



A River Network Learning Session

Monster Under the Bed: How to Overcome Your Fear of Your Website

January 15, 2026



WELCOME!

...DIY Marketing Made Fun, Efficient & Cost Effective

While you wait, please ...

- Introduce yourself in the chat – name, organization, where you're calling from
- Use the chat box for questions
- Open the evaluation form now & give us feedback after the session!

ABOUT RIVER NETWORK

River Network grows and strengthens a transformational national network of water, justice, and river advocates.

We envision a powerful and inclusive movement that ensures abundant clean water for all people and nature to thrive. We believe that joy and hope for our planet flows through our rivers.

Meet the network and search our Water Protectors Map on our website!

rivernetwork.org



OUR PRESENTERS



Mitch Sloan
(they/them)

Digital Media Producer



Patrick Williams
(he/him)

Director of Creative Services





THE MONSTER UNDER THE BED

How to Overcome Your Fear of Your Website

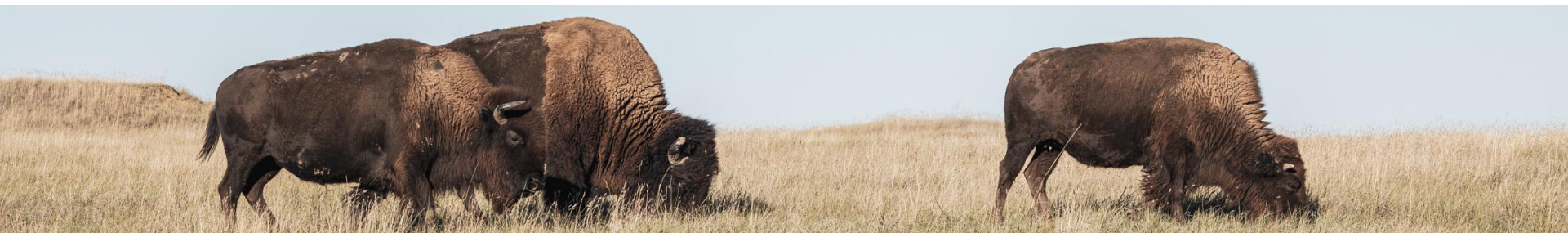




About Bold Bison

Bold Bison Communications & Consulting provides forward-thinking communications solutions, engaging strategy and facilitation services, and inspiring workshops and trainings for nonprofits, particularly in the conservation, climate, and local food movements, as well as the arts and cultural institutions.

Bold Bison is a professional affiliate of the Land Trust Alliance and is a Certified LGBT Business Enterprise® through the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit **[BoldBison.com](https://www.BoldBison.com)**





Our Team



DIGITAL MEDIA PRODUCER

Mitch Sloan
They / Them



DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE SERVICES

Patrick Williams
He / Him





Today's Agenda

1

Site Management Discussion

4

Content Strategy Discussion

2

The Old School Style of Web Development

5

Questions You Should Always Ask

3

Common Roadblocks to Web Management

6

Wrap-up / Q&A



To Get the Most From This Workshop

1

Reduce distractions such as phones and email.

3

Use our prompts to consider how these topics affect your org.

2

Take notes and ask questions.

4

Center yourself and be present.





THE MONSTER UNDER THE BED

How to Overcome Your Fear of Your Website



Popcorn Discussion:

Who is responsible for maintaining your organization's website?

What challenges do you experience in maintaining your site?





Common Categories of Website Headaches



Technical Challenges

- 404 error code
- Widget broke
- Broken links and redirects
- Backlog of updates
- Site crash, hack, or other horrible misadventures

Time and capacity to maintain clunky CMS

- Control panel is different every time you use it
- Have to check in periodically to update/troubleshoot
- Limited technical support or documentation



Yale School of Art
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New Haven, Connecticut, 06520-



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This website exists as an ongoing collaborative experiment in digital publishing and information sharing. Because this website functions as a wiki, all members of the School of Art community—graduate students, faculty, staff, and alums—have the ability to add new content and pages, and to edit most of the site's existing content.

Content is the property of its various authors. When you contribute to this site, you agree to abide by Yale University academic and network use policy, and to act as a

YALE SCHOOL

The Yale School of Art is a **graduate school** that confers MFAs in Graphic Design, Painting/Printmaking, Photography, and Sculpture; and offers undergraduate-level art courses to Yale College students. Our website exists as an **ongoing collaborative experiment** in digital publishing and information sharing. It functions as a wiki—all members of the School of Art community have the ability to add new, and edit most existing content.

