## Don't design websites. Design web *systems*!

### Todd Nienkerk and Adam Snetman



DrupalCon London | August 24, 2011

**Personal introductions** 



### **Todd Nienkerk**

Co-founder, designer, and developer Four Kitchens

todd@fourkitchens.com

atoddross



Photo: Kristin Hillery



### Adam Snetman

Design Director Thinkso Creative

snetman@thinkso.com



Photo: Erica Freudenstein



## Websites vs. web systems

## In the old cays

A LOUGH AND A

Photo: eddiecoyote on <u>Flickr</u> (Creative Commons BY)

- Websites were measured in "pages"
- Each page was maintained by hand as a single HTML file



## Today's websites...

- Are dynamic and always-changing
- Allow site maintainers to create and edit content, set user permissions, and connect with other services
- Generate their own output

## Today's websites are actually web systems

Photo: Snak Shak on Flickr (Creative Commons BY-NC)

Designers are powerful!

## "With great power there must also come... great responsibility!"

#### **STAN LEE**

Amazing Fantasy #15, August 1962 (the first Spiderman story)

Photo: Edward Liu via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA)

# Designers determine a site's functionality

We communicate functionality to developers through sitemaps, wireframes, and design comps

# Even a tiny "log in" link tells a long and complicated story

- In order to "log in," users must also be able to:
  - Create accounts
  - Reset their password
  - Update account information

- And what about...
  - Permissions?
  - Public profiles?
  - Email notifications?

### We are a site's primary architects

Designing a web system

## Stop! Close Photoshop!

# You wouldn't paint a house before building it...

So how can you design a website before architecting it?

### STEP 1 Define the site

- What's the purpose of the site?
- Who is the **audience**?
- What is the content, and how will it be organized?
- How will people experience the site?

### What's the purpose of the site?

# Gather goals and requirements

### **Business goals**





Who is the audience?

## Create personas



- Make a list of target audiences
- Create one persona for each target audience
- Give each persona (at least) a name, age, face, reason for visiting, and "wish list" of tasks



### Adam, 34

### **Reason for visiting:**

Adam's wardrobe is roughly 80% plaid shirts. He buys a new plaid shirt most months, and a friend recommended *sweet-plaid-shirts.com* to him as a good place to shop.

### Website wish list:

- Sort available shirts by various criteria. (most popular, newly added, etc.)
- See which shirts friends have purchased.
- Sign up for a an account to save preferences and make repeat visits quick and easy.

### What is the content, and how will it be organized?

# Define content types and create a sitemap



- In Drupal, different kinds of content are called content types
- Content types are usually defined by the different information they contain

### **Blog post**

Title

Author

### Date published

Body

#### Lead image

Product
Name
Description
Price
<b>Options (sizes, colors)</b>
Images

## Sitemaps

- List all sections/pages of the site
- Illustrate how pages are organized within the sections



How will people experience the site?

## **Create wireframes**

## Wireframes

- Illustrate navigation and layout
- Demonstrate functionality and how user interfaces work
- Identify static vs. dynamically generated elements
- Identify unique layouts








### Home page layout



## **Balsamiq Mockups**

### balsamiq.com

- Cross-platform, lots of plugins
- Free license for opensource "do-gooders"
- Drupal components: bit.ly/drupal-balsamiq



And time & budget permitting...

## Do some usability testing

## **Usability testing**

### Napkin Paper sketch prototypes

### Keynote prototypes

## HTML/CSS prototypes

### STEP 2 Choose your platform

## Drupal isn't always the best solution

From The Simpsons Movie

## STEP 3 Translate everything into "Drupalspeak"

# Most Drupal sites are comprised of just a few, basic components

### Content

- Not always a node
- View, panel, user profile, form, admin interface...
- Blocks
- Menus
- Primary and secondary links

### step 4 Visual design



Now you can make informed decisions about how to create a compelling and effective design

- How will type, color, and imagery work together to translate the client's brand identity to the web?
- Generate discussion with the client using mood boards and style tiles

## Mood boards and style tiles

- Faster and cheaper than iterating on full comps
- Involves the client in the design process
- Increases client confidence and buy-in
- Fun to make

### **Mood boards**



From Why Mood Boards Matter by Mindy Wagner



From <u>Why Mood Boards Matter</u> by Mindy Wagner

## **Style tiles**



이 방법하는 승규는 이것 – 것입었었는 – – 가는 왜 같아. 것은 가슴감감하는 – 것 않 두 갔어요.

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#### This is an Example of a Sub Head Fort Georga take

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#### This is an example.

