Land acknowledgement

We’re presenting to you on unceded Indigenous lands, recognizing the Kanien’kehá:ka Nation as custodians of the Tiohtià:ke/Montreal region, a historical gathering place for many First Nations.

As this presentation will be made available online, this acknowledgment extends to locations of online viewers and we encourage you to visit Whose.Land to learn about the Indigenous Peoples in your area.

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Managing the human side of a large-scale platform upgrade

Matt Corks, Portfolio Manager, Web Services
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Confoo 2026, Montreal, Canada

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Who here gets paid to....

...write code?

...manage projects?

...specialize in stakeholder engagement, needs assessments, or communications?

...manage people who do one of these?

...change things?

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You may have already noticed, but things change all the time.

“Loss is nothing else but change, and change is Nature's delight.”

– Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor & philosopher

“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river, and he's not the same man.”

– Heraclitus of Ephesus, Greek philosopher

“All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you. The only lasting truth is change.”

– Octavia Butler, science fiction novelist

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What will you do about it?

Elephant at Serengeti: Kai Pütter, Unsplash

How can we help others manage change?

- Change will happen to you, and either leave you stronger or leave you behind
- It's a lot easier to adapt when you know what's coming
- You will inflict change on others, including whoever pays you
- You need to make this as easy and predictable as possible, and clearly communicate when you can't

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McGill's Drupal 7 environment

- 1000 web sites with different content and editors
- 1300 trained users updating content
- 6-8,000 edits per week
- Free security support stopped January 2025

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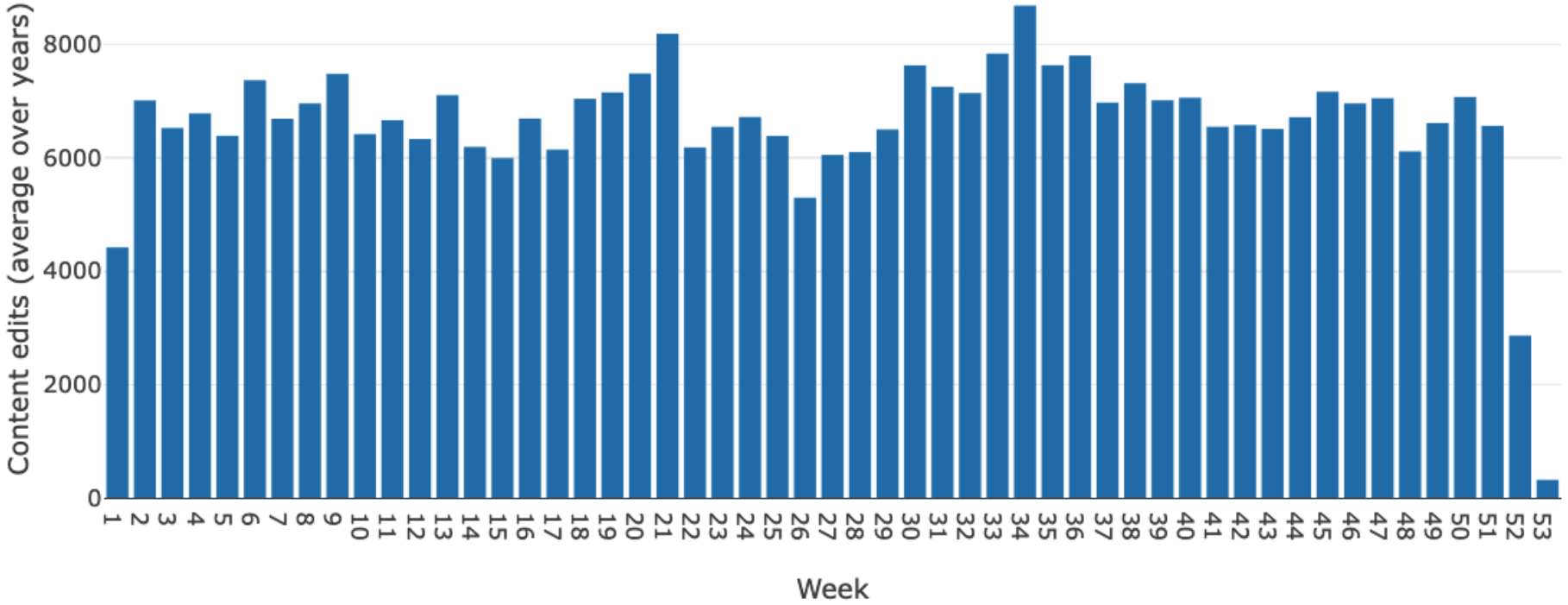
Human complexity

Weekly content edits on McGill's centrally templated websites.



Migration decisions

- How can we reduce complexity and customization?
- Move forward if there is no timely response or review?
- Proceed incrementally by recreating features in Drupal 10: do we upgrade a feature on all sites (strangler fig method) or upgrade all sites which use only that feature (one site at a time)?
- Should we fix problems with the old platform or build the new one?

