



# Terra Dotta's Study Abroad Directory

## Program Brochure Guidelines

The following document provides basic instructions and technical guidelines for the Directory sponsors that are creating program brochure content using the Directory's WYSIWYG Editor. While this HTML editor gives the user a great deal of flexibility, there are many considerations to be taken when authoring content which is to be displayed on hundreds of Terra Dotta Software web sites.

The following aspects of brochure content are covered in this document:

1. HTML, head, and body tags
2. Content area width
3. Images
  - a. File size considerations
  - b. Uploading
  - c. Hotlinking
4. Hyperlinks
  - a. Absolute URLs
  - b. New window/tab targets
5. CSS
  - a. Restricting to your brochure
  - b. Positioning
  - c. Linking to external .css files
6. JavaScript
  - a. Linking to external .js files
  - b. Script conflicts
7. Common brochure issues
  - a. Microsoft Office formatting tags
  - b. Tracking code
  - c. Form conflicts
  - d. Security alerts due to insecure protocol

### HTML, head, and body tags

All properly formed HTML documents have `<html>`, `</html>`, `<head>`, `</head>`, `<body>`, and `</body>` tags to structure their content. However, the content being created in the WYSIWYG Editor for the Directory should not have these tags included, as the software generates these tags and wraps the content.

The content in the WYSIWYG Editor is going to be imported and displayed on subscriber sites as a distinct section of the subscriber's own brochure page. This brochure page already has <html>, <head>, and <body> tags defined, and including additional tags like this can sometimes result in unpredictable behavior on clients sites and/or browser warnings regarding the additional and unexpected <html>, <head>, and <body> tags.

Most often, these tags are included by accident when the sponsor is copying the HTML file content from pre-existing brochures on their current site. It may be necessary to make adjustments to the HTML file's content to make it compatible with the Directory subscriber sites.

## Content area width

One of the more important design aspects to keep in mind when creating the Directory is that the overwhelming majority of Terra Dotta Software sites use a constrained-width layout for their public websites, and if they are using the software's stock layout as a guide, the brochure content area will be 598 pixels wide and any content that extends beyond this border will either result in the brochure section having a horizontal scroll bar at the bottom of it or the content extending beyond the right border will be clipped.

It is strongly recommended to keep all image, table, span, and div elements with a width of less than 598 pixels, and where it can be done, allow your content to be more adaptive to changes in the width of the display. While this width is commonly used by Directory subscribers, it is not an enforced design and there may be clients with wider or potentially narrower content areas for their program brochures.

## Images

Another important aspect of program brochure pages are the images that are used in the content area. Since these are files that can be loaded from the server in various ways, it is important to make sure that they are being added and edited properly to avoid broken links and page load issues.

## File size considerations

When adding images to a page, the file size should be considered. Terra Dotta Software has an image compression routine that it runs on all images to make them web-safe, but it is still possible to upload images that result in a file size that is much larger than it needs to be. It is always best to use an image file that is as close to the resolution that you will be using in the WYSIWYG Editor.

For example, don't upload a 2000 x 2000 pixel image into the WYSIWYG Editor and then resize it down to 200 x 200. It is best to open that image in a local photo editor, resize it in that application, save it, and upload the scaled down version to the WYSIWYG Editor. This will result in faster loading images on the brochure pages.

## Uploading

There are actually two ways to add images to your program brochure content. The first is by uploading the image file to the Directory's image library by clicking on the 'Image Library' icon and uploading the image file from your local hard drive. You then insert it into the page's content and adjust as necessary.

This is the preferred method of including images in your brochure content, because the linkages and file delivery will be managed through the Directory. You will not need to worry about changing domain names, image URLs, or transfer protocols. It will also be passed through the Terra Dotta Software image optimization routine so that you can be certain of the file size being appropriate for the resolution at which you are displaying it.

## Hotlinking

The other method of adding images is to hotlink to them from the WYSIWYG Editor by clicking on the 'Image' button and entering the absolute URL path to the server where the image is stored. You can then resize and adjust it accordingly.

While this is not the preferred method of including images, it is supported. It is important to remember that you will be responsible for ensuring that the URL to which that image tag is directed continues to function. When you link to images in this manner, the WYSIWYG Editor will not actually have a copy of the image file, but just a reference to it on another server where it is to be fetched.

IMPORTANT NOTE: When using absolute URLs for images, the URL should be adjusted to either use a secure protocol or not define the protocol being used. What this means is that even though it will look like this URL works in the WYSIWYG Editor:

```
http://studyabroad.terradotta.com/images/mypicture.jpg
```

You will want to adjust that URL to make it look like one of the following:

```
https://studyabroad.terradotta.com/images/mypicture.jpg
```

OR

```
//studyabroad.terradotta.com/images/mypicture.jpg
```

While the majority of Terra Dotta Software sites have program brochure pages on their public (http) pages, these brochures are frequently browsed by users after they have logged into the site, and those users will be behind a Secure Socket Layer certificate (https).