Editor details

ON THIS PAGE

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

FALL 2021 AT THE SCHOOL OF ART

SCHOOL NEWS

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

CALENDARS & NEWSLETTERS

Website content isn't engaging

- MarComm strategy hasn't adapted to your user goals
- Unresponsive, doesn't format on mobile, incompatible with accessibility devices/strategies
- Text-heavy featuring everything your org has ever done (EVER!)

Breakout Discussion:

How does your organization rely on your website?

Which of the challenges described are you facing with your site?





Old & New: Styles of Web Development





The Old School Style of Web Development

- Pay a **contractor** to build you a website, they work in **their own software**, resulting in an for invoice any time **you need something** and leading to a few problems:
 - **High costs** (beyond what you already paid for the website itself)
 - **Lack of full control** over the product you already paid for
 - **Developers retire**, leaving you with a **vulnerable website** that you're responsible to maintain



A New Way to Work: All-in-One CMS

- **Simplify web management** by consolidating your content management, web hosting, and domain registration on a single platform, such as SquareSpace or Wordpress (recommended)
- These platforms **automatically update** to prevent security risks, widgets breaking, and outdated browser formatting – it takes the technical work completely off your plate
- Extensive **library of templates** that allow for drag-and-drop edits similar to your other marketing platforms (MailChimp/Constant Contact or Canva)
- **Archival documentation** to help you troubleshoot (forums, YouTube, Reddit threads) and **live-support options** on business plans



Headaches Resolved: Technical Challenges

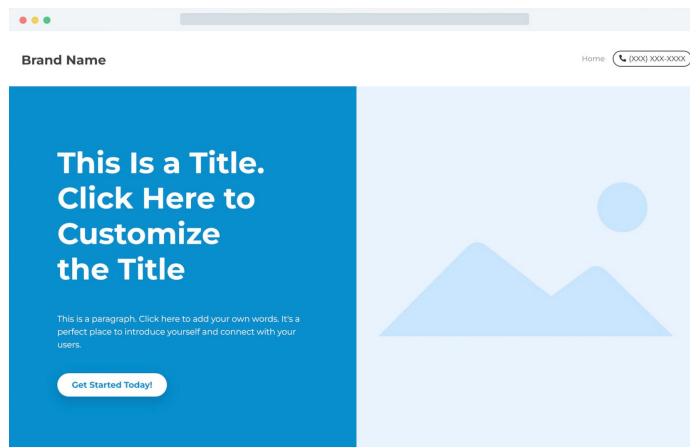
- **Externalize the risk** to vendors whose businesses exist for it
- **Strengths of a toolkit:** donation processing, event registration, email signups, translation, etc.
- **Put your website on autopilot** so you can focus on the fun parts—content, design, and strategy





Headaches Resolved: Capacity

- **Reduce the time spent** keeping systems healthy – all-in-one systems automate updates.
- **Fail-safes to restore your site** to a previous state (without coding, technical instructions, or support calls.)
- **No-code templates** let you drag-n-drop content, “what you see is what you get” editing.





Headaches Resolved: Content Strategy

- **UX (User Experience) is empathy.** Put yourself in the shoes of your audience: what do they want to do on your site?
- Does your website “feel” like attending visiting your org? Consider your **website as a welcome mat** for your organization.
- Focus on **common accessibility features and simplified navigation** to help all users engage with your content.





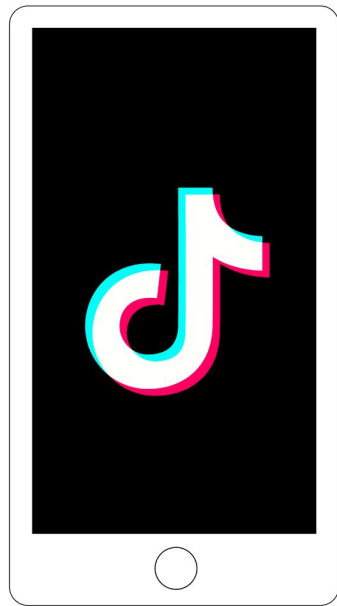
Your Users Have Evolved

Your web strategy may be working off outdated information regarding web browsing habits.



