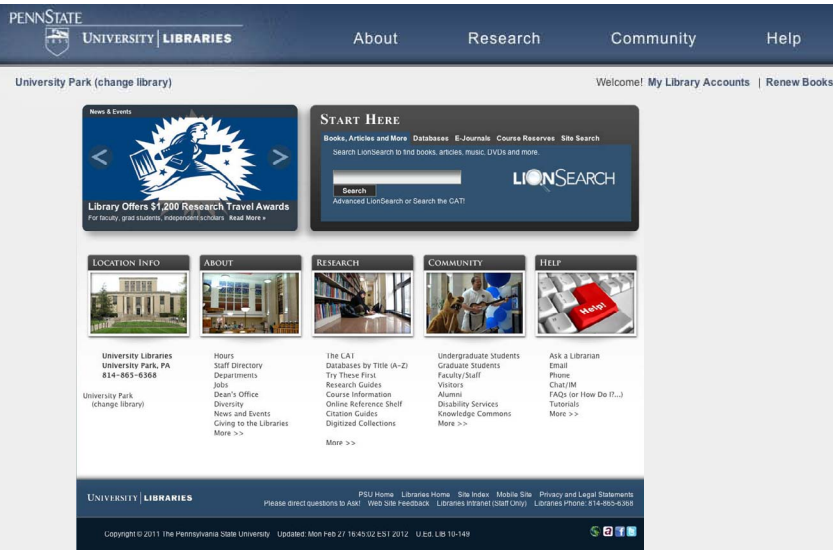Penn State University Libraries
Taking the lead on accessibility

Penn State University Libraries
University Park, Pennsylvania
www.libraries.psu.edu

Results
- Reduced site administrative overhead by reducing the number of pages that make up its websites from 50,000 to 5,000
- Improved compliance with accessibility requirements
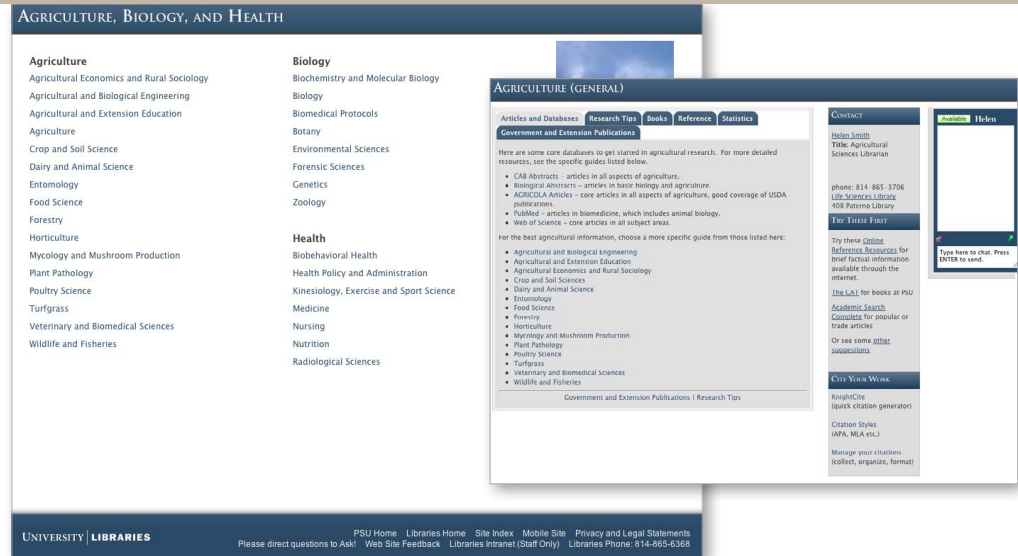- Increased authoring efficiency throughout the organization

The Penn State University Libraries work with Adobe to provide an optimal online experience for every user, accessible by everyone

Founded in 1855, Penn State has a threefold mission of teaching, research, and public service. Penn State's 36 libraries spanning 23 locations across the state support this mission with collections of more than 5.8 million books, 102,000 serials, 579 databases, and 203,000 eBooks accessible at all Penn State locations, as well as instructional programs, online guides, course reserves, digital projects, equipment, and the services of expert librarians and staff.

