# Chapter 22
# A Preliminary Look at the Development on Websites of Higher Education Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter provides an overview of websites of higher education institutions. It then discusses the impact of emergent Web 2.0 technologies and social media on the online communication and society, and presents a study focusing on trends and issues of the development on websites of higher education institutions. The results of the study in this chapter indicates that under the influence of Web 2.0 and social media, websites of higher education institutions have been developed on: building a strong sense of community via embedding social networking tools, endorsing open education via sharing multimedia resources, and enriching users' experience via offering self-service. The study also indicates that in order to develop effective websites, authenticity and digital citizenship should be considered and managed by administrators and technologists of higher education institutions.*

## INTRODUCTION TO WEBSITES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Over the years university administrators have developed a number of ways to involve students in campus life. One such mechanism many colleges and universities have historically utilized is a printed booklet containing photographs and information about incoming students, in order to help students learn about their peers and identify potential friends as they navigate in a new environment (Wandel, 2007).

The rapid technological change and proliferating information resources are lineaments of our contemporary society. Probably the most exciting and significant innovation in education

in recent years is the widespread computer-based technology integrating in teaching and learning. Particularly, the World Wide Web is radically redefining how people obtain information and the way people teach and learn. Apparently, more and more educators and students have access to abundant information, and the amount of that information is growing at a staggering speed (Yang, 2008). Cooper and Burns stated, "The Internet and more specifically websites at college and universities have become thoroughly integrated into the admissions process" (p. 203). According to Carnegie Communications, the Internet is ''considered the single most important tool in the college search process'' (Klein, 2005, p. 37). As McKenzie (1997) noted, "Web sites - properly constructed - are information systems. They efficiently structure content to provide visitors with knowledge and insight. They deliver 'the goods'…a good school Web site helps people find educationally worthwhile information with a minimum of wasted time and wandering" (p.26).

Since 1998, colleges have placed increasing emphasis on restructuring their websites so they are attractive and relevant to prospective students' wants and needs (Tucciarone, 2009). Hoover (2006) found that seventy- nine percent of enrollment managers at private research universities indicated ''their top priorities included integrating the Web into marketing efforts.'' According to Stoner (2004), a college's website is rated as one of the top sources of information during the college-search process. Cooper and Burns (2007) stated, "Websites for colleges and universities have become the primary means for students to obtain information in the college search process" (p. 203). Prospective and current students utilize college websites because of their convenience and speed. A college's website, offering a wide range of information is the portal to students' interactive search, providing a means of communication, access to tools such as databases and directories, and targeted information (Middleton, McConnell, and Davidson 1999). As Rozelle and Landis (2002)

indicated that a college's website was associated with perceptions of having gotten more realistic information about the university; perhaps most important, it had been available 24 /7, offering greater flexibility.

Over a considerable period of time, a typical university website of higher education institutions usually includes: about the university/college, academics, admissions, student life, news and events, athletics, etc. Prospective and current students, faculty and staff, parents, visitors, community and business, and alumni can focus on the university based upon their interests.

## WEB 2.0, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND WEBSITES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Online information and communication is changing the way people interact and learn. Today, the Web is no longer just an information repository or a place to search for resources. Traditional Web applications typically consist of browsing and searching on the Internet and are essentially a reading operation. The *Read-only Web,* sometimes called Web 1.0, which gained popularity in the mainstream in the early 90s, is the first phase of Internet usage and focused on presenting information (Rosen & Nelson, 2008). Web 1.0 tools are leader-initiated publishing of information. They isolate the interaction with immediate peers and only allows one-to-one, one-to-few, and one-to-many interactions. However, Today's *Read-Write Web*, often called Web 2.0, allows everybody to present information and to participate in creating information (Rosen & Nelson, 2008). They allow user-initiated publishing of information and strength the connection among the Internet-based community, which means few-to-few and many-to-many interactions. Furthermore, in the phase of Web 1.0, it requires strong technological knowledge to broadcast. Web 2.0, on the other hand, gives anyone the opportunities not only

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