Button Ex

#### Possible Colors



#### Possible Patterns & Textures



**Client Logo Here** 

#### Possible Colors

#### THIS IS A STATIC HEADER

Fort Baskerville

#### This is an Example of a Sub Head Fort Georgia i Italic

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Fort Mat

This is an example of a Text link+

BUTTON EXAMPLE SUBMIT #



#### Notes

Erest Articl.

This is a warm, rich sophisticated style. The overall look would be very clean but accented with rich textures that imply a sense of depth.

Style Tile

version:3

#### Contact searen@phase2tectwokgy.com pha

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#### phase://technology

Possible Patterns & Textures

Style Tile version:2



#### Notes

This is a brighter, boulder style that utilizes large sams self typography to draw emphasize and could oceasity time in munice locking images to all

#### From <u>Style Tiles in Practice</u> by <u>Samantha Warren</u>

- Avoiding a Frankenstein Website Design: Collaborating with Clients
  - bit.ly/collab-with-clients
- Why Mood Boards Matter
  - bit.ly/mood-boards
- Style Tiles in Practice
  - bit.ly/style-tiles

CASE STUDY Expeditionary Learning elschools.org

## Who is Expeditionary Learning?

- Expeditionary Learning is an education reform organization that partners with schools, districts and charter boards to bring their project-based learning approach to new and existing schools
- EL partnered with Thinkso Creative and Four Kitchens to relaunch their brand and website





### Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound

SEARCH

SITE MAP

CONTACT US

TUS MEMBER LOGIN

N EMPLOYMENT

т

FAQ

#### What is ELS?

**Our Approach** 

**Professional Development** 

HOI

We Can Help You

See Our Results

Support Expeditionary Learning

**Our Publications** 

Aprendizaje Expedicionario en Español

#### Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound (ELS) is a national,

non-profit organization that opens new elementary, middle and college-oriented secondary schools, and partners with existing schools, to improve student achievement; build student character; enhance teacher practices; and instill a positive school culture. The ELS approach promotes rigorous and engaging curriculum; active, inquiry-based pedagogy; and a school culture that demands and teaches compassion and good citizenship.

At the heart of ELS are learning expeditions, interdisciplinary units aligned with state and district standards. The ELS approach is experiential and project-based, involving students in original research -- with experts -- to create high-quality products for



audiences beyond the classroom. The ELS approach to teaching has been proven effective by third-party research conducted by the Rand Corporation, the Academy for Educational Development, the American Institutes for Research and the National Staff Development Council.

#### News

The ELS Board of Directors has appointed Scott Hartl as the new President and CEO of Expeditionary Learning Schools. Read the full press release here.

Students at Bonner Springs Elementary are changing the environment and trying to

#### Events

Register for the King Middle School site seminar, taking place May 14-15, 2009. The King Middle School, in Portland Maine, has sustained a powerful Expeditionary



# EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

### EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

A chartered entity of Outward Bound

E

Lili Brown Chief Advancement Officer

Expeditionary Learning 247 West 35th Street Eighth Floor New York, NY 10001 212-239-4455 212-239-8287 fax

lbrown@elschools.org









### thinking in a new direction What does it mean to you?

Our Promise to school proper at challen's to success a high challen's and regard them as children the protein school and children.

EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Our Values

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### **Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound**

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## Theory vs. practice

- 1. Define the site
- **2.** Choose your platform
- **3.** Translate to Drupalspeak
- 4. Visual design

- 1. Define the site
- 2. Visual design
- 3. Choose your platform
- **4.** Translate to Drupalspeak
- **5.** Revise site definition and visual design

### STEP 1 Define the EL site

# What's the purpose of the site?

- Communicate EL's mission, vision, and methods
- Translate the new brand identity for the web
- Create secure online tools for EL's network of teachers that would help them collaborate on projects, tap into existing resources and plan their school year
# Who is the audience?

#### Kayla, 11



#### Personal & professional details:

Kayla is a strong fifth-grade student in an upper-middle class suburban elementary school; next year she will be in a large middle school. She is white: has one younger

brother; has young, professional parent all the time when she can be, networkin She is a member of an online student v group sent the entire group a link to the featured. Kayla visited the site and imm been investigating and discussing it.

#### Persona: "No excuses" advocate/educator/administrator "tight" schools

2 June 2011

#### Motivation for visiting & website v

- She wants to be able to look at a wire for her classwork
- She would like to build an exhibition, project



#### Will, 32

#### Personal & professional details:

Will is white, an ivy league grad, has TFA experience, and is currently working in a high-need, urban school.

