TYPOlight trainings
by Harry Boldt

The following article covers a draft concept as well as a couple of questions regarding the offer of worldwide TYPOlight-trainings! Okay, strong meat, I know. But we have to start somewhere. I'm convinced that TYPOlight will become more important, if people can attend "real" courses to get familiar with the design and functionality of TL. Further I added a report of a first TYPOlight training course, the initial idea for this workshop.

A draft concept

As a first approach, I picked up some questions, that might be interesting concerning the trainings

- What benefit can be expected from TYPOlight-trainings?
- Which requirements have to be complied?
- Which target groups can be defined?
- How should the trainings be composed in form and content?
- Is there a "best of" concerning the didactical design of a TL training course?
- Where could trainings be offered (state, town, location)?
- How can TYPOlight-trainer benefit from each other?

And of course: Are there other points, I did not mention in my questions?

TYPOlight training

As a media pedagogue, I have some experience in training how to use software, so I arranged a first TYPOlight training course last week in Aachen, Germany with a small group of 5 course participants. The training course was designed as a course for beginners without knowledge in PHP but with some experience in HTML and CSS. The goal was, that each participant will have realized his own (working) site with its own design and functionality within four days (22 hours). Here are my votes.

Requirements

Requirements that should be complied before the training course starts are:

- A course-room that holds a computer for each participant,
- a beamer,
- an existing account on a server with PHP5 and MySQL 4.x for each participant,
- browser Firefox with the following Add-ons: Web Developer, FireFTP, Firebug (or alternative tools),
- each participant should have an existing idea, of how the site should look like, how it should work and and what special functionality it needs. At least, in general.

Concerning the accounts I experienced that the participants did have accounts at public hosters, but the did not know, if their package fullfilled the TL requirements. To make it short: In three cases (out of 5!) they did not. So I was really happy that Leo promised me on

our meeting, to set up some iNet Robots test-accounts if it should be necassary. I took about three or five minutes from sending the three faxes to iNet Robots and the e-mails to my participants, providing their access information (oh yes, I remember again: this is why we call it "provider").

In some training-centers, the local system on the computers is re-initialized on each boot. To avoid reinstalling the Browser Add-ons everey day, the admin of the trainings-center should ensure, that the local configuration of the browser is stored - at least during the course.

Didactical approach

I decided to let the students learn the whole process. They should install the necessary tools, and of course TYPOlight. What they should not install is the Music Academy. Do not misunderstand me. I love the example and it can be very helpful for self studying. But in a training, where there's a trainer, who can help people to understand the system, I think it is much better to build up the site from the scratch.

I first explained the differences between static and dynamic pages and what the advantages of dynamic pages are. After that I explained the general concept of TYPLOlight with the help of some paintings on the whiteboard (About 15 min).

The students part

With a little help, the students did not have problems to install TYPOlight. The installation of the browser add-ons is also quite simple, so we could start rather early, setting up the site. Here's the order we went through the different working fields of TL:

1. Building up the structure: This is the most important part, when starting a project (not only valid for web-sites). The students have to become a structured idea of what they want to show and say.
2. Setting up a screenlayout: It is then important to define, where I want to show the different informations. Where should my logo be placed, where do I want to place a navigation and so on.
3. Creating modules: After that, some common modules should be defined: header logo, navigation, footer as a simple html-module.
4. Uploading material: Graphics and css-files for the layout, photos, pdfs and other material should now be uploaded.
5. Styling the site: The students import one or more prepared css-files and arrange their modules with the inbuild css-editor.
6. Writing articles: Time for content and learning the different content elements
7. Implementing special functions like news, comments, calendar, newsletter...

In this first training-course, the css-part was the most time consuming part of all. First I explained the different divs that TL provides in its standard templates. During the work of the participants I learned that it would be very helpful for the students, to have the choice between different sets of predefined css-files where each set covers a special look and feel, i. e a horizontal main navigation with a separate sub navigation and so on. But anyway, even if such a "css-set for TL-trainings" would exist, the trainer must be very familiar in CSS in order to be able to switch between the students and to help them quickly in finding

solutions for their individual problems.

In my eyes, it is important, that the participants start to learn writing content after the layout is in a quite acceptable state. Thus they will better "feel" how fast they can create sites. An ugly and unready layout will always have a negative effect on the whole site, what would reduce the value of the nice content elements.

Result

I think it was all in all a successful first TYPOlight training course. All participants have reached to build up their own site with an own individual layout. I have to admit, that in one case, the layout was really individual. Some better preparation of special training related css would have been helpful for all. But the best: All of the participants said, that they plan to go on with TYPOlight!

Next steps

It would now be interesting, to think about what we can do, to establish more TYPOlight training courses and probably to define a kind of "Certified TYPOlight training", that ensures a certain training quality.