



Module 4: Managing Website Projects Webinar Series Review

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Module 4: Managing Website Projects is the 4th installment of the series organized by the Museum Learning Hub under the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This particular module focuses on managing and optimizing website creation and maintenance. We hear from three speakers during this module, with experience ranging from a small non-profit volunteer organization to a corporate environment with a large budget. Below I've summarized each of the four modules so you can get a better sense of what you will learn during each session, as well as linked a few helpful resources for anyone interested in growing their Web projects!

Introductory Session

The first session of Module 4 introduces us to two accomplished women – Cathy Saunders and Dr. Fran Kaplan – and provides an overview of how websites can be used and cross-programmed to both increase engagement and support the mission statement of museums.

Cathy Saunders is the coordinator of [Lighting the Way](#), a project by the [New Bedford Whaling Museum](#) which aims to educate people on the lives and accomplishments of women in American history, especially those who have not been represented in history prominently thus far. Cathy discusses her Strategic Visioning Strategy, which reinforces a goal of increasing website traffic and constantly focusing other programming such as [live events](#), public outreach efforts, and digital exhibits towards directing people to the Lighting the Way Website. The project incorporates new events frequently and connects with the community through photo and video media to draw different voices and audiences to the educational materials available on the website. Some of the challenges she elaborates on include managing a variety of people who don't all necessarily have

or understand the same vision – coordinating between web developers, interns, and researchers involves clear lines of communication and an introspective eye which allows for flexibility and adaptability based on what can be achieved over digital platforms. Some of her future goals for the program are increasing its digital inventory, partnering with other institutions, and engaging with more age groups. Cathy represents a mid-size museum and a mix of new and existing projects, but she utilizes skills which are fundamental for any high achieving museum with a strong sense of purpose.

Dr. Fran Kaplan is the co-founder of [Nurturing Diversity Partners](#) and consultant for [America's Black Holocaust Virtual Museum \(ABHC\)](#). ABHC has operated both exclusively virtually and with a brick-and-mortar location over the course of its existence, and Kaplan discusses that relationship as it has changed over time. The museum operates completely on volunteer work without a set financial budget, demonstrating how creativity and digital savvy can work effectively regardless of funding. The website serves as a living document and history for African Americans and does an excellent job of continually generating content almost daily through their [Breaking News](#) page. Kaplan talks about how she interacts with different individuals in the organization and how to oversee volunteers while allowing for a large amount of freedom and creativity in the work that individuals complete. Digital archivization and organization of thousands of pages of content are topics which museums of any specialty can learn from, and Kaplan does an adept job at explaining a variety of approaches to displaying those archives to make them more accessible to people who learn and process information in different ways. ABHC, like Lighting the Way, has a clear sense of direction and purpose, and balances mission statement with vision so that the organization has a meaningful history, effective present operation, and ambitious goals for the future.

Technical Workshop 1

Are you ready to start a website project but not sure how to make a plan for success? In this Technical Workshop, Despi Mayes will walk you through the process step by step so that you have the tools to manage the technology, the timeline and the people involved in your project. Despi is the founder and leader of [Bluebird Digital Studio](#), a marketing consultancy focused on serving small businesses and nonprofits. She is an expert in marketing, with experience in both large for profit companies and nonprofits. She focuses in this webinar on tailoring advice to

"solopreneurs" and small teams and creating a productive mindset no matter what your experience level is in marketing and online presence development. She talks about how to build a team and accept help, with four central functions – project manager, content manager, creative lead, and technical lead – at the center of conceptualize the functionality of a website project no matter how many people you have: maybe you have a large team and you can divide and conquer, but you can also figure out how to fill all of these roles yourself with the right mindset. Negotiation between volunteers, interns, university programs, staff, and freelancers can be tricky, but every type of team member can provide a different degree of specialized work. Despi imparts a few personal stories of how to work with volunteers and the team.

Creating solid technical requirements and a realistic [project checking cadence](#) is essential to keeping you on schedule for your website project, and Despi both touches on how to create this plan and how she will go into the topic further in a later workshop in Module 4. Setting goals seems like a relatively mundane and routine process for small museums and nonprofits, but this module goes through a concrete thought process focused on quantitative and qualitative metrics of success that can turn abstract beliefs into simple "who, what, why" statements. Finally, she discusses some of her controversial ideas, including disclosing your budget and refraining from sending out RFP (request for proposal) in order to find more creative natural relationships with your technical partners. This is a great module to get you and your team in the headspace to implement a timeline with both structure and flexibility.

Technical Workshop 2

In Technical Workshop 2, we hear again from Despi Mayes on methods to streamline content planning and [track the progress](#) of your team. Content can be used to tell stories and engage with your audience, so [understanding your goals](#) and how to implement effective content creation is essential for any size organization. She walks through picking a Minimum Viable Product, planning launch phases, building and scaling projects according to data analytics, and then how to physically map out a website through a number of methods for different learning styles. [Creativity](#), a willingness to experiment, and an ability to think critically about the goal of your project will keep you from getting in your own way and allow you to focus all of your energy on your organization.

Technical Workshop 3

In the final workshop of this Module, hear some advanced level knowledge on project management, along with some of the common issues which leaders face when planning website launches and maintenance. Despi joins us again, this time with specified information on [finding team members](#), keeping your projects on track, and analyzing the pitfalls and successes of Web projects. She also goes into Launch considerations and some common issues which arise when dealing with virtual platforms. Website Maintenance and consistent content creation round off her advice in designing an effective and sustainable website.

Final Thoughts

Hearing from the same speaker over the last three sessions of this module provides a continuity to the lessons Despi gives and parallels the kind of consistency it takes to create and manage a Web project. The module is supplemented by a [toolkit](#) of creation resources, project management tools, guides and books, as well as the slides the speakers use to communicate their content. Overall, this module is focused and digestible, with the potential to give any viewer a crash course on Web Projects in under 4 hours.