



WEB 101 FOR DESIGNERS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW **BEFORE** YOUR FIRST SITE

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EXPECTATIONS

○ This talk is....

- a **superficial** overview of things you should know
- a starting point: let's get some **Q&A** going
- sometimes filled with tech **jargon** (you'll have to be OK with that to succeed on the web)
- about how easy or hard it can be to go from a static **Photoshop** design to a functioning **XHTML** website

○ This talk is **not**....

- an exhaustive, comprehensive tutorial
- a **magic potion** that will apply your skills to the web
- going to turn you into a web designer over night
- about SEO, SEM, Social Media, Web Analytics, Ecommerce, Communications, etc...



SOME JARGON TO START...

- XHTML, HTML – eXtensible HyperText Markup Language
 - The code that makes up the **content** of the website
- CSS – Cascading Style Sheets
 - More code that controls the **layout** of the website
- OS – Operating System
 - Makes computer hardware run, could be “Windows XP” or “Mac OS 10.5 (Leopard)” or “Vista” or “Tiger”
- JS – Javascript
 - A programming language interpreted (used) by a web browser to manipulate content and layout
- CMS – Content Management System
 - An easy way to create, edit, delete and maintain a website. Provides additional functionality in some cases, not always.
 - Examples: Drupal, Joomla, Mambo, Plone, DotNetNuke (yech!), WordPress (to an extent), Wikis... there are **MANY**
- AJAX – Asynchronous Javascript And Xml
 - A way of retrieving data from the server without reloading the whole HTML page
- UX/IA Specialist – User eXperience/Information Architect
 - Wholly responsible for arranging the information on the site



IDEAL PROCESS, WORKFLOW

- Usually between Client, Designer & Developer
 - Larger projects sometimes have an **UX/IA** specialist
- Analysis of current site
 - Sitemap, wireframes, recommendations
- **Informed** Site Design by Artist/Designer
 - Collaboration with Client (& Developer)
 - Photoshop PSD
- Conversion of PSD Design to XHTML/CSS
 - Specific pages of the site, no real functionality (menus?)
- Conversion of static XHTML to a template/theme
 - Integration with a **CMS**



KNOWING THE LIMITATIONS

- Page layout
 - Positioning, page breaks, line breaks, color matching
 - Anti-aliasing
 - Printing, different stylesheets
- Browser and OS differences
 - Embrace it: your design **WILL** look different
- Fonts
 - 5 generic “Font Families” as defined by CSS
 - Sans-serif more readable



PAGE LAYOUT

- Before CSS, layouts of sites were achieved using tables
 - No separation of content and layout (design)
- With CSS, there is more flexibility with positioning, backgrounds, overlaps, z-axis
 - True separation: more than one CSS depending on the device
- Content on a webpage has no natural concept of page breaks
 - **Get over it:** content will break where it breaks. You can't control it in the same way you do a printed piece.
- Line breaks
 - Might occur in one place in one browser, and another in another browser. You really have no control over line breaks either: **get over it.**
 - On a small site, you might be able to avoid one word widows – this is not feasible nor guaranteed for a large site.
- Color matching
 - There is sometimes no way to have a particular color display the same on everyone's screen – we all have different environments. Sorry.
 - Colors are specified as RGB values in Hex format. #000000 is black, #FFFFFF is white and all other colors are in between. That's around 16 million colors, or 24bit color depth.



PAGE LAYOUT (CONT'D)

- Printing your webpage
 - Separate style sheet that formats just the data
 - No design in the printed version
- Browser Anti-aliasing
 - Important to small fonts
 - Different limits in browsers, some higher than others
- Photos
 - JPEG format
- Resolution is 72DPI
 - Anything more than this is just a waste
 - Use “Save for Web and devices...” in Photoshop
- Fixed width or Fluid Design
 - Most sites are fixed width at 960px – 960 grid system
 - Modern monitors all support at least 1024x768
 - 960 is exactly divisible by many numbers making it a highly flexible base number to work with
 - 12 or 16 columns separately or in tandem



BROWSERS AND OS DIFFERENCES

- No universal standard on how a computer or device should be made. Probably a good thing.
 - Result? Windows XP, Vista; Mac OS Tiger, Leopard; Mac OS 9; Linux (Ubuntu, Fedora, Suse); Palm OS; iPhone OS; Blackberry; and so on...
- No universal standard on how a browser should be developed
 - Internet Explorer on Windows, Firefox on Windows & Mac, Safari on Windows & Mac, Camino on Mac, Opera, Chrome, Netscape, AOL, etc.
 - Many, many different versions
 - Some layout engines power different browsers. For example, WebKit powers Safari and Google Chrome.
- Big picture? Your design **Will Look Different** to everyone. Embrace this.
- Best solution? Testing in browsers that the majority (95%) of users will see your site in.
 - Might add cost to the development of the site
 - True mark of a quality website is not only beauty, design, functionality, wittiness, service but also how it withstands and how much integrity it retains in many different environments.



