

News

Is Your University Portal Up to Snuff?

4/7/2008

By David Nagel

The Web Marketing Association last week released its 2008 Internet Standards Assessment Report (ISAR), an evaluation of some 15,000 sites, including universities and other educational institutions. The bad news? According to the WMA, "University sites have underperformed the five-year criteria benchmark averages in all areas." The good news?

Well, according to the association, university sites are strong in design and content. They just aren't all that strong in innovation. (Perhaps, for example, your site doesn't have a Flash-based spokesmodel with a fancy alpha channel and drop shadow effect that allows her to appear to float in your browser window.)

"As the standard of excellence for [Web] sites continues to increase, consumers (and WebAward judges) are increasingly picky about what they consider to be an effective website," said William Rice, president of the Web Marketing Association, in a statement released in conjunction with the report. "To increase effectiveness, university websites need to find the appropriate balance between a fiscally minded administration and an extremely web-savvy student body."

Based on an average score of 51.8 out of 70, universities ranked at No. 45 as an industry, just behind hotels/lodging and retail. Oddly, K-12 school sites came in at No. 17 with an average score of 55, a tenth of a point below game sites and design sites. The overall industry winner was television at an average of 58 points. Magazine sites ranked at No. 21. (We didn't include ourselves in the study, as we didn't want to skew the results and bump television from it's No. 1 spot.)

The complete report can be requested here [www.webaward.org/isar_report.asp].

In other WMA news, nominations have opened for the 2008 WebAwards. Past higher ed recipients of the award have included The Art Institute of Pittsburgh (2007), Xavier University (2006), and San Diego State University (2005). This year, nominations are open through May 31.

Information about entering the awards program, along with some more handy advice from the WMA's chroma-keyed spokesmodel, can be found here.

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