

MISSION E-POSSIBLE

Renewed mission websites present an informative, consistent and eye-catching window into Canada. By Martha McLean

For our online visitors, the new websites:

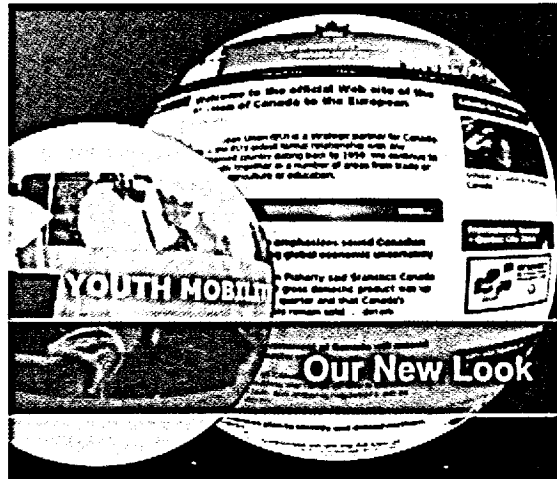
- ▶ are designed with the user in mind, with cleanly presented information, structure and navigation;
- ▶ include new banner visuals that speak to key Canadian and non-Canadian audiences.



In the early days of the Internet at DFAIT, our missions abroad recognized the value of making information and services available virtually, and they set about developing websites.

While these served their intended purposes and audiences well, Canada's international Web presence was a veritable buffet of designs, messages, logos and approaches, leaving some people wondering if they had reached *the* Government of Canada—or several different ones.

Following an extensive departmental Internet review in 2006, RSS eCommunications (now GLB) dug in to bring order to this opportunity-rich network of some 100 mission sites outside the U.S. and Mexico, which deliver information and services and promote activities to a largely international audience in more than 25 languages.



For DFAIT, our missions and our partners in other government departments, the new websites:

- ▶ enable more efficient management;
- ▶ allow for rotating campaigns that highlight Canadian programs, priorities, policies and events;
- ▶ let us better target audiences and communicate key messages;
- ▶ comply with the Government of Canada's guidelines and accessibility standards.

For non-Canadians, these websites are windows that showcase the country's business opportunities, world-class education and rich diversity of cultures, as well as its people and their values and interests. At the same time, the sites show Canadians one way that their government is working effectively and for their benefit.

How did we go about tackling an enormous website renewal project while managing the current online network? Vision, ambition and commitment. The goal was to create a more efficient, "client-centric" online experience in an environment that allows for promotional offerings and key messages that the Government of Canada wants to communicate.

After months of reviewing content, analyzing statistics, testing different designs, mapping out a process and project plan, and engaging our missions, we launched the first renewed site in July 2007. The last will be finished in December.

We will continue to evaluate and adjust this evolving network, improving content, developing campaigns, surveying and analyzing the needs of our users, and further engaging our partners.

It has been an exciting, challenging, frustrating, monotonous and rewarding project for our team. The cooperation, patience and support of our colleagues at missions cannot be overstated. I would also like to single out the dedication each member of our team showed over this period. We take a great deal of pride in the work we do and this project, a major undertaking, is a true success.

No great feat is accomplished in isolation, and GLB is grateful to teams in BCI, CMR, AIAD/W and many other divisions for their expertise and contributions to this transformation.

This is also the beginning of an exciting time for you! What are you working on? What do you want to say to your audiences at home and abroad? We can tell you who is visiting our sites and help you deliver your message. You'll be hearing more about the new possibilities for communicating through these windows, so stay tuned!

Martha McLean is deputy director of eCommunications in GLB.