The website maintained by Penn State's Libraries plays a vital role in its community. Students rely on the website to discover and explore resources for their coursework. Professors and researchers access the latest findings in their field through the online databases available through the Libraries. Rich content supports the studies and research of people around the world.

Several years ago, Penn State's Libraries determined that website changes were needed. The Libraries' faculty and staff had relied on a variety of HTML editing tools to maintain more than 50,000 static HTML pages. This model was inefficient and lacked the functionality needed to implement global changes across the large-scale website.

Challenge
- Provide a more seamless and consistent user experience across a diverse range of websites and resources
- Improve site administration by reducing the number of pages that make up the website
- Ensure that Penn State's Libraries maintain a commitment to website accessibility

Solution
Use Adobe Marketing Cloud, Adobe Experience Manager to create templates and workflow tools that automate the enforcement of accessibility standards for web authoring

Systems at a glance
Adobe Marketing Cloud, Adobe Experience Manager. Products used include:
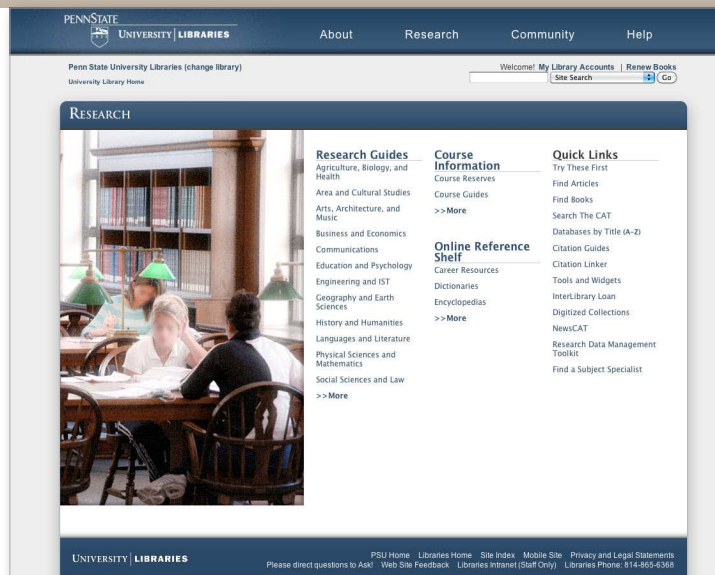- Adobe® CQ
- Adobe CQ DAM
- Adobe CRX

Penn State's Libraries chose Adobe CQ, Adobe CQ Digital Asset Management (DAM), and Adobe CRX to transform the way it publishes content to its website. Adobe CQ helps Penn State's Libraries bring new simplicity, control, and efficiency to every aspect of its web publishing. Penn State's Libraries now use the Adobe product to maintain a web presence encompassing a top-level library home page, department-level pages and content, and 23 library locations within the system.

The elimination of the need for content authors to have HTML skills has made it possible for a much larger pool of employees to contribute to the Libraries' website. More than 200 authors throughout Penn State's Libraries now author content directly. Penn State's Libraries use Adobe CQ DAM to more easily and effectively manage the growing number of images, multimedia files, and documents. Online folders created and controlled by the Libraries' Public Relations and Marketing Department provide images and other visual elements that authors can reuse as needed, including headshots of employees. IT now plays a much smaller role in day-to-day publishing, allowing it to focus on more strategic work. Standard templates and style sheets, as well as brand guidelines and assets stored in Adobe CQ, make it much easier to maintain a uniform look and feel.

Efficient content reuse has enabled Penn State Libraries to reduce its website from more than 50,000 pages to roughly 5,000, while providing a richer online experience. The website makes it simple for students to discover the right resources for their needs, including course guides for specific courses, subject-based research guides, general content for a diverse range of subject areas, links to an online catalog, and listings for more than 500 third-party databases. Students can also access their library accounts from a link on the site. Integration with the Penn State Libraries LDAP server, as well as headshots in the Adobe CQ DAM system, enable staff photo directory listings and directory searches.

"Our website is now the digital hub for the Libraries' collections and services. Everyone uses it, from undergrads and graduate students in the Libraries, on campus, and remotely to community members, and members of the general public worldwide," says Linda Klimczyk, assistant head for the Libraries' Department of Information Technologies. "Everything we do is designed to provide high-quality content to help our constituents get their work done."

