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MPLA Webmaster Report
25 March 2013

Website Doings

1. Roy and I have started moving the MPLA web files over to the new hosting service. As previously discussed, this shift will save the Association money in web hosting charges, by almost half. Other things related to this behind the scenes move is transferring the MPLA domain name to the new hosting site as well. One day in the near future, we will "flick a switch" and transfer the domain name. It will take a day to propagate around the internet, and when it is propagated, Roy and I will shut down the old server account. This should be transparent to the users.

2. Another topic to bring up is the disposition of the MPLA domain name (mpla.us) itself. When we registered the domain name, we did so for a period of 10 years, at a price of about $150, if I remember correctly. It is registered until 01 November 2015, but I think we can renew that at any time (although I'd defer to Roy on that.) We probably should start planning to renew that domain name for a few more years. I believe we can renew it far cheaper than $150 for 10 years. I'm seeing prices as low as $4/year.

3. A long overdue revamp/redesign of the MPLA website is underway. As long as we are transitioning to a new hosting service, it's also an opportune time to reconsider our website and spruce it up a bit. Some parts:
   - First, I am going to be incorporating responsive design elements into the website, which means the website will be optimized to the device. If you look at it on a desktop computer, it would look one way, but if you looked at it on a tablet or smartphone, it would be the same but different.
   - Roy came up with a great new banner logo for the website. I loved it so much, I asked him to let me use it. Here it is:

     Mountain Plains Library Association

   - We will also still be featuring this logo on the website as well, as it is the logo we are primarily identified with.

     mpla

   - I am nowhere near finished with this redesign – I've literally only started. I wouldn't anticipate it should take a very long time, but I can't tell you when it'll be done. If you want to see a little "sandbox" where I'm playing with design elements and layouts, it is at: mpla.us/index2.html Fair warning: it changes daily as I tweak.
   - I'm inclined to change dominant colors on the new design. I'm rather tired of the blue and gold we use presently. The current mock up of the website features a black navigation bar on the top of the website with a charcoal navigation bar below the banner image. The more I look at the black and charcoal, the more I prefer it. Roy's banner isn't final yet, I want to do a couple of more things to it, when I get the chance, but it features green and brown, for a splash of color.

