

This issue

Is it time to clean up your blocks? P.1

No more exclamation points P.2

Make One Thing Better P.3

Are you using your alternative tags?

Remember, each time you add an image to anything on your site, you need to fill in that "alternative text" field.

Without it, people using voice readers (typically, the blind and visually impaired) will be unable to understand the context of the image.

Additionally, that wonderful Section 508 and WAI accessibility compliance, that your site certified for, is then gone.

Make it a habit to use that field every time you upload an image, helping your library to make its site accessible.



Is it time to clean up your blocks? Almost certainly

Every Dynamic Website Kit has at least *some* of them—side blocks that run down one or both sides of the site, advertising databases, local history materials, and more. In some instances, libraries have been adding perpetually to these, since the launch of their sites, creating many diverse items clamoring for user's attention.

Therein lies the problem—too many images, all trying to be seen. Many times, libraries have added a side block because they're not sure where else the thing being promoted can go. When there are too many of these, users will fail to see them at all, in their desperate hunt to find the thing that they really need.

Libraries also need to keep in mind that each additional block (especially images and widgets) add not-insignificant download time for the end user. One thing you never want to hear from an online patron is "Your site is too slow!"

So, what is OPLIN asking YOU to do? We'd like you to take a really, really careful look at your side blocks. How many are really being *used*? Is it worth the download time for that inevitable dial-up user? Is it something that could be promoted occasionally as a front page story, rather than needing a permanent home on the front page?

It's not spring, but we, at OPLIN, feel that it is time to do some site cleanup for many libraries. Examine what you have added and let us know what we can move or get rid of—we're happy to help, and there's only very rarely a cost for these kinds of changes. **We want to help your library put its best foot forward.**

Featured Module

Each issue we'll highlight a Drupal module (add-on) that you can add to your existing OPLIN Web Kit.

Scheduler

This module allows nodes (for example, stories or pages) to be published and unpublished on specified dates. Want to create content nodes ahead of time, and then have them appear at a specified date? This is the module you need.

Interested in adding this module to your Website Kit? Contact OPLIN Support at support@oplin.org.

Need help?

You can reach OPLIN Support (and usually Laura, too) via our chat room (<http://support.oplin.org>)

Website Kit Documentation

Get the most recent documentation for your OPLIN Web Kit here.

(<http://www.oplin.org/content/website-kit-documentation>)

“There are the exclamation-point addicts out there, you see. They’re the writers who feel they really can’t put across the excitement, immediacy, or sincerity without that little extra boost (!) to make it feel super-charged.

They’re the writers who believe that they should slap an exclamation point at the end of a written sentence anytime they would allow their voice to lift at the end of spoken one. “

—James Chartrand, [Men With Pens](#)

I’m fairly certain that I’ve talked about this in nearly every Website Kit training I’ve done; despite this emphasis, I still see exclamation points appearing on OPLIN-created websites.

I know, you think it doesn’t matter. It’s just so easy to use an exclamation point. And, of course, so many things your library is doing are so *exciting*, so they must warrant an exclamation point, right?

No, they don’t. Let me be as clear as possible about this: exclamations will always hurt your image more than they will help. Here’s why:

First, by its very nature, an item tagged with an exclamation point will downgrade everything else around it. That’s what an exclamation point does: it says “this is the most important thing, ignore the other things.” It’s meant to

draw attention to itself. By default, it tells the reader that it is most important. This is the feature that, I understand, libraries enjoy about the exclamation point’s use. However, I suspect most users of this mark don’t intend to make everything else insignificant. Yet, that’s what it does.

Second, and more importantly, professional writing does not use exclamation points. Go look at newspapers. Murders and wars are exciting stuff, sure. Yet, newspapers do not end all of their potentially-exciting headlines with exclamation points. It isn’t done.

I always tell libraries: “If your library wins a really big levy, you can use ONE exclamation point on your website. That’s it.” Say thank you to your

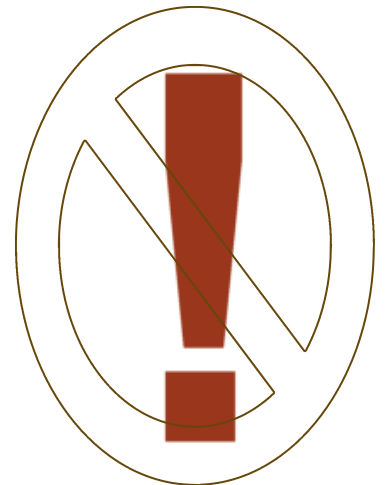
NO MORE exclamation points

If you want your site to look professional, this is one of the first and most important steps any library can take.

voters with one exclamation point. They’re valuable, after all. Otherwise, make a point (pun intentional) of staying away from them entirely. It might be a little more work, but the boost of the image of your library’s website is well-worth it.

“Exclamation points, you see, are evil. “

James Chartrand, Men With Pens



MAKE **one thing** BETTER

Telling people to “click here” is bad usability

It's a holdover from the (very) early days of the Web, when people really didn't know what an underlined word or phrase meant. Using “click here” as link text hurts your site's usability.

People scan websites, they don't read. If you're lucky, people will read up to 28% of the text on your website. That's the **best** case scenario. People are looking for quickly identifiable key words that will help them accomplish whatever it takes to fulfill their need.

Compare these and give them some thought:

To download the library's Interlibrary Loan form, click here

versus

Request an item from another library.

The first one spends too much verbiage on unnecessary mechanics. People no longer need to be told how to retrieve something using a simply hyperlink; it also is harder to scan, since what the link

does is not as easy to discern as it is in the second example.

Do your online visitors a favor and make your links easy to scan. Use action verbs and the active voice, as well as being specific about what gain will be gotten from clicking the link.



Q&A :

Q: Why is underlining on our website bad?

A: It's important to always remember that the Web is a completely different medium than print, and the answer to this question illustrates this point well. This question usually comes up because library staff are unsure of how to handle book titles. In print, book titles are usually underlined. However, on on the Web, underlining is never (and this is an absolute, sorry, no exceptions) supposed to be used except to denote a hyperlink. So, what to do?

Online, book titles are usually italicized, while magazine articles/essays/*et al* are put in quotes.

So, this also explains why there is no underline function in the Webkit editor. You'll never need it. When you create a link with the editor, it automatically includes the underlining.

Got another question? Email

laura@oplin.org.

Which libraries have a Web Kit underway?

- Claymont Public Library
- Herbert Wescoat Memorial Library
- J.R. Clarke Public Library
- Licking County Public Library
- Lima Public Library
- Marvin Memorial Library
- Meigs County Public Library
- Perry Public Library
- Grafton-Midview Public Library
- Tiffin-Seneca Public Library
- SERLS
- Rodman Public Library
- Richwood-North Union Public Library
- Jackson City Public Library
- Pataskala Public Library
- Oak Harbor Public Library