



The WikiWikiWeb

Dr. Patrick R. Michaud

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What is the WikiWikiWeb?

- ◆ “Wikiwiki” means “quick” or “hurry”
- ◆ Originally developed by Ward Cunningham
 - Called “the simplest online database that could possibly work”
- ◆ A simple yet powerful system for online collaboration

The Essence of Wiki

- ◆ A wiki invites all users to edit or create pages within the Wiki Web site
- ◆ Uses only browsers and simple markup
- ◆ Easy to create links between pages
- ◆ Freeform and democratic, little imposed structure
- ◆ Favors authors over readers

Wiki Basics

- ◆ Page links are simply “WikiWords”
- ◆ A WikiWord is a sequence of capitalized words without spaces
- ◆ Accessing a non-existent page brings up a form to create it
- ◆ Links to undefined pages invite others to create the page
- ◆ Creating new pages automatically builds a structure

More Wiki Basics

- ◆ URLs in text are links to external pages
- ◆ URLs of images are embedded in text

Wiki Markup

◆ Paragraph styles

- Bullet lists (*), numbered lists (#), definition lists (:), headings (!)

◆ Inline styles

- Italics ("), bold (""), monospace (@@), WikiWords, urls, references ([[...]])
- Escapes ([=...=])

Applications of Wiki - Public

- ◆ Resource collections
- ◆ Collaborative FAQs
- ◆ Project management
- ◆ Web site management
- ◆ Discussion/review
- ◆ Shared bulletin board
- ◆ Online guestbook
- ◆ Free-form database

Wiki disadvantages

- ◆ Can be too open – too little linking between contributions
 - ◆ Can be too unstructured
 - ◆ Vandalism
 - ◆ Scalability
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- ◆ Most disadvantages can be overcome via other mechanisms

PmWiki

- ◆ Pm's version of the WikiWikiWeb
- ◆ Available from <http://www.pmichaud.com> (GPL)
- ◆ Features
 - Easy to install and use
 - Allows segregation of wiki pages into WikiGroups
 - Allows selective password protection of pages and groups
- ◆ Installed for TAMU-CC use at <http://www.tamucc.edu/wiki>

PmWiki Philosophy

- ◆ Favor writers over readers
- ◆ Don't try to replace HTML
- ◆ Avoid gratuitous features
- ◆ Support collaborative maintenance of web sites
- ◆ Easy installation and configuration

Pm's view of web maintenance

◆ Principal tasks

- Developing web content
- Editing/updating web content
- Structuring web content

◆ Two approaches

- Dedicated web master and resources
- Open to all to update and change

Web Maintenance Activities

- ◆ Content publishing
- ◆ Reviewing/updating material
- ◆ Browsing
- ◆ Following links, cross-referencing
- ◆ Commenting/reviewing

Activities – Content Publishing

- ◆ Wiki – anyone can publish
- ◆ Static – web master or delegated
- ◆ Database – controlled by database scripts

Discovery: Create a system that makes it easy to speak, and discover that nobody has anything to say.

Activities – Reviewing/Updating Material

- ◆ Wiki - Anyone, anytime
- ◆ Static - Scheduled when there is time by person with access
- ◆ Database – controlled by database scripts

PmWiki: Easy to detect changes via “RecentChanges” pages

Open Source: When many eyes can view and repair a problem, all bugs are shallow.

Activities - Browsing

- ◆ Wiki - Free-form structure, topics, search, backlinks
- ◆ Static – defined by web master(s)
- ◆ Database - Query transactions or structure dictated by database relationships

Activities – Cross Referencing

- ◆ Wiki – Anyone can cross reference or reorganize the site
- ◆ Static – requires redesign of major portions of the system, link rot a problem
- ◆ Database – depends on structure of underlying database

Automation is key to handling web site redesign and providing consistency among pages.

Activities – Comments/Review

- ◆ Wiki – Anyone, on any page
- ◆ Static – via email, feedback form, or "guestbook" page
- ◆ Database – via mechanisms implemented in underlying database

Why Wiki markup over HTML?

- ◆ Difficult to write HTML
- ◆ Difficult to edit HTML via browser
- ◆ Arbitrary HTML can make page unviewable
- ◆ Can introduce security holes

Wiki Resources

Leuf, B., and Cunningham, W. *The Wiki Way*, Addison-Wesley, 2001.

WikiWikiWeb – <http://c2.com/cgi/wiki>

MeatballWiki -

<http://www.usemod.com/cgi-bin/mb.pl>