

Website/App

2019 Winner: American Society for Microbiology

Entry Title: ASM website redesign

Project Overview

The new ASM website is the culmination of a 3-year-long web redesign process that embraces 3 pillars: content, usability, and design.

Content strategy—the creation, planning and dissemination of content—is at the heart of ASM's digital approach. To execute a content strategy for an association with so many established content streams (journals, existing blogs) takes thoughtful planning, extensive research, and collaboration.

For the last 3 years, ASM's digital team, staff, members, and leadership worked together to shift the website to a user-friendly experience. We released yearly surveys, asking our members what they'd like to see. We conducted user testing at ASM meetings. Nearly a dozen workshops took place where we established our web taxonomy, keywords, and tags with experts.

We held trainings on writing for the web, SEO and Google Analytics to help ASM staff gear up for a new digital approach. Articles that focus on topics our members are interested in are written by staff and volunteers. We held two content audits to take 20,000 pages down to a more manageable 1,500 pages. Pages that were incorrect, outdated or had low visitor numbers were repurposed or deleted.

Since 2015, ASM's web traffic increased by more than 300%—skyrocketing from 1 million page views per year to over 4 million in 2018.

ASM's new website features SEO-friendly tags, organized content, smart search, and commissioned, original artwork. The new design executes ASM's vision for a fresh, clean look that celebrates microbiology and stays true to the ASM brand.

Goals/Objectives

Goal 1: Putting our users first

Over 3 years, we surveyed and tested with users to discover their needs and interests, balanced that with organizational goals and wove them together to increase traffic and engagement as well as conversions on ASM's business objectives.

Goal 2: Taxonomy

We built a web taxonomy to serve as a foundation for smart search and organized content. Over 18 months, we streamlined multiple "languages" used at ASM (marketing codes, meetings tracks, publishing categories) into one controlled vocabulary that

serves as the basis for website taxonomy and tags. Courtney Reyers presented on this process at last year's ASAE Tech Conference.

Goal 3: Web governance

We introduced web governance and a style guide to maintain site integrity upon launch. ASM's web space was essentially the "wild west," a place where anyone could do anything at anytime without consequence.

ASM's digital team has authored a web handbook, editorial style guide, and workflow and process handbook to bring order to chaos and inject the spirit of always thinking about the user into everything that earns a spot on our website.

Strategy/Tactics

Goal 1: Putting users first

Regular annual surveys to members and users

Personas and user journeys built and verified

Deployment of Google Analytics to establish baseline measurements

Injection of SEO into our web content, monitoring for the day that organic search surpassed our social referrals (it happened last year!)

Streamlined ASM's fractured digital footprint into 1 master site

Restructured the information architecture in stages so staff and leadership slowly became adjusted to changes

Conducted user testing on new pages and designs on the ground at our meetings, shared findings with staff and stakeholders

Goal 2: Taxonomy

Collected all "language" types in use at ASM Monitored keyword search referral terms in Google to see how users were actually getting to our content, sharing findings with staff and stakeholders

Held nearly 12 workshops with internal Ph.Ds. to streamline and modernize keywords

Held card sort with members to validate versions of taxonomy

Categorized and tagged all web content, ASM products and services based on this taxonomy

Used taxonomy as basis for "smart search" on the new site

Taxonomy ties CMS and AMS together, so that eventually members can subscribe to interest-based newsletters

Goal 3: Web governance

Through massive education efforts (writing, SEO, analytics, and content strategy trainings and workshops), the change management needed to make a shift to a governed (well-maintained, organized, and effective website) has started to take root. A true content strategy and digital manifesto were crafted to serve as the touchstone for all things around the website. Content planning meetings, lunch and learns, guest speakers regularly happen at ASM HQ. Professional development dollars were increased to close the skills gap on long-term staff who were unfamiliar with digital best practices.

Success Metrics/Results Achieved

Goal 1: Putting users first (and increasing user engagement)

Website survey engagement increases each year, with 400 participants in year one to 3,000 last year.

300% increase in web traffic

5% uptick in author submissions across entire journals portfolio

Sold out attendance at smaller meetings and conferences.

High readership numbers of our new "blogs" created 2 years ago (our blog network has brought 750K users to our website since 2016)

Goals 2 and 3, N/A

Learn more

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ASM Website Redesign

Association Website:

www.asm.org