BROWSERS AND OS DIFFERENCES

- Accommodating all browsers on all operating systems on all devices is **not feasible**.
- Web analytics is crucial
 - Site that is redesigned will have data
 - New sites should at least accommodate the A grade browsers
 - Firefox 2 & 3 on XP, Vista and 10.5
 - IE 7 & 8 on XP and Vista
 - IE 6 on Windows 2000 & XP
 - Opera 9.6 on XP and 10.5
 - Safari 3.2 on 10.4 and 10.5
- Use a testing tool to help with layout issues
 - Litmus – <http://www.litmusapp.com/>
 - Browsershots – <http://www.browsershots.org/>



FONTS

- 5 generic families (IMHO 2 are UGGG-LEE)
 - **Sans-serif**
 - Windows: MS Sans Serif (99.6%), Verdana (98%), Arial (98%); **Helvetica (7%)**
 - Mac: Arial (97%), Helvetica (96%), Verdana (94%)
 - **Serif**
 - Windows: Palatino Linotype (98%), Sylfaen (95%), Georgia (95%)
 - Mac: Georgia (93%), Times New Roman (91%), Times (89%)
 - **Monospace**
 - Windows: Courier New (97%), Lucida Console (97%)
 - Mac: Monaco (97%), Courier (97%), Courier New (92%)
 - **Cursive**
 - Comic Sans: 97% Win, 92% Mac
 - **Fantasy**
 - Impact: 97% Win, 88% Mac



FONTS

- Images of Headings can be done if absolutely necessary
 - Bad for SEO (Search Engine Optimization)
 - Bad for site with numerous pages & a CMS
 - Discourage use
- Sans-serif most readable on screen
 - Serif for headings
 - Sans-serif for paragraph copy
- CSS allows you to select a group of fonts
 - Can be any combination of fonts
 - Usually they are similar looking fonts, last option is the family name
 - Great way to try to achieve consistency across different systems



FONT RENDERING COMPARISON

Windows fonts / Mac fonts / Font family	Normal style
Firefox on Vista	
Arial, Arial, Helvetica, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Arial Black, Arial Black, Gadget, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Comic Sans MS, <i>Comic Sans MS</i> ⁵ , <i>cursive</i>	
Courier New, Courier New, Courier ⁶ , <i>monospace</i>	
Georgia ¹ , Georgia, <i>serif</i>	
Impact, Impact ⁵ , Charcoal ⁶ , <i>sans-serif</i>	
Lucida Console, Monaco ⁵ , <i>monospace</i>	
Lucida Sans Unicode, Lucida Grande, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Palatino Linotype, Book Antiqua ³ , Palatino ⁶ , <i>serif</i>	
Tahoma, Geneva, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Times New Roman, Times, <i>serif</i>	
Trebuchet MS ¹ , Helvetica, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Verdana, Verdana, Geneva, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Symbol, Symbol (Symbol ² , Symbol ²)	
Webdings, Webdings (Webdings ² , Webdings ²)	
Wingdings, Zapf Dingbats (Wingdings ² , Zapf Dingbats ²)	
MS Sans Serif ⁴ , Geneva, <i>sans-serif</i>	
MS Serif ⁴ , New York ⁶ , <i>serif</i>	

