Usability for contributed modules

DrupalCon Szeged, 2008

Erik Stielstra
• Introduction

• What is usability

• Usability in practice
  • Documentation
  • Forms

• Wrap up
Who am I
Erik Stielstra

- Arnhem, the Netherlands
- 20+ years experience field between human and technology
- Involved in Drupal since August 2006
- Modules: Simplenews, Header Image
- Co-ordinator of Dutch translation
What is Usability?
usability flaw
“Don’t make me think”
“Don’t make me think”
(Steve Krug)
Usability in practice

Contributed module usability
Example: Simplenews
Introduction

- What is simplenews? (Purpose)
- Who uses simplenews? (Users)
- How does simplenews work? (Implementation)
Documentation
الحوطة إلى كويري التونسي
سلاك هذا ألوس
Simplenews Documentation

- Project page
- README.txt
- Module help
- Handbook page
Simplenews Documentation

- Project page
- README.txt
- Module help
- Handbook page

Promotion & overview
(pre-)installation info
On-site installation, first-aid
Extensive info
Project page

Promotion & overview

- Module promotion: What, Why, When
- Related modules
- Alternative modules
- Link to README.txt (pre-install instructions)
- Link to handbook page
- Remarks, credits
Project page
Mail projects overview

Simplenews

Description
Simplenews is a simple newsletter module which allows both anonymous as well as registered users to subscribe to different newsletters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Links</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.x-1.0-beta3</td>
<td>2008-Jun-25</td>
<td>Download · Release notes · Edit</td>
<td>Recommended for 6.x ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.x-1.4</td>
<td>2008-Jul-13</td>
<td>Download · Release notes · Edit</td>
<td>Recommended for 5.x ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Find out more · Bugs and feature requests

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drupalmodules.com
Simplenews publishes and sends newsletters to lists of subscribers. Both anonymous and authenticated users can opt-in to different mailing lists. HTML email can be sent by adding Mime mail module.

Simplenews 6.x supports multilingual newsletters (I18n) and actions/triggers.

Questionnaire:
To determine how Simplenews is used and what new functionality is desired, a questionnaire is set up for existing Simplenews users. Please spend five minutes of your time to help develop Simplenews further.

More information:
Full documentation: Simplenews handbook page
Installation instructions: README.txt (Drupal 5), README.txt (Drupal 6)

Drupal 6 development:
The beta 3 version is now available. We can still use more testing, especially testing with large mailing volumes (> 5000 subscribers) is requested.
Before reporting an issue ALWAYS check the previously reported bugs if your is already reported.

Known bugs:
Simplenews and Category module are currently not compatible. See the issue in the Category module issue queue for the current status.

Credits:
README.txt

(Pre-)installation info

• Summary
• (Pre-)installation instructions
• Specifications, limitations
• Links to other information sources
README.txt

- Description
- Requirements
- Installation
- Send newsletter with cron
- Collaboration with other modules
- Credits
README.txt

- Description
- Requirements
- Installation
- Documentation
Help page hook_help()

On-site installation, first-aid

- Module concept
- Installation instructions
- Dynamic help
- Links to drupal.org handbook page
- Links to all sections (automatic by core)
**Simplenews**

Simplenews sends HTML or plain text newsletters to the subscription list. Subscribers and unsubscribers are managed through a block, a form, or by the newsletter administrator.

Individual newsletters are grouped by a newsletter subscription form. Newsletters can include links with the ability to subscribe, unsubscribe, and receive a list of newsletters and an associated RSS feed. Newsletters can be managed by site.

For more information please read the configuration and customization handbook, [Simplenews docs](#).

**Simplenews administration pages**

- Configure permissions
- Newsletters
Simplenews

Simplenews publishes and sends newsletters to lists of subscribers. Both anonymous and authenticated users can opt-in to different mailing lists.

Simplenews uses nodes for newsletter issues. Each newsletter issue is assigned to one newsletter by a taxonomy term. Node type and vocabulary are selectable. A newsletter is sent to all email addresses which are subscribed to the newsletter. Newsletter issues can be sent only once. Large mailings should be sent by cron to spread the load of the mailserver.

Simplenews adds elements to the newsletter node add/edit form to manage newsletter format and sending of the newsletter issue. A newsletter issue can be sent for test before sending officially.

Both anonymous and authenticated users can opt-in and opt-out to a newsletter. A confirmation message is sent to anonymous users at subscription and unsubscription. Users can (un-)subscribe using a form and a block. A subscription block is available for each newsletter offering a subscription form, a link to recent newsletters and RSS feed. Email addresses can also be imported and exported via the subscription administration pages.

Configuration

- Configure permissions
- Configure Simplenews
- Enable a newsletter subscription block.
- Manage your newsletters, sent newsletters and subscriptions.

For more information, see the online handbook entry for Simplenews.

Simplenews administration pages

- Configure permissions
- Newsletters
- Simplenews

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Header Image help

- Dynamic configuration
Header Image help

**Configuration**

- Set up permissions.
- Select a node type to be used as Header Image or create one if you haven't already.
- Create a Header Image block.
- Create Header Image nodes and set display conditions.
- Assign a Header Image block to a region.
Header Image help

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Date and occasion
Header Image help

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Missing link
Missing link
Missing link
LINK3 webservice

Missing link

What now?
Missing link

- Use install message
- Link to module help
- Requires a better solution in core
Messages \texttt{drupal\_set\_message()}

- Describe problem
- Give a solution
- Link to the solution
Module concept
Related modules
Alternative modules
Recipes
Snippets
Theming
Link to project page

Handbook page
Extensive info
Documentation summary

- Project page
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Promotion & overview
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Forms

How to improve form usability?
Forms: common faults

- Long pages, many collapsed field sets
- Complex decisions
- Long titles
- Description adds no information
- Wrong use of form elements
Long pages
Collapsible field sets
Form elements

- Use the simplest input type
Element titles

- Short titles
- Include keywords for scanning
Element description

- Do not duplicate the title
- Describe the consequences of the selection
Use conventions

- Users like conventions
- Use the wheel (don’t re-invent it)
Use conventions

• Users like conventions
• Use the wheel (don’t re-invent it)
Complex decisions

Drupal newsletter
Stay informed on our latest news?
E-mail:

- Subscribe
- Unsubscribe

Submit

Previous issues
Improvements
Forms summary

- Short pages
- Simplest form elements
- Scannable titles
- Descriptions that add concept and actions
- Minimize complexity
Highlights

- Documentation: Introduction & installation
- Draw the bigger picture first
- Conventions are your friend
- Omit needless words
- Reduce the noise
- User testing
References

- Books
  - Don’t make me Think - Steve Krug
- Web
  - Presentation: http://link3.nl
  - Module documentation: http://drupal.org/node/161085
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