Everything is TikTok now

- **Endless scrolling feeds** of content, usually prioritizing video and **optimized for mobile devices**
- Strong preference towards **moving elements on-screen**
- Users tend to leave a webpage within **15 seconds** if the content doesn't grab their attention





People Scan Content for Relevant Info

- “**Listicle**” formatting has transformed blog content and lived on in **Gen AI summaries**
- **Less than 1/4th** of text-on-page is read by a visiting user
- Users expect content to be **organized logically**, and want to find their quarry **within 3 clicks**





Web Presence Effects Reputation

- Halo effect – users may become **biased for/against your organization** based on web presence
- Search engines **de-prioritize websites** with high bounce rates and minimal accessibility features
- Successful sites **design for returning users** that engage with content, instead of flashy elements for “unique visitors”





Easy Win: Alternative Text

Alternative text (alt text) is descriptive text that conveys the **meaning of an image** in digital content. **Makes visual content accessible** to people with vision disabilities but also improves SEO in a variety of ways:

- **Additional keywords** to rank on search engine results
- Search engines **prioritize sites with accessibility features**
- Alt text helps **feed AI Summaries**, citing your content in Gen AI results

Breakout Session:

Thinking about your organization's current website, who is your website for? Who should it be for?

What changes are needed to begin to update your website for your key audiences?





Takeaways

- **Your website needs to be an asset not a burden**, so externalize the risk where you can
- **Web behaviour is changing** – considering your user experience is vital to your website, but you also need to consider how changes in website behavior impact your organization's **overall marketing strategy**
- **Implementing accessibility features** help address big-picture changes in user behaviour on websites while remaining **AAA compliant**



Questions to Ask Before Rebuilding Your Website

1

How will this website alleviate our capacity constraints?

2

What does our relationship with our developer look like post-launch?

3

How will we “control” the look and feel of the website after launch?

4

What are the annual costs we can expect from this hosting platform?





Still Feeling Stuck? We Can Help With That.

- While we hope today's learning will help you overcome any fears of your website, Bold Bison can **help you tackle** the challenges we discussed today
- Help with strategy, organization, and management to **improve your existing website**; offer an assessment, help with accessibility, or troubleshooting
- Design and **build new website**, including training those on your team to who will be responsible for keeping it up to date





Connect with us!



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Mitch Sloan

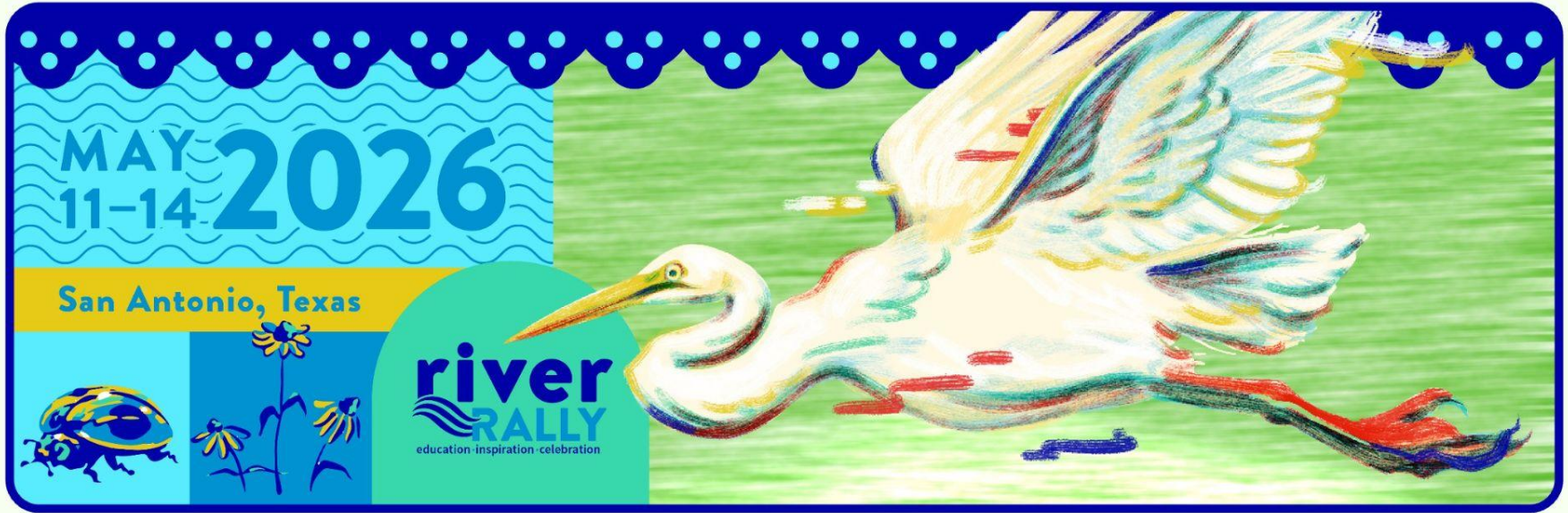
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SAVE THE DATE!



May 11-14, 2026 in San Antonio, Texas



rivernetwork.org/river-rally

THANK
YOU!