- One of the elements we likely will lose (because it's not compatible with responsive design) is the Facebook Likebox. Because of the way Facebook packages that widget we plug in there, it won't shrink to the device. Further, we have had it there for several years now, and I think we can offer icons for the social media and let people go there to like us, etc.
- Here is sort of what it looks like now:
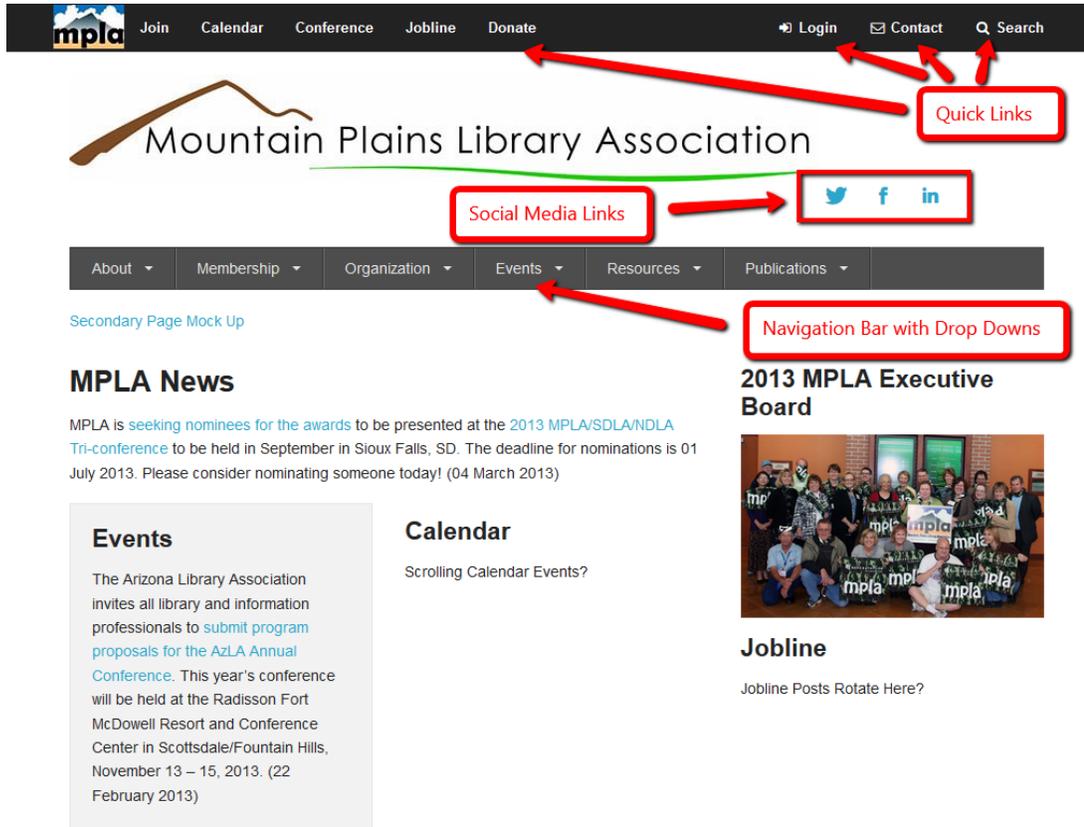
- If you look at it on a smart phone, here is what it looks like:
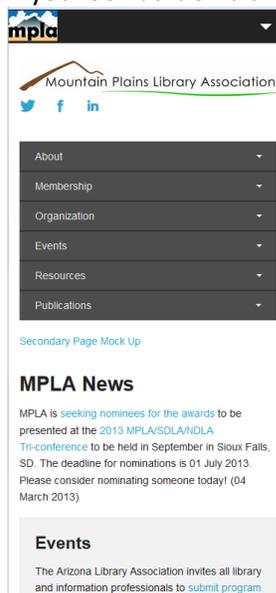
- Another element we are going to be implementing is a content management system, ModX. This will enable us to start doing some really flashy things quite easily. For example, on my cool things list, making MPLA NEWS a rotating box, displaying 2-3 things at a time, but that scroll automatically. We can take items from the MPLA Calendar and put them into a box on the homepage to show people a scrollable list. We can place a Jobline box with postings that rotate. Of course, the CMS will allow me to offer an RSS feed throughout the site. The way we do things now, RSS feeds are a pain to create manually. We will be able to offer conference handouts on a website optimized to the device, so if you're at conference and want to access handouts, you can do so easily. The CMS should simplify my job dramatically. Or so Roy tells me ☺
- But, that is all what I am working on. This is fun stuff for me. I love coming up with new ways for us to present our public face.
- As always, if you have ideas for the website, please let me know and I will see what we can do. If you have any thoughts on the design, please let me know. I don't like operating in a bubble where mine is the only opinion I hear. I like to hear what everyone thinks. In fact, every now and then I plan to post photos or links to the MPLA Facebook page, just to let fans know what I am working on. The other day, I posted this photo to the FB page. This is a photo I took of my website notes and possible layout designs, to show fans a little bit of how I work (luddite that I am ☺):
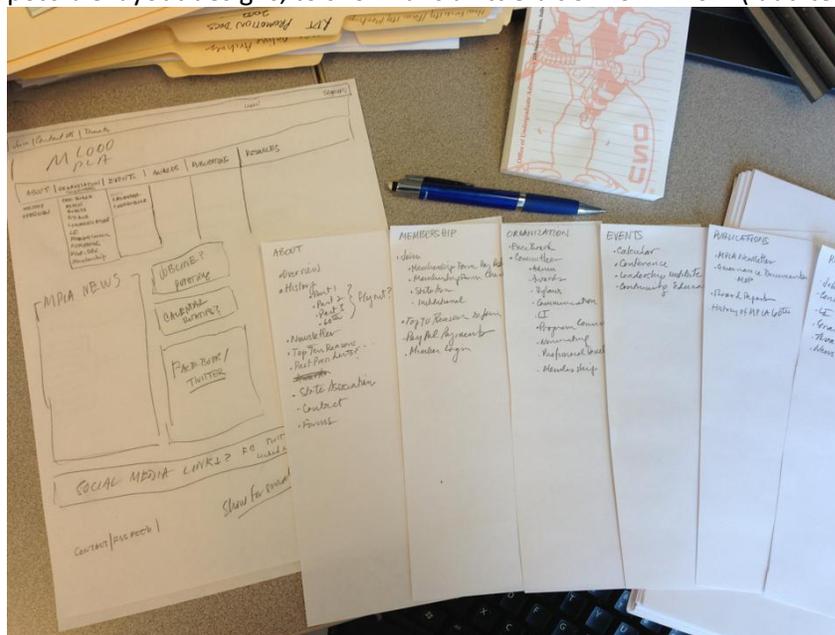
Respectfully submitted,

Dan Chaney
MPLA Webmaster