MEMORANDUM

To: Chief Judges, United States District Courts
   District Court Executives
   Clerks, United States District Courts

From: Judge D. Brock Hornby
      Chair, Committee on the Judicial Branch
      Mr. James C. Duff
      Director, Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts

RE: DISTRICT COURT WEBSITE TOOLBOX (INFORMATION)

We are pleased to inform you that the Administrative Office (AO), under the supervision of the Judicial Branch Committee and its New Media Subcommittee, has created a toolbox that courts may use when developing, enhancing, or updating their public-facing (Internet) websites. The toolbox includes different tools that may be adapted to the needs of individual courts, including the following: (1) templates to create district court websites and supporting documentation, (2) design elements, (3) content that can be used across court websites, and (4) services to enhance courts’ public communications. Individual courts may use any or all of these tools.

The Judicial Branch Committee, in requesting the AO’s assistance in designing and developing a website template for district courts, asked the AO to accomplish the following goals: (1) assure that content required by statute and/or by Judicial Conference policy is present on court sites, (2) bring greater uniformity and consistency across court websites in terms of design and functionality, (3) respond to requests from outside the Judiciary to make information on court Internet websites more available and accessible, and (4) offer a consistent user experience for the public. The toolbox is designed to achieve these goals at little or no cost to the courts.
The toolbox initiative has been developed in collaboration with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey, which is working on a similar effort for district and bankruptcy court websites in the Third Circuit under an *Edwin L. Nelson Local Initiatives Program* IT grant. The AO also has received substantial assistance and input from other sources, including chief district judges, the district judge representatives to the Judicial Conference, circuit executives, the District Clerks Advisory Council, the Information Technology Working Group, the Electronic Public Access Working Group, and other court groups. In addition to providing a set of website resources to courts nationwide, the AO hopes to build a collaborative network across the courts to share information and resources, cultivate creative ideas, and provide an internal technical support structure.

The district court templates currently are being tested by courts and are scheduled to be released for use in early 2011. Similar templates for U.S. Bankruptcy Courts and U.S. Courts of Appeals are in the design phase, with a target release date in mid-2011. Some of the enhancements are available for use now. (See attachment for a complete list and contact information.)

An internal blog is accessible for tracking the project at [http://webapps.ao.dcn/webtoolbox/](http://webapps.ao.dcn/webtoolbox/). Interested court employees are encouraged to visit the blog and subscribe to the associated email updates. In addition, the AO toolbox project team soon will contact court information technology staff to advise them of the availability of toolbox resources.

Court Internet sites are an important and essential tool for public interaction with the Judiciary. We hope you find these new tools useful for enhancing your court’s website. In addition to technical staff who already are involved with your court’s website, we urge you to designate an individual to manage and monitor the website’s content and to ensure the site is accessible to all visitors. Inaccurate, out-of-date, or inaccessible website content is a disservice to the Judiciary and to site users.

For more information and assistance, please contact Beth Grabo or James Davison in the Office of Public Affairs at 202-502-2600.

Attachment

cc: Chief Judges, United States Courts of Appeals  
Chief Judges, United States Bankruptcy Courts  
Circuit Executives  
Assistant Circuit Executives for Automation  
Automation Support Managers
Toolbox for External Court Websites

The Administrative Office is pleased to be working in collaboration with the courts to provide a toolbox of resources for use in the design and development of the courts’ Internet websites.

Homepage and Primary Landing Page Templates
- Pages provided in functional format, complete with required features in place. Consultation on navigation and information architecture if desired.
- Design guide, style guides, and tips for developing external websites will accompany the templates.

Graphics Library
- Images and graphic elements available for use on the new sites, including court seals, buttons, lines, shaded boxes, and images.

Color Palette
- Will include web-friendly core colors and accent colors, along with a style guide outlining use.

Popular Site Content, Features & Functions
- Available for linking/downloading from uscourts.gov and Courts’ external websites: Court Locator, Careers, Federal Judiciary YouTube Channel, publications, FAQs, E Pro Se, and other useful content.