Windows fonts / Mac fonts / Font family	Normal style
Firefox on Leopard	
Arial, Arial, Helvetica, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Arial Black, Arial Black, Gadget, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Comic Sans MS, <i>Comic Sans MS</i> ⁵ , <i>cursive</i>	
Courier New, Courier New, Courier ⁶ , <i>monospace</i>	
Georgia ¹ , Georgia, <i>serif</i>	
Impact, Impact ⁵ , Charcoal ⁶ , <i>sans-serif</i>	
Lucida Console, Monaco ⁵ , <i>monospace</i>	
Lucida Sans Unicode, Lucida Grande, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Palatino Linotype, Book Antiqua ³ , Palatino ⁶ , <i>serif</i>	
Tahoma, Geneva, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Times New Roman, Times, <i>serif</i>	
Trebuchet MS ¹ , Helvetica, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Verdana, Verdana, Geneva, <i>sans-serif</i>	
Symbol, Symbol (Symbol ² , Symbol ²)	
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Wingdings, Zapf Dingbats (Wingdings ² , Zapf Dingbats ²)	
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MS Serif ⁴ , New York ⁶ , <i>serif</i>	

<http://www.ampsoft.net/webdesign-l/WindowsMacFonts.html>



FONTS, LAYOUTS & BROWSER RESULTS

- Given a specific design in Photoshop, what does the resultant XHTML webpage look like in different browsers:
 - Firefox 3 on Mac and Windows
 - Safari 3 on Mac and Windows
 - Camino 1.6 on Mac
 - Internet Explorer 6 & 7 on Windows
 - Google Chrome on Windows
 - Opera 9.6 on Windows



CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- Many different ways to generate XHTML
 - All involve some combination of programming language, web server and database
 - Microsoft IIS, ASP.NET and MS SQL
 - Ruby on Rails, Lighttpd, MySQL
 - ColdFusion with PostgreSQL
 - PHP, Apache and MySQL
 - Some are Enterprise and cost a lot of money
 - IBM, Oracle, Microsoft
 - Some are Open Source and cost little to no money
 - Drupal, Joomla, WordPress
- A good CMS... (not an exhaustive list)
 - Is easy to use for a client
 - Is easy to administer by the client and developer
 - Is easy to customize by the developer
 - Places no unnecessary limitations on the designer (like content areas, functionality, etc)



CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

○ My favorite is Drupal

- Uses Apache Webserver, MySQL Database, PHP scripting language
- Easy to deploy, fast to setup
- Sometimes a steep learning curve, but there are good resources online
- Many different modules available for extending it
- Well supported by community
- Excellent Ecommerce Cart solution, Ubercart
- Excellent CRM solution, CiviCRM
- Integration with merchants is seamless (Paypal, Authorize.net, etc)



MY HUMBLE ADVICE

- Beware of a developer who says

“ It can’t be done. ”

- Let your imagination run wild, but be flexible in your design intent to accommodate for limitations
- Talk to the developer for feedback on how realistic your intentions are
- Beware of little or no testing of many browsers on many platforms – red flag:

“ Looks just fine on my computer. ”

- Don’t believe a developer who says

“ It can’t be done. ”



CONCLUSIONS

- Learn some jargon
- Focus on your own talent: **design**
- Know the medium
 - Page layout
 - Fonts
 - Browser & OS differences
- Many different ways to implement your vision
- Be flexible
- Communicate, test, communicate, repeat.
- Beware of “**It can’t be done**” & “**Looks good to me**”



RESOURCES

- Fonts
 - CSS Font Sampler and Survey
 - <http://www.codestyle.org/css/font-family/index.shtml>
 - Common fonts to Windows & Mac that are browser friendly
 - <http://www.ampsoft.net/webdesign-1/WindowsMacFonts.html>
 - Fonts for web design: a primer
 - <http://dev.opera.com/articles/view/fonts-for-web-design-a-primer/>
- Layouts, Design
 - Graded Browser Support (Yahoo!)
 - <http://developer.yahoo.com/yui/articles/gbs/>
 - A list apart: for people who make websites
 - <http://www.alistapart.com/>
 - 960 Grid System
 - <http://www.960.gs/>
 - Fluid 960 Grid System
 - <http://www.designinfluences.com/fluid960gs/>
- Content Management System
 - Drupal
 - <http://www.drupal.org/>
 - Ubercart
 - <http://www.ubercart.org/>
 - CivCRM
 - <http://www.civcrm.org/>
- Books
 - “Don’t make me think” by Steve Krug
 - <http://www.amazon.com/Dont-Make-Me-Think-Usability/dp/0321344758/>
 - “Web ReDesign 2.0: Workflow that Works” by Kelly Goto and Emily Cotler
 - <http://www.amazon.com/Web-ReDesign-2-0-Workflow-VOICES/dp/0735714339/>

