to easily find links to all other Carleton environmental sites.

Lesson 2: The environmental and sustainability movement at Carleton needs a form of institutional memory.

Carleton students, faculty and staff have made major environment and sustainability related accomplishments in the past, but we are not aware of anyone place on where we record our movement's history. Instead of building on past lessons, student are forced to "re-invent the wheel" every four years or so. This problem became especially apparent this term when ENTS intern, Chris Petit, discovered an old Carletonian article about the "Green Network." In the last 2-3 years, the Green Network has existed as an email list, but Chris discovered that the Network used to meet weekly and served to unite multiple environmental campus groups. Given the lack of communication between environmental groups in the last 2-3 years, a uniting group like the Green Network would have been extremely helpful.

We hope that our site increases institutional memory, and plan to include three features that will address this need. One feature will be called "The History of Environmentalism at Carleton," and will document past achievements, events and lessons.

Another feature will be a well-organized Archive section, in which Sustainability Initiative documents, ENTS projects, student news articles, KRLX radio shows and all other forms of media can be stored and accessed. Additionally, our blog and events calendar will be archived and organized so that website users can review past events and discussions.

Lesson 3: Carleton needs a better venue for electronic communication on sustainability. A news blog and events calendar would serve this need.

Carleton currently does not have a sufficient venue for electronic communication. E-mail lists are exclusive by nature because one has to subscribe to receive the e-mails. Many interested in events may not subscribe to the server or even know about the list, and, as a result, are uninformed. Email lists tend to support divisions between student groups and between students, faculty and staff because they generally include only one group.

Carleton may not be alone with this lack of communication. We noticed that although other colleges' sites offer information on the schools sustainability initiatives and values, very few, if any, serve as an effective communication tool for people on campus. The problem with many of the other sites is that their websites were not very interactive and did not provide a venue to discuss issues or publicize events. For instance, Saint Olaf has been recently applauded by the media for publishing a beautiful webpage that is very informative¹. However, once one visits their site, she says "Wow, that was neat", but has little reason for going back because there is no frequently updated discussion forum. We want our page to be a place that creates community, facilitates discussion, and that people continue to visit after the first and even their twentieth time.

We looked to the northfield.org website as the best example of an interactive site that creates community by facilitating communication and by drawing people back to it again and again. The site accomplishes this through a frequently updated blog, which is used to sparks conversation about Northfield issues and to spreads news of community events. We think a blog like northfield.org's would fill Carleton's need for a electronic communication venue.

The internet provides a unique forum for sustainability efforts on college campuses. While it is a source of information and education, it is increasingly becoming a way that communities can come together. Many college sustainability websites do the former without the latter. As blogging and podcasting become more significant, it will be important for the sustainability movement to adopt and incorporate these new democratic forms of media. College sustainability websites can be supported by the enormous amounts of energy on the ground and have incredible potential with these new medias. These webpages may be able to link the colleges in such a way that sustainability can be a united effort by a consortium of colleges that can have a greater impact on the world than colleges do now as most colleges act individually and independently of one another.

With a new website, we believe that we can provide a forum for communication that did not previously exist at Carleton, and will be able to funnel and centralize our efforts. We think that the webpage will inspire Carleton students, and also put our school at the forefront in sustainability communication through new media.

¹ Grist Magazine

Plan of Action:

Short-term

**Gather contributions.* We need to find someone to write the “History” and “Goals” sections. We need to receive the Green Map from our Environmental Ethics classmates and the “Values” section from Jen Everett.

**Ask permission to post documents.* We will need permission to post work from ENTS classes and other documents such as the Campus 100-Year Plan on our site.

**Enlist support.* Technical support will be necessary to include multimedia content on our site.

**Seek Feedback.* Once draft site is created, we should have other groups preview it and give comments on it before it goes live

Long-term

**Increase website visibility.* In order for webpage to be a community forum, we must make sure that every member of the Carleton community knows about the website. Our publicity campaign may include posters around campus, a *Carletonian* article, or announcements on KRLX. We may also investigate ways of publicizing our site to audiences beyond Carleton.

**Increase involvement.* At present we intend to appoint the ENTS intern, Chris Petit, Biology Professor Phil Camill and Mathias and Dana as moderators of the blog. In the future, we should consider allowing other professors, staff members and leaders of student groups such as SOPE, MPIRG and others to post information. We should also consider having separate blogs for different topics.

**Involve sustainability coordinator.* Eventually, the sustainability coordinator should be responsible for the management of the webpage. This will ensure that the site does not become less active as students who first worked on the website graduate.

