New view for mobile phone, tablet users

Hospital Taps into Tech Version of Intelligent Design

Apple sold 14 million iPads in the fourth quarter of 2012 alone. Amazon sold another 6 million Kindle Fires. Roughly 120 million Americans use smartphones, accounting for more than half of all mobile phones and counting. One of the big attractions of these devices is, of course, mobile Web access.

The answer for more and more sites, including the hospital’s, www.uch.edu, is “responsive redesign.” The idea: reconfigure the image of the Web site page based on the size of the screen of the mobile device. Instead of seeing a truncated or tiny image that cuts off information or makes it unreadable, users see the entire page and can easily navigate to other pages on the site.

Starting last month, mobile device users visiting www.uch.edu began seeing a responsively redesigned site. The hospital’s IS Department worked with Web software vendor Geonetric to develop and test the change. It’s a key upgrade for the hospital, which saw the total number of visits from mobile phone and tablet users more than double between calendar years 2011 and 2012.

“Responsive redesign will make uch.edu still more useful to mobile device users, who make up an ever-growing percentage of visitors to the site,” said Bill Sonn, senior director of marketing, communications and public relations for UCHealth.

Through the first six months of fiscal year 2013 (July 1 to Dec. 31, 2012), Sonn said, visits from mobile device users represented 15.6 percent of all visits to the hospital’s site, up from just under 12 percent for the same period the year before. Three years ago, he added, when the department first began tracking Web traffic, the percentage was only 4 percent.

“Most predictions are that, in the not-too-distant future, mobile users will make up the majority of Web traffic,” Sonn said.

Regardless of the growing numbers, he noted, responsive redesign is a plus because it meets the expectations of visitors who surf with a phone or tablet.

“It’s important to bend the experience to mobile users’ needs,” Sonn said. “Before the new design, mobile users were apt to get...
a simple list of links to click on or, worse yet, a page crushed into a small phone screen. Now they get a much more usable page on their device.”