If you have images hotlinked through the 'http' protocol, there will be a warning displayed in some browsers (Internet Explorer) that there is insecure content on the page. In other browsers, the images will not load and will appear to be broken links (Chrome).

## Hyperlinks

When building a program brochure, there will very likely be hyperlinks that you want to include to additional web pages and documents. There are a couple of guidelines to remember when creating the hyperlinks in the WYSIWYG Editor.

## Absolute URLs

When creating hyperlinks in the WYSIWYG Editor, you'll want them to be absolute URLs and not relative URLs. Since these hyperlinks are not active in the WYSIWYG Editor, you might not notice that they are non-functional as relative URLs.

So instead of a URL like this:

```
/images/mypicture.jpg
```

Use a URL like this:

```
https://studyabroad.terradotta.com/images/mypicture.jpg
```

or

```
//studyabroad.terradotta.com/images/mypicture.jpg
```

IMPORTANT NOTE: When using absolute URLs for images, the URL should be adjusted to either use a secure protocol or not define the protocol being used.

## New window/tab targets

Since the brochure content you are creating will be deployed on subscriber study abroad sites, it is strongly encouraged that any URLs that lead to a different web site be created as 'New Window' target URLs. Subscribers will want their site visitors to keep a window or tab open on their website when viewing program brochures offered by their office. By selecting the 'Target' tab and then choosing 'New Window (\_blank)' from the drop-down menu, the hyperlinks you are creating will generate either a new window or tab in the browser before proceeding to their destination.

## CSS

An increasingly common method of designing brochure pages is to make extensive use of a cascading style sheet. While this is a great way to maintain consistency and take advantage of the ways in which modern browsers can more effectively present your content, there are sometimes issues and conflicts which can occur.

Terra Dotta Software loads a core style sheet which is used for its functional interfaces. In addition to this core style sheet, there may be one or more additional style sheets being loaded for the site's layout (each site has a custom wrapper).

Any additional style sheets, inline style overrides, or positioning directives could potentially result in your brochure page being mis-rendered on the subscriber's site.

## Restricting to your brochure

The primary thing to remember is that you will want to make sure that any style directives that you are implementing in your brochure content are only going to impact your content and not potentially impact content elsewhere on the page.

For example, if I have the following in a <style> tag or in a .css file that I load:

```
p {font-family: Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, sans-serif;}
```

It could potentially impact the text of the rest of the page (or at least anywhere that the subscriber has paragraph tags).

The most effective method for making sure that the content of a <style> tag or .css file is not going to break anything outside of your content is to wrap all the content in the WYSIWYG Editor in a <div> tag with an id attribute and then preface all your style declarations with that id.

As an example, you would add the following tag to the very beginning of your source HTML:

```
<div id="tdu-content">
```

And the following tag to the very end of your source HTML;

```
</div>
```

Then, all style and .css files should add the id to the beginning of the declaration like this:

```
#tdu-content p {font-family: Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, sans-serif;}
```

Now, the font used within the paragraph tags in my brochure content will be Arial, but it won't impact any paragraph tags outside of my brochure content.

## Positioning

When using CSS to position elements in your brochure, it is important to remember that your content is going to be displayed as a section within the subscriber's brochure page. So when using any position declarations, you should be making them in a manner that doesn't result in your content appearing outside of the designated area on the subscriber's brochure page.

One of the most effective ways to do this is to wrap your brochure content in a <div> with an id that is given relative positioning.

So as an example, you would add the following tag to the very beginning of your source HTML:

```
<div id="tdu-content">
```

And the following tag to the very end of your source HTML;

```
</div>
```

Then, add a directive like this:

```
#tdu-content {position: relative;}
```

Now, any positioning declarations given to the elements within that <div> will occur relative to that <div> wrapping all the content of your brochure.

## Linking to external .css files

One of the most common methods of assigning styles to a page is through an external style sheet (.css file). While the Directory doesn't allow you to include an external file like this when creating content, you can import an external .css file through a <link> or <style> tag in the HTML source.

