

Information sharing on the web - a personal experience

Mario Valle - 02/03/2006



Swiss National Supercomputing Centre

```
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" xml:lang="en"><head>  
<title>Visualization resources</title>  
<meta http-equiv="Content-Language" content="en-us" />  
<meta http-equiv="Content-Language" content="en-us" />  
<meta name="Description" content="Resources about both scient  
<meta name="Keywords" content="CSCS, visualization, ITM, manno, s  
<meta name="Author" content="Mario Valle" />  
<meta name="Date" content="02/03/2006" />  
<meta name="Organization" content="Swiss National Supercomput  
<link rel="stylesheet" href="Mario Valle" type="text/css"  
<link rel="stylesheet" href="CSCS Brown Bag Lunch - 02/03/2006" type="text  
<link rel="shortcut icon" href="..\/icons\/favicon.ico" type="i
```

Information sharing on the web

A personal experience

Info sharing on the web

Today I want to present my personal experience regarding information sharing on the web

- This is not a web tutorial
- This is not a (directly) CSCS sponsored project

Who does not want to be known?



Seriously



In your community it is better to be known to have credibility...
...and for the next job interview helps to have someone that knows you

Web site (Bookings) Experience - Brian Vailo - CS21 01/03/2006



Hidden info is lost info



- Experience notes
- Software testing and compare
- Presentations
- Additional material for courses you have given
- Bibliographies and link collections
- ...

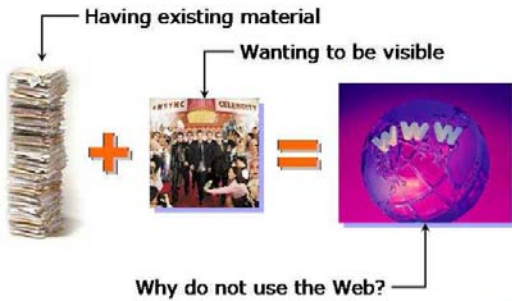
P.S.: I'm not speaking of cat photos, family reunion stories and your bungee-jumping records...



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1 + 1 = 2



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Have web, will run

- **Having:**
 - Web space
 - A really serious domain: www.cscs.cb
- **Decided to use this opportunity to:**
 - Make my work known
 - Help community (hopefully sharing useful material)
 - Learn something new
- **At the end discovered that:**
 - It is fun
 - It is useful (for me and for the community)
 - Has two unintended very nice effects (wait and see...)

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Start doing, not lingering

- I have no deadline or official project
- I do not need (and want) a quick and dirty solution
- I absolutely want to learn
- So to start I do not need...
 - Sophisticated tools
 - In-depth knowledge of HTML
 - To be a Web design expert

→ That means...



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The results

- 38 pages in 6 thematic areas
- Created with:
 - MS Word (for existing documents)
 - PowerPoint (for existing presentations)
 - Macromedia Dreamweaver (mainly to cleanup Word output)
 - The GIMP (to adapt existing images)
 - Text editor (for everything else)
- Based (more or less) on:
 - HTML 4.01
 - CSS 1.0 (someone told me it is a Good Thing...)
- But more important than technology...



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... is what I have learned

1. You should have something to say

- Content comes before tools and technology
- Also because on the web: "do ut des"
- Really it is not so difficult: the average professional already has a lot of things to say

2. Be professional / do not look amateurish

- The graphical design is not only for aesthetics
- It is vital to define an information architecture

3. Think about your (potential) visitors

- Simplify their life: no broken links, provide a logical navigation, support nice printing, ...
- Multibrowser support
- Multilanguage (at least a little)

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Ready for a new design round



126 pages in 14 thematic areas
Uniform look
Uniform navigation support

What experience can be shared?
What have I learned?

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A little upfront planning

1. Define information content

- What information do I want to share?
(Really means: about what fields I'm an expert?)

2. Define a common look and feel

- Separate content from rendering and formatting

3. Follow standards

- Prepare for the future
- Reduce incompatibilities

4. Go around the web with open eyes

- On the Web there are gazillions of examples and good ideas
- "Show source" is the most useful tool

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Examples

- **My home page**
<www.cszs.ch/~mvalle/>
 - From an existing **template**
- **An old Word document**
<www.cszs.ch/~mvalle/AVS/D01perfEnhancement.html>
 - Added header & footer
 - Cleaned MS Word garbage then fixed tags for XHTML
- **A gallery of commented images**
<www.cszs.ch/~mvalle/ChemViz/representations/>
 - Image preparation pipeline
 - Tableless modern design
- **Multiple style page view**
<www.cszs.ch/~mvalle/ChemViz/models-and-tools/representation.html>
 - Show the power of CSS
 - This page shows also how not to write for the Web
 - In retrospect: goal changed so html is not the right format

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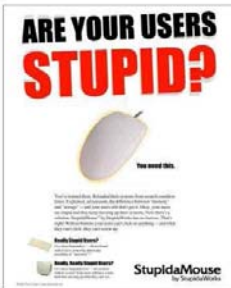


From the show, what have I learned?

