re.web at the College of William and Mary
Transcript of: "Don't ask for the moon, we have the stars!"

Thanks for listening to the weekly re.web podcast. Today is Thursday, January 3, 2008 and I'm Susan Evans.

I'm a huge fan of the actress Bette Davis and using her final line in the movie, "Now, Voyager" I'll set the stage for some of my thoughts about the final decision for buying a web content management system for W&M.

[Sound clip - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-KGiwGn1d8&mode=related&search=]

During the week of January 21st, we'll be hosting some meetings for demonstrating two content management systems. After months of review and evaluation, we've determined that Cascade and RedDot are two excellent options for the College. In the coming weeks, many W&M web editors will be invited to see Cascade and RedDot in action.

As you have the chance to see and compare the two systems, I hope you'll think about them through the lens of your most frequent web editing and maintenance tasks. What I'm trying to say is - during the two demonstrations, pay careful attention to how you'd do things like create a new page, or add an image, or update links in your web site.

Whichever CMS we choose, it should allow W&M web editors to easily do the web site maintenance tasks you do most often. This reminds me of the purchase of small kitchen appliances. For Christmas, my husband Larry bought me a Kitchen Aid Stand Mixer. Yes, he gave me an appliance as a gift, but it's okay because I asked for it. Anyway, I wanted a mixer I could walk away from – the flat beater and the wire whisk were part of the included parts so I knew I could mix cakes or beat egg whites in a snap. For me, the Stand Mixer is "the stars."

Now when you buy the Kitchen Aid Stand Mixer you're presented with optional equipment. So I considered buying the citrus juicer and food grinder attachments. But really, when's the last time I made sausage? And will I really take the time to dust off the juicer attachment to add the juice from half a lemon to a recipe? For me, optional attachments for the mixer are "the moon" - they might seem nice, but I know I won't use them. Perhaps we'll be faced with optional attachments for a new CMS too – but in my view, fancy accessories should not substitute for a core system of the highest quality.

Let me state myself more plainly – I hope you will evaluate Cascade and RedDot based on the web site management tasks you spend most of your time on. What would be "the stars" for you? Is it a system that automatically updates links? Or, maybe it is a system that sends you an email when one of your pages hasn't been updated in 6 months?

Bear with me as I take my kitchen analogy one step further. My Kitchen Aid Stand Mixer is now perfectly positioned on my kitchen counter top. It's beautiful, well rated, and recommended by others who've used it. But if I decide to bake a cake today, the new mixer is only one component

towards a delicious cake. Even after the purchase of the best technology, I need fresh eggs, I need to decide if I want chocolate or spice, and I need to follow the recipe. I'm guessing you're starting to get the idea … the CMS software and hardware we decide on is only at best 30% of the resulting web site. Without the other ingredients, like accurate information, good writing, and sensible navigation, a quality web site isn't possible - despite a CMS with all of the optional accessories.

Thanks for listening. Until next week.