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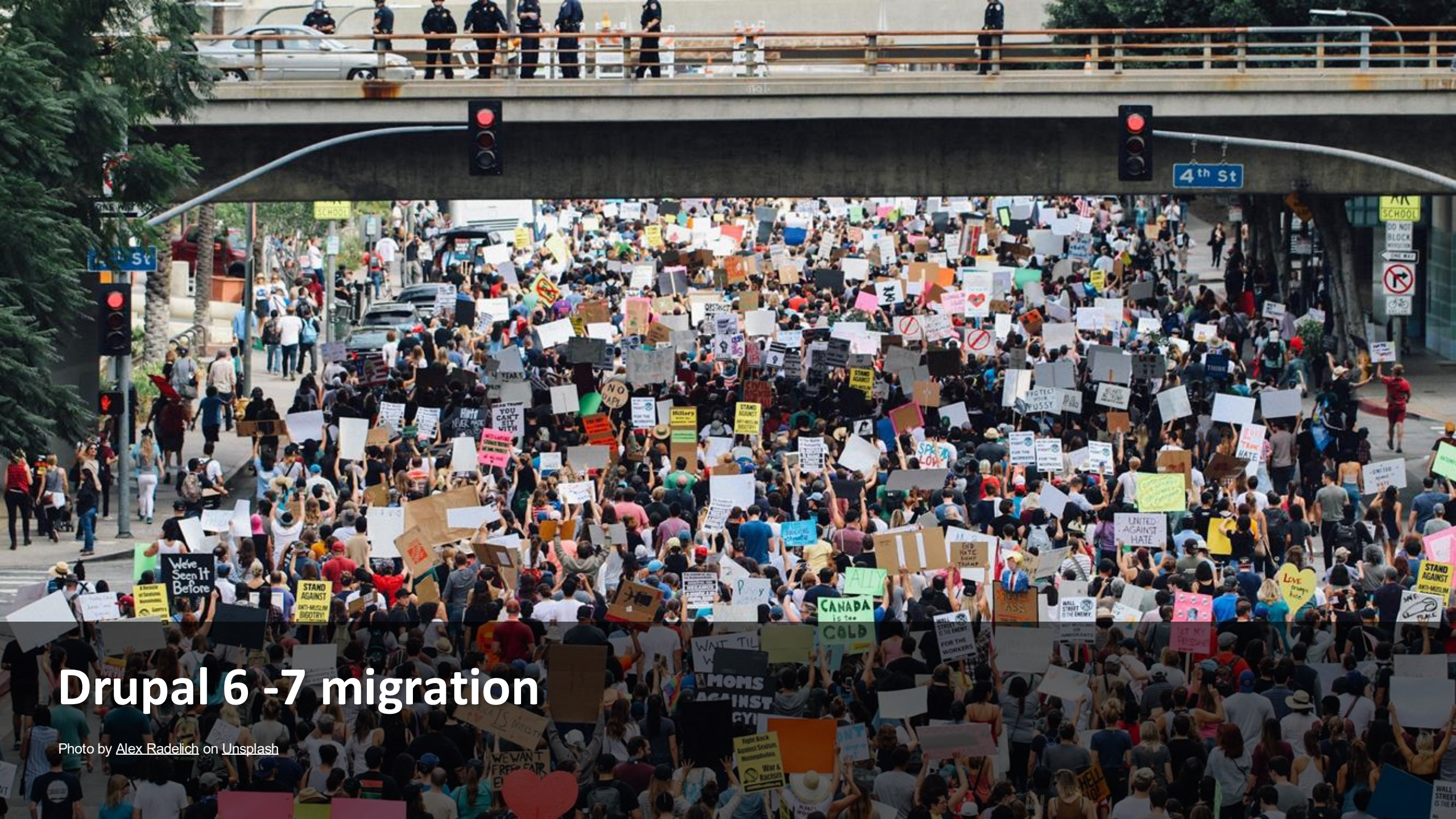


