

Craig Allington - SMLP - Web Plan

Goals of Website

- To implement new PHP skills learnt
- To be valid XHTML Strict 1.0 and CSS Level 2.1
- To be conformance level 'A' (<http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/#Conformance>)

Target Audience

Billy is 18 years old. He enjoys listening to music, playing his guitar, going to gigs with his friends. His favourite band is The Subways. He is studying music at college and so spends a lot of his spare time practicing the guitar and so doesn't get much chance to be online. Whenever he is online he is usually looking for tabs for new songs or streaming music from the internet. Because of this he uses a relatively quick broadband speed (approximately 5Mbps) and the latest Internet Explorer browser.

Charlotte is 25 years old. She enjoys listening to music, playing the bass and going to gigs with her boyfriend. Her favourite band is also The Subways. She works in a office where she spends much of her time using the internet. She is allowed to use the internet for personal use in her lunch hour which is when she mainly uses it. Her company has high speed broadband (8Mbps) which she takes advantage of by watching videos on sites such as YouTube. Her company uses Internet Explorer 6 but Charlotte has Firefox 2 installed at her home although she only uses this on weekends along with a approximate 512Kbps broadband speed.

Josh is 30 years old. He enjoys listening to music, playing the drums and going to gigs (though his family life means he doesn't get to as much as he would like). His favourite band is once again The Subways. He works part time so that he can look after the children when the finish school whilst his wife is at work and so spends a lot of time using the internet on a afternoon. He solely uses a Mac and so uses solely Firefox 2 to access the internet with his approximately 8Mbps connection. He spends a lot of time downloading music through various sites and software whilst also streaming radio stations in the hope of hearing new music.

Competitive Analysis

www.thesubways.net

The official site is obviously going to be my biggest 'competitor' so to speak and seemed like a good place to look. The site has recently had a remake so you would expect it to be quite up to date both in it's information and it's style.

What really gets my attention about the site straight away is the distinct lack of colour. The background of the web site is pure white with the main body of the text being black. Even the sites header is mainly black and white.

This theme seems to run throughout the whole site with photos on the site being black and white (and even a section devoted to the gallery for black and white photos).

The navigation I find quite interesting. As The and Subways are on two lines there would normally be a lot of negative space left but the navigation actually fits in with the title to take away this fact. I personally think it is quite a clever idea as not only does it use up the negative space but it also reduces the space needed for the navigation, and with 11 links this is quite a good thing. This is of course at the cost of accessibility as the navigation is actually a series of images. Anyone viewing the site in a browser which doesn't support images would not be able to navigate the site at all.

The site is very simple to use, the navigation is obvious and at the top of the page at all times. Per-

haps the most confusing aspect of the site is the fact that there is a 'live' page which contains identical information on the home page. For people who immediately look at the navigation however this is probably a good thing.

Overall I think the site is quite plain and in some ways quite boring. The idea of trying to keep the site black and white is effective but it seems like very little has been done with the rest of the site so to fit in with this style.

www.myspace.com/subways

The first site I looked at is The Subways 'official' web site. Presently this is their MySpace page and so perhaps not as accurate as I would have liked but it is a good place to start nonetheless*.

The first thing I notice about the site is that they have a large image used at the top of their page which pushes the rest of the web site down. Although this is quite an effective picture it seems almost like a 'splash page' as it takes up nearly the whole of the screen (and perhaps on smaller screens would do) and forces the user to scroll immediately.

Once scrolled past the large and somewhat pointless picture you see a list of what is coming up on the tour and some songs which you can listen to. The list of songs is very useful as it allows people who may not have heard of the band to listen to them, and the tour list is good for people wishing to find out when they are next playing near them.

After this is a blog section which is really just some news and a bit about the band.

The design of the web site isn't the best. It is just a plain black background with a slight gradient type edge fading into white. Though the black is effective, as it makes everything else stand out, it is very basic and boring. As well as this there are numerous flash banners throughout the site which can be a bit annoying but at the same time do catch your eye. Perhaps if they were just a little bit smaller they wouldn't be as bad.

*Shortly after doing this competitive analysis the new Subways site was launched. I have analysed this site also now too.

www.the-metropolitans.tk/

This site starts off with a very annoying splash page which brings very little (if anything) to the site. Once in the site there is a very crude picture at the top of the page which is very badly compressed and appears to cut off at one side. There is also a pattern on the image which doesn't match up with the background pattern.

The first thing you really notice however is the navigation at the top of the page. It is clear and is obviously divided from the rest of the content. The worst thing about this navigation is that there is no differentiation in states from the standard link, a hovered link or even a visited link. If there was some differentiation it would improve the navigation even more.

Other than this there is not really that much more to say about this site. The text is centered which makes it difficult to read, some of the images need more spacing around them, some need less, some need a combination of both.

www.the-subways-fans.de

This site is completely different to the other 2 I looked at. There is very little colour on this website (very pale greys and white) whereas the previous 2, although still lacking in colour, used very bold, dark colours (blacks and browns) which stood out from the page and the rest of the content.

The second thing I really notice about this site is that there appears to be two parts to the navigation which can confuse the user. Especially when there are 2 links for 'home', this just seems pointless too.

I think the fact that the navigation is divided with sub sections is quite a good idea as there is quite a long list of links. By clicking on 'The Band' and it then giving you links for the individual band members for example helps reduce the navigational list.

Once more the text is centered which makes it very difficult to read at times, and again some of the images could do with a little more padding added to them.

The final thing I notice about the site is that there is quite a lot of scrolling to be done on some of the pages which could really be shortened or divided up more but this may once again add to the list of links in the navigation.

Delivery Requirements

XHTML

XHTML (eXtensive Hyper Text Markup Language) will be used as the starting point for building the web site and lays out the structure of the site. XHTML will be used for each page of the site.

CSS

CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) will be used to add style to the pages. This will be in many forms including laying out the site, adding background colours and setting the font.

CSS is also good for improving search engine ranking's which would be good in a commercial situation.

PHP

PHP is an open source scripting language that can be embedded into HTML coding. A PHP script is executed on the server and returns the page on the browser as plain HTML. For this reason PHP will be combined with MySQL to create the web site and make the pages dynamic.

MySQL

Owned by a single for-profit firm (MySQL AB) MySQL is an open source database using SQL (the most popular language for adding, accessing and processing databases). Because the software is open source it means that it can be downloaded by anyone and altered or tweaked to meet their needs (in accordance with the licence). For this reason MySQL will be combined with PHP to create the web site and make the pages dynamic.

Site Structure