Enhanced Communications Evaluation & Accessibility Tools
- Designed to reach existing and potential visitors to court websites, these tools may make it possible for users to more easily access the information they need.
  - Email delivery service (GovDelivery): Provided by a third party, this service alerts users who have registered for information on additions to a site. For example, courts may keep members of their local bar informed of updates to a court’s announcements page or rules changes.
  - Read-aloud service (BrowseAloud): Reads web text aloud for users who find it difficult to read online. This is not intended for people who are blind, but is useful to those who have trouble reading, have mild visual impairments, or have another limitation that may prevent them from reading materials on the computer. This program also allows users to download portable files of the material on a site and listen to it later.
  - Widgets: Allows courts to receive a news feed or access the Court Locator directly from uscourts.gov. A piece of code is available for download on uscourts.gov, and embedded on a court’s website.
  - Web Analytics Tool: Reviewing and evaluating website traffic can provide valuable feedback on the effectiveness of site navigation and content. Google Analytics, currently offered free in a limited version, provides flexible, easy-to-use features that capture and present traffic data with the addition of simple code to each web page. Written guidance on setting up and using Google Analytics on court sites will be provided as part of the toolbox. Courts will manage and review their data independently.

For more about the toolbox, including the latest information and to sign up for email updates, visit the project blog: http://webapps.ao.dcn/webtoolbox/

Contact
Beth Grabo
Digital Media Services
Office of Public Affairs
Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts
Phone (202) 502-2600
E-mail: beth_grabo@ao.uscourts.gov
1. Seminar disclosure information.  
   (See JCUS-SEP 06, p. 24)

2. Judicial Misconduct and Disability Rules and form for filing a complaint.  
   (See 28 U.S.C. §§ 351-364; JCUS-MAR 08, p. 21; JCUS-SEP 07, pp. 21-22.)

3. Location and contact information for the courthouse, including telephone numbers and contact names for the clerk’s office and judges’ chambers. (E-Government Act, Pub. L. No. 107-347, § 205.)

4. Local rules and standing or general orders of the courts. (E-Government Act, Id; additional information highly recommended by memo of the Director, January 10, 2010.)

5. Individual rules, if in existence, of each judge of that court. (E-Government Act, Id.)

6. Access to docket information for each case. (E-Government Act, Id.) Note that for items 6, 7, and 8 on this list, the Judicial Conference determined that a link to PACER satisfies the E-Government Act requirements. See JCUS-MAR 05, p. 7.

7. Access to the substance of all written opinions issued by the court, regardless of whether such opinions are to be published in the official court reporter, in a text searchable format. (E-Government Act, Id.)

8. Access to documents filed with the courthouse in electronic form. (E-Government Act, Id.)

9. Any other information, including forms, in a format that can be downloaded, that the court determines useful to the public. (E-Government Act, Id.)
1. Fee schedule: Filing fees, etc.


4. The court’s policy on portable electronic devices, such as cell phones and laptops, and access to the courthouse with these devices.

5. Information on how to order a transcript.

6. Information for pro se litigants.

7. Attorney admission information.

8. A website map.

9. Information about access to the courthouse for those with disabilities.

10. Case Management/Electronic Case Files link.

11. Clerk’s Office hours of operation.

12. Information about courthouse parking, mass transit, etc.
1. History of the district.
2. Judges’ biographies or a link to the FJC’s biographical directory. (http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf)
3. Alternative dispute resolution information.
4. A media page, or link to the AO’s media information. (http://www.uscourts.gov/news/journalistsguide.aspx)
5. Civic educational outreach materials for students and teachers, or a link to materials, such as those provided by the AO and FJC. (http://www.uscourts.gov/outreach/ and http://www.fjc.gov/)
6. Court statistics, or a link to the AO’s court statistics page. (http://www.uscourts.gov/statistics)
7. Employment opportunities.
8. Criminal Justice Act information and forms.
9. Links to the Probation and Pretrial Services Offices.
11. Information concerning interpreters.
12. Information about available courtroom technology.
**U.S. District Court Website Content**

**USEFUL INFORMATION TO CONSIDER**

1. Information about the Central Violations Bureau, or a link.  
   http://www.cvb.uscourts.gov/  
   (This is relevant for courts whose jurisdiction includes federal land.)

2. A link to the Online System for Law Clerk Applications and Review, OSCAR.  
   http://oscar.uscourts.gov


4. A mission statement and/or greeting from the Chief Judge or Clerk of Court.

5. Information about pending class action cases.


7. Links to the home pages of other courts in the circuit.

8. Post judgment interest rates.

9. FAQs about federal court-related topics.


11. Information about multi-district litigation.

12. Library information.

13. Information about the location and hours of the courthouse cafeteria, if one exists.

14. The history of the courthouse or otherwise notable information about the courthouse, (building tours?), the individual for whom the courthouse may be named, etc.

**Contact**

**Beth Grabo**  
Digital Media Services  
Office of Public Affairs  
Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts  
Phone (202) 502-2600  
E-mail: beth_grabo@ao.uscourts.gov