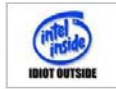


1. Some (hopefully) useful experience
2. Have found some helpful tool
3. Have been aware of web development dark corners
4. Have started think (a little) about the future

Be convinced that your visitors...



...are not stupid



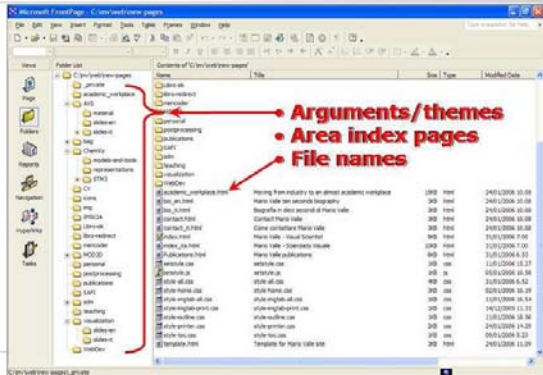
They understand immediately if your pages say something or are only omeat blabla

They understand immediately if they can find something that helps their work / leisure / learning / etc.

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Structure the information you have



Define a page template

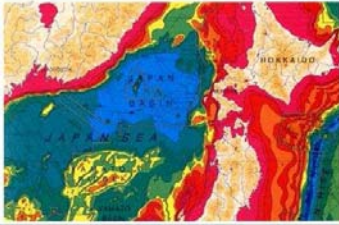
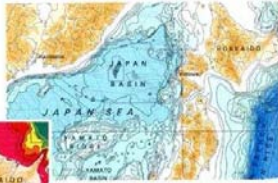
www.steves-templates.com

www.webpagethatsuck.com

my template

Graphic design is important

You want to say this ...



... but your page ends like this

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Content ↔ presentation

Content: HTML

```
<h1>Moving to academia</h1>
<p>In February 2003 I moved from a
commercial company
(<a href="http://www.avc.com/">Advanced Visual
Systems</a>) to a more academic workplace [...].</p>
```

Presentation: CSS

```
h1 {
  font-size: 218%;
  font-weight: bold;
  color: #1266cb;
  margin-left: 10px;
  margin-top: 1.0em;
}
```

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Tools: editors

Simple syntax highlighting text editors

- SciTE
- Visual C++ IDE

More specific editors

- FrontPage (very nice, but it pretends too much to help me)
- Amaya (from W3.org, but it does not respect my choices)
- Bluefish (excellent straight editor, but Linux only)
- CSSed (but it is simpler to buy an O'Reilly book)

Other

- MS Word (always plus HTML Tidy!)
- MS PowerPoint (and live with huge pages...)

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Tools: other development tools



The astounding Web Developer toolbar!

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Tools: checkers

<http://validator.w3.org/>

Xenu



Mozie

Tools: images

▪ The GIMP

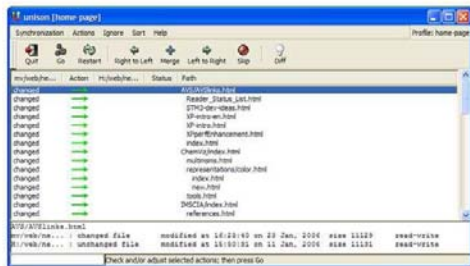


▪ Image Magick (also to build an automated pipeline to create image galleries)

▪ PNGout

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Tools: uploader



Unison – useful also for laptop and WS synchronization

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Tools: access counters

To see if at least someone visits my pages

Webstats4U

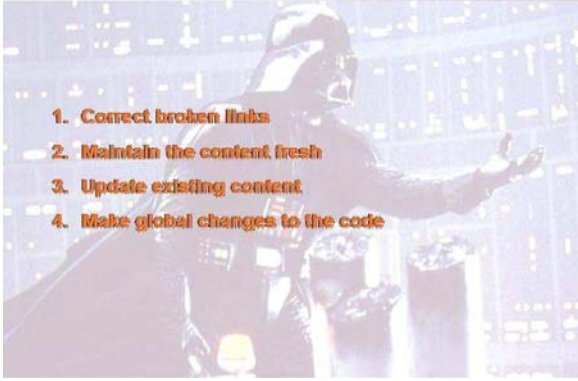
And I will try Google Analytics

But a web server based tool will be better (looks more professional)...



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On the dark side...



1. Correct broken links
2. Maintain the content fresh
3. Update existing content
4. Make global changes to the code

And the future?



1. Find more two-way collaboration and sharing methods
2. Make sense of the web acronym soup: RSS, Blogs, Wiki, Podcast,...
3. Push more the Web as another media for visualization

Unintended effects?

I discovered two unintended effects of developing and maintaining my web presence:

1. Force you to finish things
2. Has proven to be a good alternative to Solitaire...

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So...

1. Think
2. Look around
3. Start!



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