#### Motivation for visiting:

- Will is looking for enrichment beyond test scores but is skeptical that student work can be either a practical measure of student achievement/skills or a way to make students college-ready. He is ready to be delighted by beauty and skills on display in the work in the site's collection, but wants to see hard data and evidence alongside the work on the site. Will also ultimately wants to be reassured that these projects are feasible/practical and he will get results in his own classroom.

#### Website wish list:

- · View exhibitions
- Search/browse individual projects
- View accompanying/supporting data for individual projects
- Follow links between projects and the core standards they connect to
- Share links to individual projects or exhibitions with colleagues

#### Technical ability:

Will is a power-user who is media-literate and tech savvy.

#### Angel, 16

Persona: High School Student

### Personal & professional details:

Angel is a student in a small, project-based urban high school. He is a sister in the same high school and a brother in the attached midd planning on being the first in his family to attend college. He spend online, gaming or on social network sites. He would like to somedar or do graphic design for software.

#### Motivation for visiting & website wish list:

- · He would like the site to feature cool graphics and animation to
- He would like have many choices and creative chances on the s customize things
- He wants to be able to communicate with his friends while he's v and to send things from the site to his other networking sites
- He would like to look at intriguing projects by students of all a particularly those with strong visual artwork or new ideas
- He would like to build exhibitions that he can show his friends and
- He would like to use his personal exhibitions in his digital portfol Presentations of Learning.
- He wants the site to be able to feature exhibitions built

# What is the content, and how will it be organized?

# Content types

# Sitemap

### Communicate EL's mission

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# Create secure online tools



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	•	ng district averages on state and mand s' test scores exceed state and district		Calli Olin	Academy

many of our schools, students' test scores exceed state and district averages by substantial margins, with particular success among black and Latino students.

#### **Evidence of engagement**

Our model fosters more than just academic achievement. Our students are engaged in their own learning and in the community around them while our school and district leaders are deeply engaged in the conversations about how to improve education.

#### Learn more>

#### **Quality of student work**

We've selected ten projects that demonstrate how our students are producing high-quality work that matters in the real world.

#### Codman Academy Charter Public School Dorchester, MA

Tucson, AZ

Decatur Discovery Academy Indianapolis, IN

Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts Thornton, CO

Northpoint Expeditionary Learning Academy Prescott, AZ

Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning Denver, CO

Silverton School of Expeditionary Learning

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# **Usability testing**

# NapkinPaperKeynosketchprototypesprotot

### Keynote prototypes

# HTML/CSS prototypes

# STEP 2 Design the EL site





#### FROM THE STUDENT PROJECT GALLERY



ANSER Bird Identification Notecards ANSER Charter School | Boise, ID | Kindergarten

Note cards with bird drawings on the front and information on the back. Drawings were done entirely by kindergartners, with critique from peers and many drafts. Fifth grade research buddies helped with the written text. Cards were sold across

#### OUR RESULTS



EL Schools outperform district averages

Read more about our results



#### PRESS CENTER

Manzanita School of Expeditionary Learning, Equity, and Diversity named a National Title I Distinguished School 12.14.10 | 09

Five Edutopia editors include EL in their top picks for 2010 12.14.10 | 09

Three EL Schools are named Colorado Centers of Excellence 12.14.10 | 000

Read More











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Read More

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### Homepage

### Landing page

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# STEP 3 Choose Drupal for EL

# STEP 4 Translate the EL site into Drupalspeak





Sitemap by Thinkso Creative





# thinkso + E Section Section Inding pages

Sitemap by Thinkso Creative





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#### What we believe

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3. Help those who help themselves

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Learn more about what we do.

What we believe

#### 2. You can't do it without the teacher

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#### WHAT WE DO

WHAT WE BELIEVE

HOW WE WORK WITH TEACHERS

HOW WE WORK WITH SCHOOLS

HOW WE WORK WITH DISTRICTS

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Learn more about what we believe.

#### Find out how we work with:







#### **Our Five Best Practices**

#### 1. Make it real

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#### 3. Help those who help themselves

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#### 4. An apple a day is a delicious snack

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#### 5. Keep your eye on the prize

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#### Learn more about our best practices

Teachers

Schools

Districts

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#### WHAT WE DO

WHAT WE BELIEVE

HOW WE WORK WITH TEACHERS

HOW WE WORK WITH SCHOOLS

HOW WE WORK WITH DISTRICTS

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#### Find out how we work with:





#### Schools

Districts

#### **Our Five Best Practices**

#### 1. Make it real

#### 2. You can't do it without the teacher

## 3. Help t

lves

#### 4. An apple a day is a delicious snack

#### 5. Keep your eye on the prize

Learn more about our best practices

**Block?** 

EXPEDITIONARY EARNING	Our Approach	Our Results	Educator Resources	Press Center	About Us
Home   Our Approach			EL COMMONS *	Search site	
WHAT WE DO	Our Approach	Learning is a l		S.M.O.	
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Home   Our Approach   What We D	Approach	Results	Resources	Center	Us
EXPEDITIONARY	Our	Our	Educator	Press	About