Drupal 6 -7 migration

Photo by Alex Radelich on Unsplash

Building a people-focused strategy

Building on the experience of others

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

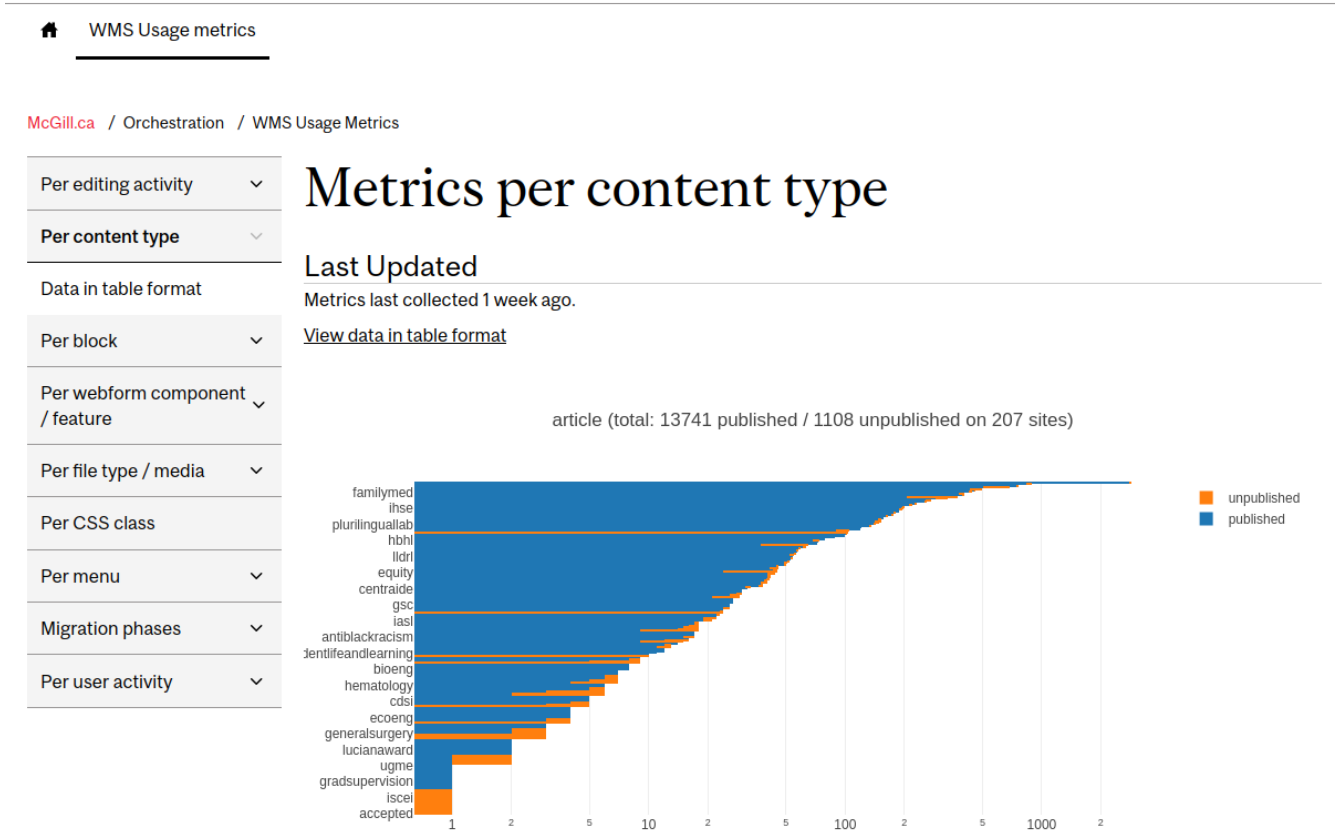
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

McGill

Data-driven decisions

How often do people use each feature?



Make it public

- Show stakeholders your data and explain how you will use this to solve the biggest problems first
- Let them track your status to build trust

Current phase: Phase 5

We are currently migrating Phase 5 sites. The following features are currently available in the new WMS:

- articles, basic pages & blocks
- media gallery pages

All other features will be implemented in later phases.

We have 143 of 726 sites in the new WMS (19%)

+ **Early adopters and test sites**

+ **Sites migrated in Phase 4 (Start date: 2025-02-10)**

+ **Sites migrated in Phase 5 (Start date: 2025-05-13)**

+ **New WMS sites**

Current and Future Phases

This page displays sites grouped by **Phase**. Site migration readiness is determined by the set of features a site uses. Features are implemented in different phases. Only sites using features which are ready in the new WMS can be migrated within a given phase.

This page was last updated on 2026-02-15.

+ **Sites in current Phase 5 started on 2025-05-13 (includes media gallery pages)**

+ **Sites ready to be migrated in Phase 6 (includes imported channels news & events)**

+ **Sites ready to be migrated in Phase 7 (includes locally created channels news & events)**

+ **Sites ready to be migrated in Phase 8 (includes restricted pages)**

Guiding our community through change

Photo by Maria Thalassinou on Unsplash

Empowering champions and influencers

Engaging our community

- Mid-year community conference
- Year-end community presentation
- Monthly training courses
- Monthly meetings:
  - Web Advisory Committee
  - Student Usability Panel
  - Faculty and department champions
- Special events, watch parties
- Annual digital standards evaluation meetings

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Communication as a change lever

Communications as a change lever

- Monthly newsletter
- Articles
- Community message boards

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Opportunities for shared learning

Clear, proactive communication

- Migration phases reporting page
- Automated notifications when site manager actions are required
- Updated training courses
- Knowledge base updates and internal changelog
- Example website showing each feature (also used for tests)

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Questions

Connect with us

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Share feedback about our talk.

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Related links

- McGill Web Services
- Resources (including our New WMS toolkit)
- Training and events

Share feedback about our talk.

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