"With Adobe CQ, our plans are to build a structured experience that helps ensure that every page our authors create is compliant with our standards for accessibility."

Linda Klimczyk
Assistant head for the Libraries' Department of Information Technologies.

## Committed to accessibility

The libraries at Penn State are committed to ensuring that all web pages are accessible to patrons regardless of disabilities or learning differences. This means making all content accessible for individuals with disabilities, whose online experience often relies on hardware and software tools known as assistive technologies, ranging from screen readers to touch screens and head pointers. Traditional web pages are often designed in a way that interferes with the effective functioning of these tools, or that otherwise renders them less than optimally accessible.

"Penn State is committed to accessibility. We initially chose to work with Adobe to make our website content more relevant, useful, and easier to administer. As our requirements and focus around accessibility evolved, Adobe was there to grow with us. We are now working with Adobe to make sure that we can deliver tools to our authors to make sure that our commitment to accessibility is met," says Klimczyk.

Although Adobe CQ includes a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) that details the legal requirements for accessibility and explains how a given product helps comply with each provision, the reality is that each organization must determine for itself what accessibility means in the context of its own website and design its own compliance program. As the law becomes more extensive, organizations also need a way to adapt to changing requirements. Penn State's Libraries are required by University policy to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA published by the W3C. As Penn State works to comply with these guidelines, the University will make content accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities.

Penn State's Libraries are working closely with Adobe to help ensure that both current and future content will meet high standards for accessibility. Says Tim Plumer, senior solutions consultant at Adobe, "Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance can be a moving target as the law continues to evolve. By providing customers with the tools to build their own accessibility workflows and components, we help them meet their existing legal and organizational requirements, and adapt effectively to new mandates as they emerge."

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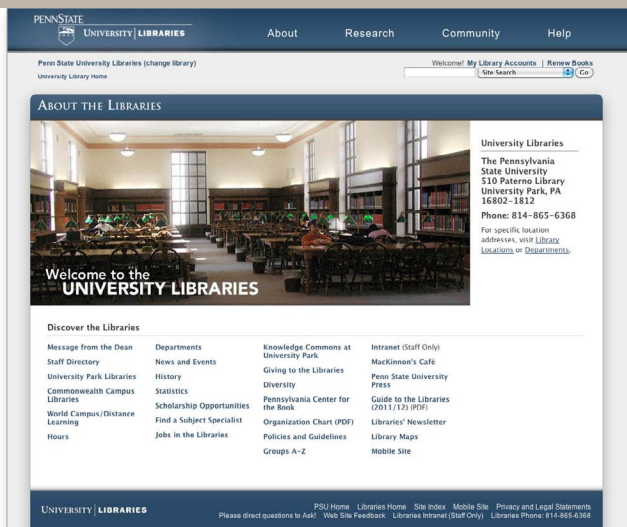
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Building accessibility into the authoring experience

"With Adobe CQ, our plans are to build a structured experience that helps ensure that every page our authors create is compliant with our standards for accessibility," says Klimczyk. For example, vision impaired users often rely on a screen reader to access page content. For this to be effective, all images published must include an "alt" tag that describes what they depict. Klimczyk's group has plans to use Adobe CQ to create a workflow that requires an alt tag to be added to every image before a page can be published.

The system also will be configured to disallow table-based layout, which often breaks pages into non-logical visual regions that interfere with screen reader functionality. Instead, each page is created in a more logical CSS layout. When creating tables to display data, content authors will be required to include table captions and header attributes for a more understandable data display for non-sighted users.

A third party accessibility-checking tool will be integrated into Adobe CQ via a customized component to verify that the page is fully accessible and compliant before being published. Penn State's Libraries currently use a similar tool to validate existing published web content and identify pages and templates in need of modification. "We just did a mass sweep through our page templates to remediate accessibility issues and further improve accessibility compliance. Without Adobe CQ, it would have taken months to work through thousands and thousands of static HTML pages one by one," says Klimczyk.

As accessibility regulations, standards, and best practices continue to evolve, the ongoing collaboration between Adobe and Penn State will help the Libraries maintain compliance while providing a model for other organizations facing a similar challenge.

For more information
*www.adobe.com/solutions/
digital-marketing*