MOVING YOUR WEBSITE INTO THE MINES CMS

The Colorado School of Mines manages its two main websites—http://inside.mines.edu and http://www.mines.edu—by way of a “content-management system” or CMS. Why this is the case is explained in our companion document Why Use a CMS?, available with many other helpful CMS documents at http://inside.mines.edu/CCIT-CMS.

Suffice it to say, a content-management system offers many advantages to individuals and departments looking for an easy way to build and maintain professional-looking Mines web pages with a minimum of time and effort.

This document details the simple steps needed to migrate a traditional website (the kind built with HTML files) into the CMS.

Migration Step-by-Step

Here is a summary overview of the main steps required to move your current website into the CMS:

1. When you decide to make the move, let us know.
2. Tell us how you wish to organize your new site in the CMS.
3. Receive some training in the basics of CMS use, if needed.
4. Move content from your old site to the CMS.
5. Let us know when you’re finished and we’ll put your new site online.

Yes, it's about as straightforward as it seems.

Each step is explained in greater detail, below.

1. Let Us Know

If you're on the fence about moving your current website into a content-management system, talk to us. We'll go over the pros and cons of such a move with you. If you have already decided to migrate, let us know about that, too.

The best way to contact us to get the ball rolling is through Mines Help Center, at http://helpdesk.mines.edu. The entire migration process will be documented there.
2. Provide Organizational Details

Your current website may be organized in such a way that migrating to the CMS is quick and straightforward. Other websites may need to be rethought somewhat to fit the organizational scheme used at http://www.mines.edu and http://inside.mines.edu—one that relies heavily on a hierarchical, nested, left-hand menu structure of categories and sub-categories (see below).

![Organizational Structure Example](image_url)

A typical departmental menu structure

Most websites can be adapted quickly to this kind of hierarchical scheme. Take a look at your current website and list the main categories represented in your pages. They may or may not be similar to the ones seen in the above. Perhaps your department has a couple of institutes; perhaps it has some enrichment programs. Add those to your list of categories. Then, using the Mines Help Center "ticket" previously initiated, tell us how your department's left-hand menu should look. For instance, it might look something like this:

```plaintext
Home
Undergraduate Programs
Graduate Programs
  Master's Degree
  PhD Degree
People
  Faculty
  Staff
Contact Us
```
The main task here is to create a simple, straightforward, hierarchical “tree” that allows visitors to your site to find what they need when they need it.

Don't worry about graphics at this point. Don't worry about the text that will go on those pages. That all comes later. At this stage, just think about the cleanest and clearest way to categorize and represent the unique resources your department offers. And if you think up new categories (that is, new menu items) later, just let us know that and we'll insert them for you. The structure of your new website isn't set in stone.

We will then take your list of menu items and create a “skeleton” website for you in the CMS. When finished, your categories and sub-categories will become left-hand menus and sub-menus on a website that adheres closely to Mines' branding and graphical standards. A basic structure will be put in place. But there is still more to do here. Before your new website is made available to the public you must first must fill your pages with content.

3. Learn to Use the Content Management System

The CMS is a “distributed” system. Rather than one or two web gurus maintaining our more than 20,000 CMS web pages, hundreds of individuals from all over Mines each maintain a small portion of our web presence. This means that someone in your department (perhaps even two or three people, for redundancy) will need to know how to use the CMS. Typically, program assistants are assigned this task, though sometimes student workers or even department chairs will take on the responsibility. You decide.

At this stage we will create new accounts for new CMS users and assign them rights to edit the web pages that will make up your new site. We will also train them in basic CMS skills and best practices. There is documentation on many aspects of CMS use online here: http://inside.mines.edu/CCIT-CMS. In addition, we find that some in-person, hands-on training—readily available from the CCIT Web Team—helps a new CMS user get up to speed quickly with a minimum of false starts. Because the CMS is so easy to use, most people find that 30 minutes of training is all they need to get started.

4. Build Your New Site

At this point, the basic structure of the new site is in place in the CMS (though not yet available to the public). One or more departmental staff members now know how to use the CMS to create, edit, and publish web pages. The ball is in your court. It's time to move information from the old website to the new one.

In many cases, this is simply a matter of cutting and pasting text from an old web page into the corresponding new web page within the CMS. To most of us, the CMS editing interface, seen below, is quite familiar. A new CMS website can be constructed by repeatedly cutting, pasting, and saving text in an interface that looks a lot like a standard word processor. Yes, it's just that easy!
A typical page inside the CMS

If the page in question has illustrations—a staff photograph, for instance—that can be inserted at this stage. To do so, the image is uploaded to a repository inside the CMS, then configured to appear on the page. (The process is quite simple. And, again, the details are available in our extensive collection of training documents.) If hypertext links to documents or other web pages are needed, those are configured at this stage as well. The CMS is quite powerful, if such power is needed, but simple when it is not. Creating pages in the CMS can be as simple or complex an experience as desired.

But, most importantly, after inserting content in this simple manner, CMS users are freed from the demands of traditional web-page construction. There's no need to specify headers, footers, fonts, font sizes, sidebars, or any graphical elements. When the CMS document is saved, it generates all that complex detail automatically. Here is that same page when viewed in a browser window:
From here, it is easy to add images, links—even a right-hand sidebar or embedded YouTube videos, if desired. But most amazingly of all: This page took literally one minute to construct.

5. Finishing Touches

It may take some time for you to move all the information from your old website to the new CMS site. Simple migrations may take a week or two. Complex sites can take a month or two. During the migration process, all your new pages are hidden from public view. Visitors still see the old website.

When the site is fully migrated, let us know through the Helpdesk “ticket” that has been used to document the process thus far. We will make some small configuration changes on servers and—voilà!—visitors to your old web address will see the new site. At this point, the contents of the old site will be archived and burned to a DVD for your department's records.

Conclusion

Upon migration into the Mines CMS, departments will notice a few things. For instance, pages will look more uniform and (often) more professional. They will have a distinct “Mines feel” to them. Visitors to the site will see a menu structure of a type that is familiar to them from visits to other Mines pages. Navigation will be easier and quicker.

And, over time, you will also notice that pages are easier to keep up to date. Rather than learning (and paying for) elaborate, complicated software to edit HTML documents, the person charged with CMS maintenance simply logs in via a web browser, opens a page, and edits the page. Two clicks later, the page is live on the web with its new content. In other words, barriers to maintaining a web page and keeping it up to date are much reduced.

Finally, what if the web maintainer leaves the department? What happens to the website then? Well, rather than training a new person in the intricacies of the department's website (and maybe even training someone in the arcane science of editing HTML pages, as the case with “traditional” websites), someone else is given a CMS account, a half-hour of training, and access to departmental

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pages. You're back in business. So maybe the best thing about a website in the CMS is that it is far more sustainable than traditional websites.

We hope that this overview of the migration process was helpful. Please contact the Computing, Communications, and Information Technologies Web Team via Mines Help Center (step #1, above) with any questions you may have about the process. We look forward to introducing you to our Content Management System.