

re.web at the College of William and Mary
Transcript of: “To Be Honest With You”

Hi, I’m Susan Evans, chair of the re.web project committee at the College of William and Mary and today is Thursday, October 25, 2007.

This is the first of what I hope will be a weekly podcast about our campus effort to redesign the W&M web presence. Each week, I’ll offer an update, an impression, a highlight, or perhaps even a concern about the re.web project.

Just to keep things light, I’ve decided to use clichés as the titles for these recordings. You have most likely already noted that today’s podcast is entitled, “To Be Honest with You.”

During the past several months, we’ve spent a lot of time talking with individuals and groups about re.web. About a month ago, we realized that setting realistic expectations for the web redesign was not only necessary, but also the responsible thing to do. So today, I want to be honest with you and share four thoughts that support realistic expectations about a web redesign.

First, a new web site for W&M will not happen overnight. As great as it sounds, we won’t go to sleep one night and wake up to a brand new web site the next morning. We do expect a “big splash” at some point with a lot of top-level sites going live at the same time; but a simultaneous launch of hundreds of W&M web sites will not be possible.

Second, there is no technology that will replace the time and brainpower that it takes to produce meaningful and accurate content for the web. We’ll ultimately have a fabulous new design and we’ll ultimately have a much easier way to publish and edit web pages but the ability to write something engaging and useful will always take more than technology.

Third, your site needs an owner. If your web pages are not tended, cared for, and monitored – that will be obvious, and irritating, to those who visit your site.

Fourth, and finally, technology is perishable. We plan to buy a great web content management system for W&M – and we’ll certainly search for one with a reasonable shelf life. But technology is not static and we’ll all need to be open to what the future will bring. That means learning new tools and understanding how to use technology to our advantage. Sure change is hard, but isn’t gaining and applying knowledge what we expect of our students?

Thanks for listening. Until next week.