Digital Publishing Platform Pilot + Creative Services (through to Dec 2022)

Why a digital publication?

The marketing and communications landscape has changed due to the spread of COVID-19. Digital and online marketing and communication methods are vital as the pandemic forces our campus community to rethink traditional print-media.

When it is not possible to print and distribute integral communications for the University, a digital publication solution is available. Digital publications offer the same design caliber you have come to expect from Creative Services but taken online with engaging content experiences designed to make an impact.

Digital publications are independent pieces of online interactive content. They have distinctive characteristics, like linear navigation, immersive media and rich animations that make them stand out..

Don't just communicate your message. Let your audience experience it.

Creative Services can enhance publications with video and sound, reader interactivity and animation, social media integration and direct links to a website. With the ability to customize the informational hierarchy and create a single-path navigation structure, we can outline a path for readers to follow and control the narrative's pace, which will keep readers engaged.

Create content that results in action
When creating digital content, you should always put your audience first. Taking an audience-centric approach will help you craft a *content experience* that will grab your reader's attention and leave a lasting impression.

Today's digital content consumers are hungry for content that's:
- Mobile-friendly and accessible anywhere
- Engaging and able to hold their attention
- Highly-visual and aesthetically pleasing
- Snackable and easy to digest
- Interactive and personalized

Online digital publications come with all the advantages of modern web technology – it's responsive, can incorporate rich media, it is fully measurable, and can be highly interactive and personal.

Sharing traditional PDFs leaves little data for how the reader interacts with the content beyond the initial download. Digital publishing from Creative Services offers robust analytics that will create insights to help shape and improve your future communications.

Look good on any screen
Digital content is viewed on many different types of devices and screen sizes and should be fully responsive. Because of these variables, online publications should be responsive. Traditional PDFs are fixed-layout documents and are challenging to use on a mobile device – requiring the user to zoom and pan the document to be able to read it. Digital publications created by Creative Services are responsive – scaling to any screen size and reframes the functions, buttons, images and other features to work optimally on devices of all sizes.

Create interactive content experiences that take necessary accessibility standards into consideration
Approximately 15 per cent of the world's population lives with some form of disability. These include visual, cognitive, auditory, physical, and speech disabilities that make performing specific actions or interacting with the world – whether online or offline – more difficult. To combat this, laws and guidelines, like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), have been set in place to ensure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities.

Currently, the University is working toward being WCAG 2.1 (AA-level) compliant and all digital publications created by Creative Services will meet these requirements.

Check out the features

Videos and animations
Use full screen background videos for maximum impact, incorporate beautiful parallax effects, and create subtle animations to make your content come to life.

Forms and overlays
Easily embed forms for collecting data from your visitors and design overlays that pop up on command.

Personalization
Pull in data from your CRM and provide each reader with a customized, personalized experience.

Measure and optimize
Creative Services can connect your publication to Google Analytics to collect rich data on how users interact with your content.

Hosting

Creative Services will publish digital publications on a university server: publications.uwaterloo.ca.

Is a digital publication right for my project?

When deciding whether a digital publication is a way to go for your communication needs, it might be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is a digital publication right for the audience?
2. Is this information relevant to the audience and does it fit into the marketing funnel?
3. What is the call to action (CTA) or the desired next steps for the reader?
4. Do I have a distribution plan to share this information?
5. This is not a website replacement. Each digital publication, created and maintained by Creative Services, is custom designed to meet your needs, and is intended to be static once published (similar to a print publication). A WCMS website provides a templated solution that allows for create your own site, with the ability to make website revisions and ongoing content updates in a self-serve model.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are digital publications accessible?
Digital publications created by Creative Services are WCAG 2.1 AA Accessible and the application used is always updating the product to stay up to date with new laws and regulations. Creative Services will design publications that meet the highest standards of accessibility.

Does a digital publication take the place of a WCMS Publications site?
Digital publications are not a replacement for any website on the WCMS, including publications sites. While they share the same technology, their usage is very different. A website (as its name implies) is like a spiderweb where everything connects to everything else. Content experiences made with our digital publishing platform are more like stand-alone presentations or printed publications because they're linear, and users navigate one page at a time. Keep in mind this platform is a one year pilot and intended for projects that have a lifespan such as a recruitment piece for 2020-21. These pieces are not intended to be updated like websites. Publication sites found <u>here</u> will stay in the WCMS.

What types of projects are suitable for digital publication?
Digital publications are a marketing tactic to compliment your digital marketing efforts. Some of the types of content suitable for digital publishing include brochures, annual reports, white papers and strategic plans – **communications that have a lifespan and are used as drivers in your full marketing strategy**.
Creative Services can help you determine if a digital publication is appropriate for your project.

How does Creative Services determine whether a project is suitable for digital publishing?
When deciding whether a project request is suitable for digital publishing, we consider the following:

- Is your request to create a marketing product or marketing tactic? If you are looking to create a stand-alone product rather than a marketing tactic that drives your reader to your website, then it would not be suitable as a digital publication.
- Are you already using a WCMS Publications site for your project? Creative Services will not create a digital publication to replace WCMS Publication sites.
- Are you looking to replace a print publication with a digital? Digital publications are suitable for most traditionally printed communications.
- What is the volume of content? Digital publication content should be thought of as a funnel to your website. It's not telling the whole story, but rather, teasing just enough content to entice a reader to want to dive a little deeper.

Why use a digital publication instead of a printed piece?
Digital publications allow you to incorporate rich media like full-screen background videos and animations. They can be personalized based on information about individual readers. They can include forms, calls-to-action, and other interactive elements. And they're accessible anywhere, rendering correctly on any device.

Perhaps the most significant benefits, however, lie in cost-saving (compared to print) and the ability to track, measure, and analyze your content's performance. See where your readers come from, which pages they engage with most, what they click on, where they leave, and then use that data to make your next edition more engaging.

Who populates it – Creative Services or the client?
Creative Services designs and builds the digital publication from start to finish. It will be published and hosted on a University of Waterloo server (publications.uwaterloo.ca).

Are there custom URLs?
Yes, all pages have the URL structure of publications.uwaterloo.ca/YOUR PUBLICATION NAME
Can I collect lead generation data?
Yes, we can safely collect lead data and supply to you.

Will my publications reflect the Waterloo brand?
Yes, all designs will reflect the University of Waterloo brand.

Can I access my publications analytics?
Yes, you can supply Creative Services with a Google Analytics Tracking ID to access the publication's analytics.

Are there word and page count best practices associated with digital publications?

The length of content and page count will vary depending on the intent of your digital publication. Creative Services recommends being concise with your content. During the editing process, ask yourself, "How can I say the same thing in fewer words?" People don't have time to read a long block of text. As digital publications live online, we recommend you follow the University's Writing for the web tips.

Would a TOC be bad form in the digital space?
A table of contents to the landing page would be acceptable and encouraged.

What if I need revisions made after a publication is published?
Revisions can be made once a publication is published by submitting a new project requisition with Creative Services.

What happens to my publications in the event that Creative Services stops offering digital publications?
Your digital publication is hosted on a University-owned server and can remain published indefinitely. In the event that Creative Services stops offering digital publications outside of the WCMS, your publication will always remain as is on our servers. Updates will not be supported.