Request for Proposals:
Rare Book School Website

<u>Objectives:</u>

Rare Book School (RBS) seeks a qualified web design/development vendor to update its current WordPress website at <u>rarebookschool.org</u>. Our primary goal is to bring the site into compliance with the Department of Justice's regulations for web content accessibility under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and with Virginia's 2025 Information Technology Access Act (HB2541).

Secondary goals include:

- effectively communicate RBS's mission and strategic objectives
- present content that is visually appealing with user-friendly navigation
- ensure that the website is mobile-responsive
- expand RBS's visibility and website engagement
- enable more flexibility and easy editing for back-end RBS users

<u>Organizational Background</u>

<u>Rare Book School (RBS)</u> at the University of Virginia (Charlottesville) is an independent, non-profit, and tax-exempt institute supporting the study of the history of books and printing and related subjects. Although affiliated with the University of Virginia (UVA), and resident on its Grounds, RBS is governed by its own board of directors and is largely self-funded. Its mission is to strengthen global communities of the book and advance the study of cultural heritage.

RBS provides innovative and outstanding educational opportunities to study the history, care, and use of written, printed, and digital materials in about 40 five-day, non-credit courses per year. Most courses take place in Charlottesville, but other course locations include Bloomington (Indiana), Ann Arbor (Michigan), Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, New Haven (Connecticut), Washington, D.C., and Oxford (UK). RBS also offers online courses.

Founded in 1983, RBS moved to its present home at the University of Virginia in 1992, where it recently celebrated its 40th anniversary year and finished a multiyear endowment campaign, "Bound for the Future." An exciting physical transition back into the newly renovated main UVA Library happened in 2023. RBS is also developing a new strategic

plan, alongside a new communications plan. Both documents will help expand RBS's impact, visibility, and sustainability.

Audience

The RBS website is a key resource for students enrolling in RBS summer courses, as well as an important source of information for RBS faculty and fellows. The website also serves as a marketing tool, highlighting RBS news and outreach events and engaging RBS board members, actual and prospective donors, and the members of the public.

Prospective students as well as current RBS students and faculty from around the world use the website to find information about current and past RBS courses, scholarships, and fellowships as well as to access their enrollment applications via Salesforce. Members of the public come to find details about upcoming public lectures and to read news items or access RBS videos and other recordings. RBS donors and board members use the site to follow RBS news announcements and to read the annual report. As a nonprofit, RBS also posts key financial and operational disclosures on the site. Our website needs to be accessible for all of these different functions and audiences including users with disabilities.

Project Goals

Rare Book School is seeking a third-party web developer to bring the current website at rarebookschool.org into compliance with the Department of Justice's regulations for web content accessibility under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and with Virginia's HB2541. The current RBS website needs to be audited and updated to meet current federal accessibility standards.

1. **Our primary goal** is to bring the current content on the site into compliance with the Federal Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Version 2.2, Level AA.
    a. This may include, but is not limited to, including alt-text for images; implementing descriptive links; ensuring that any text on a page is formatted for screen readers and other assistive technology (AT) tools by using appropriate headings and other structural components; and creating clear navigational structures and layouts for the presentation of material.
    b. We would like to find a functional solution to replace PDF guides that are currently posted to the site with information for RBS students, including moving legacy media (e.g., old PDFs) to an Archives page or removing them from site.

    c. Take into consideration the Library of Congress's guidelines on [Creating Preservable Websites](#).

    d. Utilize assistive technology (AT) tools to confirm that all compliance updates have been successfully implemented

Secondary goals include:

2. Retain the general content of the site but find better ways to structure it. We would like to explore more accessible and dynamic ways to convey what we do, why we do it, and how we make an impact.

    a. Reconsider site organization and navigation from the user's perspective, especially for those applying to RBS courses

    b. Rely more on visuals and less on text

    c. Enhance organization and searchability of upcoming and past RBS events

    d. Make historic course information more accessible and not overwritten by updated information, as is the case with website's current wireframe

3. We would like to prioritize more inclusive content and representation, such as accurately highlighting diverse RBS collections, programming, students, and faculty.

4. Ensure the website is mobile-friendly and responsive across all devices and web browsers.

    a. Ensure the site conforms with best practices for search engine optimization (SEO) and Google Analytics.

    b. Integrate RBS social media content into website (e.g., most recent posts display on homepage).

5. Combine all events listings (past and upcoming) into one comprehensive, searchable database.

    a. Link past event videos and audio directly from website and not solely via YouTube or Soundcloud.

6. Create a hub for sharing external (non-RBS) resources, announcements, job postings, conference links, &c.

Other considerations include:

7. Rare Book School's website is built in WordPress and is maintained and updated by our two-person Communications team. We need back-end components to be built in a way that ensures easy editing by our staff while also being easy to navigate and appealing for users on the front end.

    a. The selected provider will provide content update training for RBS staff, as well as detailed instructions for future website maintenance. This should include a written manual where necessary for clarity and consistency of approach.

8. We understand that details may be subject to change upon vendor recommendation and/or research of more optimal solutions. In your proposal, please feel free to suggest alternatives.
9. We would like to foster a positive and productive working relationship with our web designer, ensuring that our needs are met while also helping guide innovation and creativity.

RFP Details

Successful applicants will submit:

- A brief overview/summary of your company's strengths and approach to projects. Please include:
    - An overview of your prior web design work that would be relevant to the project, with linked URLs where relevant.
    - 3-4 client references
- A proposed overview of the RBS website compliance project from start to finish, including a suggested timeline/work schedule.
    - The approximate number of individuals from your organization that will work on the website project, along with their roles and responsibilities
    - Details of any additional resources you may require
    - The federal government and UVA have set a deadline of late April 2026 for institutions to be in compliance with the accessibility rules. We are therefore aiming for the RBS website to be fully compliant by March 2026.
- A budget for the full plan and deliverable steps for bringing the website into compliance with federal regulations.

Successful concepts will receive a Zoom interview to explore the design and how you like to work. We anticipate a round of feedback on the proposal. When the full proposal is accepted, we expect to transition into production mode. If the concept is accepted for production, RBS will authorize payment for the full project.

RBS's fiscal years run from October to September. If the selected applicant's work proves successful, we anticipate further opportunities to refresh the overall look of the website to present RBS content in new and engaging ways.

Please contact and submit proposals to Kim Curtis (kim.curtis@virginia.edu), Director of Communications & Outreach, by **June 13.**