**Commitment from professors.* Get a commitment from professors that they provide student with the opportunity to publish their course work on the website.

Carleton's Sustainability Initiative:
Sustainability Website
10/8/05

Team Members:

Dana Kraus
Matthias Bell

Vision Statement:

The website will create a culture of sustainability by increasing communication between Carleton groups and provide a venue where Carleton students, faculty and staff can discuss their hopes and dreams for the future of Carleton. We believe that greater communication between groups will strengthen the sustainability movement at Carleton. The website will provide institutional memory, increase environmental literacy among Carleton students, and send a message to everyone who visits the site that sustainability is valued at Carleton

Goals:

2005-06 academic year:

- ◆ Design and plan website
- ◆ Gather and create content for website
- ◆ Seek out input on website from users
- ◆ Increase awareness and interest in website
- ◆ Collaborate with ITS and the Web Communications and Development to create site and link it to Carleton's main web pages.

Fall 2005:

- ◆ Create set of design goals for website by reviewing existing Carleton sustainability sites
- ◆ Contact and initiate collaboration with ITS and Web Communications and Development
- ◆ Find more people to write content and help us create the site

Process:

1. Find and analyze other campus sustainability sites
2. Analyze Carleton's existing sustainability sites
3. Create set of design goals and draft an outline our site
4. Contact Phil Camill, who work on the site previously
5. Present draft of site to Jaye Lawrence and Matt Ryan of Web Development Group and ask for their help on the site
6. Find people to write content for site

Ethical Issues:

We feel Carleton has a responsibility to become more sustainable in its operations. By increasing communication between important campus groups, the website will make our efforts to become sustainable more effective.

As a liberal arts college, Carleton also has a responsibility to educate its students in sustainability. We think our website will help more students become environmentally literate.

We feel Carleton environmentalists have responsibility to be as inclusive as possible. The website will make the sustainability movement more inclusive by making our discussions, goals and activities open to the public. In addition, the website will provide more people with the information they need to become involved in sustainability at Carleton, and it will provide a forum where diverse individuals can comment on the activities of the sustainability movement.

As the creators of the website, we have a responsibility to insure the site is welcoming to a diverse group of campus users. We also need to insure the site is useful, well-designed and provides accurate information.

Resources:

Campus resources

- Phil Camill's email discussion with Jaye Lawrence

Carleton Websites

- ACT (http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/act/issue_areas/directory_page/Environment_Sustainability/)
- Cowling Arboretum (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/arb/>)
- Environmental Advisory Committee (<http://apps.carleton.edu/governance/environment/>)
- Facilities, Planning and Management (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/facilities/energy/>), (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/facilities/environmental/>), (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/facilities/sustainability/>)
- Dining Services (http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dining_services/localgrowers/)
- Environment and Technology Studies (<http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/ents/>)
- Many student organization websites

Other Campus Sustainability Sites

- University of British Columbia (<http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/index.html>)
- St. Olaf College (www.stolaf.edu/green)
- Cornell University (<http://www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/index.html>)
- Middlebury College (<http://www.middlebury.edu/administration/enviro/coordinator.htm>)

Websites Features

- **Blog** – Select individuals will be able to post news items and discussion topics. Everyone who visits the site will be able to post comments. The blog will be the centerpiece of the frontpage of the site.
- **Carleton Sustainability Sites Menu** – A menu bar listing other major sustainability sites which may including ENTS, Facilities, ACT, the Dining Halls, the EAC, and Cowling Arboretum
- **Calendar of Events** – Environmental and sustainability events will be posted on the calendar.
- **Goals and Values** – The Statement of Environmental principles will be posted on this page. A list of specific sustainability goals that the EAC recommends Carleton achieve will also be posted. Jen Evertt will write an essay about how sustainability fits into Carleton values for this page.
- **Partners** – A list of all environmental and sustainability related groups at Carleton and in Northfield. There will be short descriptions of all the groups and links to their websites.
- **History of Environmentalism at Carleton College** – A concise history of the environmental and sustainability movement at Carleton. We hope an ENTS student will write it.
- **The Green Map** – A map of all “green” locations on campus.
- **The Campus 100-Year Plan**
- **Links** – Links to other useful sustainability websites
- **Archives** – EAC documents, Sustainability Initiative documents, ENTS classwork, *Carletonian* articles, KRLX shows and all other forms of Carleton sustainability media will be stored here.
- **Contacts** – Contact information of the leaders of sustainability movement at Carleton. The ENTS intern, the ENTS Director, the Sustainability Coordinator and maybe other individuals contact information will be listed. Alternatively, we may have a sustainability comment box or email address where visitors can send their comments and questions.