Vocabulary of the Web
(an incomplete, possibly biased list written by Teri Hoyer)

Accessibility – Section 508: In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require Federal agencies, which includes universities, to make their web sites accessible to people with disabilities. The W3C standards include accessibility guidelines for constructing web sites to meet these requirements.

CSS – Cascading Style Sheets: CSS defines how HTML or XML elements are displayed. Style sheets (collections of styles in a document separate from the HTML or XML) can be attached to every page of a site, thereby consistently defining the appearance of an entire site. By changing the style sheet, the whole site can be easily modified.

DTD -- DOCTYPE Declaration: Defined by web standards, the DTD tells the display (i.e. browser) which of the approved web standards to use when interpreting the code. There are basically three standards typically used for web pages – HTML, XHTML, and XML. HTML and XHTML are very closely related and each has three different specifications: Strict, Transitional, and Frameset. Transitional is most flexible in terms of what the browser will attempt to interpret in the code – and is therefore used more frequently. But each specification dictates slightly different coding methods.

DOM – Document Object Model: The DOM is a W3C Web standard that provides a way of representing everything on a web page (the graphics, the tables, the forms, etc) as a generic tree structure. The DOM allows developers to access the document (i.e. web page) via a common set of objects, properties, methods and events, and to alter the contents dynamically using a scripting language, such as JavaScript.

FTP and SFTP – File Transfer Protocol and Secure File Transfer Protocol: Standards for how files are uploaded and downloaded from workstations to the web server via the internet. SFTP encrypts the username and password during the connection between computers.

HTML – Hyper-Text Markup Language: The basic code for creating web sites. The standard is currently version 4.01. A variety of web editing software presents the user with a friendly interface that eliminates the need to even see the code.

HTTP and HTTPS – Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol and Secure Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol: Network standards for how messages are formatted and transmitted for the web. Also includes instructions for how web servers and browsers should respond to specific commands. For example, when you enter a URL in your browser, it sends an HTTP command to the web server requesting transfer of the web page. HTTPS requires that the transfer be handled by Secure Socket Layer (or SSL) – which basically means that the content is encrypted for security.

Protocols: Networking standards that enable hardware and software systems to communicate. In web work, our primary protocols are HTTP (Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol) and FTP (File Transfer Protocol). Secure versions of both of these protocols transmit encrypted communications – HTTPS and SFTP.
**Screen Reader:** Software that speaks the computer screen to those without sight. Screen readers interpret HTML tags and add structural information to the content as it is spoken. One primary example of this is “alternate text” to describe images placed on Web pages.

**SSL** – Secure Sockets Layer: Standard for transmitting private (i.e. secured) information via the Internet. SSL uses encryption (i.e. a secret code known only to the sender and the receiver) to keep information from intercept by anyone other than the intended recipient. Servers using SSL must attach a digital certificate from a Certificate Authority with the encrypted data to authenticate the sender of the message.

**W3C** – World Wide Web Consortium: The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) develops web standards and guidelines. It is a committee of more than 400 international organizations who collaborate to “lead the World Wide Web to its full potential by developing protocols and guidelines that ensure long-term growth for the Web”.

**Web Standards:** Voluntary guidelines and protocols written by the W3C to enable computer manufacturers and web developers to build sites and equipment that speak the same dialect of the same language.

**XML** – Extensible Markup Language: Extensible Markup Language (XML) is a markup language like HTML, but instead of having a set of fixed, pre-defined elements, it allows you to define your own - or use a set made by someone else.

**XHTML** – Extensible Hyper-Text Markup Language: XHTML is basically HTML with some XML features. XHTML will display in your browser identically to HTML. Using stricter rules than ordinary HTML, XHTML makes automatic processing by the display device (browser, mobile phone, screen reader, etc.) much easier and cheaper than ordinary HTML.