### What We Do

#### WHAT WE DO

WHAT WE BELIEVE

HOW WE WORK WITH TEACHERS

HOW WE WORK WITH SCHOOLS

HOW WE WORK WITH DISTRICTS

CERTIFICATION

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A HIGHER LEVEL SUBHEAD LOOKS A BIT LIKE THIS

"As soon as our group finished the first session with our school designer, I knew it: this is what had been missing and my teaching would never be the same." Ken Westlake, Kendale Lakes Elementary

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### Page node



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# Revise site definition and visual design

# Better. Faster. Cheaper.

How to accelerate the design and theming phases of your project
# Design on a grid

### (And use a CSS framework to implement it!)

## 1) Saves time

### 2) Saves money

# 3) Reduces frustration

## "Embrace constraints"

- Mark Kraemer, National UX Practice Lead, EMC.com

 Constraints narrow the scope of the design and encourage creativity



Photo: Aaron Schmidt on Flickr (Creative Commons BY-NC-SA)

Enforcing a grid accelerates design while maintaining order

# 960 grid system

- CSS framework for grid-based design
- Download: <u>960.gs</u>
- NineSixty for Drupal: <u>drupal.org/project/ninesixty</u>
  - Live demo at <u>ninesixty.fkdemos.com</u>

## **Drupal**<sup>™</sup>

### Build for Today. Create for Tomorrow

What can you make with Drupal? Beautiful, personal blogs or mighty, multi-featured, multi-user corporate sites. Our open source publishing software is the platform you need to create your place on the web.

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### Why Choose Drupal?

Drupal is like Lego. Connect the pieces and build a site limited only by your imagination. Drupal's passionate, vibrant community are always creating new pieces, or improving existing ones. Choosing Drupal means as your needs evolve, so does your site.

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### Things We Made with Drupal



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### **Develop with Drupal**

Drupal is extensible, powerful, scalable, and flexible.

Current activity
4212 CVS a/c holders
612 commits this
month

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Explore Drupal modules and themes



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310,721 people in 24 countries speaking 14 different languages are using Drupal.

News

# Don't start at zero. Start at *Drupal*

Increase your Drupalspeak vocabulary by leveraging default Drupal behavior and contributed modules

- Core modules
- Default blocks and menus
- Default theme regions
- Default template variables
  - listed at the top of each template file

# **Default output and styling**

- Know what the default markup and CSS look like
- Stark theme
  - Drupal 7: included in core
  - Drupal 6: <u>drupal.org/project/stark</u>



Drupal 6 Stark theme: <u>drupal.org/project/stark</u>

# Little modules can save you hours of theming

- Someone else has probably run into your problem before... and solved it
- The trick is finding the module

### The problem: CCK outputs values one-by-one in their own divs



- The (theme) solution:
  - Override the CCK field's template file
  - Write PHP to output each field separated by a comma
- There's got to be a better way!

- Text Formatter: <u>drupal.org/project/textformatter</u>
  - Lets you output CCK fields as lists or commaseparated strings

Configuring Text Form	atter	Default	-
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Save					

### After Text Formatter

All about my kitchen

View Edit

Mon, 08/23/2010 - 06:37 - admin

My kitchen is inside my house. It's filled with all kinds of interesting things: a fridge, a blender, a sink, and some cabinets. I also have some utensils!

Utensils: Spatula, Butterfly whisk, Egg slicer, Cherry pitter

Add new comment

No theming required!

## Find more modules

- Drupal.org: Search + most popular modules
  - drupal.org/project/modules
- Lullabot's "Module Monday" blog series
  - <u>lullabot.com/ideas</u>

Design for change

## Minimize templates

- More templates mean more maintenance
- Consistent styling across templates creates a better user experience
- Create a robust default template
  - What happens if a site administrator creates a new content type without creating a new template?

# Accommodate content of any length

- Your design should be robust enough to handle short and long content
- What happens if your title wraps to two or three lines?

# Anticipate expanding navigation

- What happens if menu items are added?
- How does your design handle multiple levels of navigation?

# The site you design today will change tomorrow.



# Because it's not really a site...

# It's a system

Photo: Snak Shak on Flickr (Creative Commons BY-NC)

and the state

# And designers are in a second second

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Photo<u>-Salim Virji</u> on <u>Flickr</u> (Creative Commons BY-SA)



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# thinkso Four KITCHENS

we make **BIG** websites



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