This is acceptable but there are two considerations when importing the styles in this manner:

1. You will be responsible for ensuring that the linkage to the .css file is valid. When you link to style sheets in this manner, the WYSIWYG Editor will not have a copy of the file, but just a reference to it on another server where it is to be fetched.
2. While the majority of Terra Dotta Software sites have program brochure pages on their public (http) pages, these brochures are frequently browsed by users after they have logged into the site, and those users will be behind a Secure Socket Layer certificate (https). The URL should be adjusted to either use a secure protocol or not define the protocol being used. What this means is that the URL should not look like:

```
http://studyabroad.terradotta.com/css/mystyles.css
```

You will want to adjust that URL to make it look like one of the following:

```
https://studyabroad.terradotta.com/css/mystyles.css
```

OR

```
//studyabroad.terradotta.com/css/mystyles.css
```

## JavaScript

An increasingly common method of making site content more interesting and interactive is the use of JavaScript within HTML. The WYSIWYG Editor supports the use of JavaScript, but in Terra Dotta Applications, administrators are not always allowed to add or update content which contains JavaScript elements. An important consideration is that not all users of Terra Dotta Applications will have permissions to interact with JavaScript content. If they update a brochure that contains script elements, they will be removed and potentially break your brochure content.

It is recommended that <script> tags in your content be crafted in a manner that will fail gracefully should they be updated by administrators without the security level access to authorize those tags. In addition, using inline javascript within your tags is strongly discouraged.

## Linking to external .js files

While you can add JavaScript to a page's content through <script> tags, it is also possible to use <link> tags to import a .js file from an external server.

This is acceptable but there are two considerations when importing scripts in this manner:

1. You will be responsible for ensuring that the linkage to the .js file is valid. When you link to scripts in this manner, the WYSIWYG Editor will not have a copy of the file, but just a reference to it on another server where it is to be fetched.
2. While the majority of Terra Dotta Software sites have program brochure pages on their public (http) pages, these brochures are frequently browsed by users after they have logged into the site, and those users will be behind a Secure Socket Layer certificate (https). The URL should be adjusted to either use a secure protocol or not define the protocol being used. What this means is that the URL should not look like:

`http://studyabroad.terradotta.com/js/myscript.js`

You will want to adjust that URL to make it look like one of the following:

`https://studyabroad.terradotta.com/js/myscript.js`

OR

`//studyabroad.terradotta.com/js/myscript.js`

## Script conflicts

A final important consideration when using JavaScript within your Directory content is that Terra Dotta Applications load many scripts on their pages as a part of the core functionality. In addition, it is also very common for subscribers to have custom layouts that load additional scripts into their pages.

For example, the popular JavaScript library jQuery is loaded by the core application code on every page. Loading jQuery into the page a second time (especially when it is a different version) can result in errors on the page.

It is strongly recommended that third-party JavaScript libraries not be used within brochure content as they are likely to cause conflicts and performance issues on your subscriber pages. When using JavaScript, conflicts can most effectively be avoided by keeping the scripts lightweight and ensuring that all variables used are properly scoped.

# Common brochure issues

While the WYSIWYG Editor in Terra Dotta Applications is very robust and does its best to provide an editing environment that produces reliable HTML for subscribers, there are a number of common issues that can occur during the editing process which might not be readily apparent when initially publishing your content but result in errors and mis-rendering on the subscriber sites.

## Microsoft Office formatting tags

One of the most common issues is when content is copied and pasted directly from Microsoft Office/Word into the WYSIWYG Editor. Microsoft Office uses hidden formatting tags within its content and when copy/pasted, these tags are included. This can frequently result in severe issues in subsequent editing and rendering of the content since the tags are not HTML compliant.

It is strongly recommended that all text that is pasted into the WYSIWYG Editor is done from a plain text document and then formatted in the WYSIWYG Editor so that it is being formatted with more compatible HTML tags rather than translated Microsoft Office markup.

## Tracking code

A common issue that has been found in Directory brochures is that the HTML is copied from a sponsor's standing website, and this HTML content contains script elements involved with setting cookies and/or sending information to analytics sites.

In most cases, this tracking code will be non-functional in a subscriber's site, and it can also cause issues in rendering the pages. In addition, it is also possible that the subscriber's site is implementing tracking code that gets disrupted by the imported brochure content.

Please note that Terra Dotta does not allow the intentional use of tracking code within HTML content on the Directory. While subscribers are aware that they are importing third-party content, they do not expect this to result in sharing site traffic data with third-parties. Terra Dotta may remove such extensive tracking mechanisms from brochure content should it be reported or found.

## Form conflicts

Much like JavaScript conflicts, including `<form>` and `<input>` elements in brochure content is strongly discouraged due to the likelihood of conflicts arising with other page elements outside of your brochure content.

The Terra Dotta Applications brochure page and custom client layouts frequently have forms and input elements that are integral to the page's functionality.

## Security alerts due to insecure protocol

As has been mentioned in prior sections, all references to external URLs in which content is being imported into the brochure content should not be doing so over an 'http' (non-secure) transfer protocol. While program brochures usually are displayed to site visitors over an http connection, it is very common for your



subscriber's site visitors to login first and then begin browsing the program catalog. When this is done, the user is browsing over an 'https' transfer protocol and browsers frequently do not automatically permit the loading of external content from another domain over an 'http' connection.