

Structured Authoring with XML Client Documentation

Table of Contents

Explaining XML

Relating back to our analysis

 Enable conversation

 Sell poetry

 Inform people

Describing the data

Appendix A: Project Links

Matthew Murphy

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Explaining XML

When I met with my client about this portion of the assignment, my first task was to explain to them what I needed. Rather than talk at length about the technology behind their website, I kept our conversation at a surface level. I explained that some parts of a website are static and change only when the designer updates the site. Other parts of a site change whenever new information (data) is available. Other examples we talked about included the information submitted on a contact form or an item purchased through an online store.

So that she could better understand my assignment, I paraphrased Marini's description of XML from his Lynda.com tutorial: HTML describes websites, whereas XML describes data.^[1] For my assignment, I needed to write a description of the data that related to their website.

Relating back to our analysis

Our next step was to identify the data needs of my client's website. Going back to our analysis document, we reviewed the three primary goals of their site:

- Inform people about upcoming poetry readings.
- Sell poetry the group had published.
- Encourage audience conversation with the group.

Each of these goals required data to be described and transferred. We discussed each in turn.

Enable conversation

This goal was addressed by adding a contact form to the static website. Google Forms already provided a user-friendly way for my client to collect and use visitors' contact information. My client felt comfortable with this solution and we moved on to the next goal.

Sell poetry

My client and I discussed the technology behind selling products on a website. Due to the complexity of creating a shopping cart and linking it to a payment processing system, we decided it best to look for an off-the-shelf solution or use tools provided by a payment processor such as PayPal or Stripe. We choose, instead, to focus on the remaining goal of informing people about upcoming events.

Inform people

As our discussion unfolded, we began to understand more about how 'data' fit into the goals we had established for the site. For example, one feature that I am working on for them is a small inline box that displays the date and time of the next poetry reading. Clicking on this would bring the user to a page containing detailed information about the event. XML would provide a way for the group's next event to always be the one displayed on the homepage.

In addition, they are considering emailing people who attended previous readings to inform them of upcoming events. Storing event information in XML would allow the same data to be used to keep the website up to date and to inform their email list.

Describing the data

Our next step was coming up with a description of the data we would need. We decided that, although publicizing events was the primary reason something might be posted to the site, they might also want to share important news. In addition, there might someday be other types of events than just readings. We asked questions such as, "What does someone need to know in order come to one of our readings?" We noted that there were fewer elements related to News because it was more freeform and less defined than an Event. I explained that there would be additional information carried in the data that would make it searchable and sortable, such as the date it was posted and who it was posted by.^[2]

By this point, I had gathered enough information to begin defining the data elements and definitions. The table below summarizes the results of our discussion:

Table 1. Possible elements and attributes

Event	News	metadata
type of event	title	post date
date	description	author
time	date written	last updated
location		tags
cost		
description		

Appendix A: Project Links

Diamond Dust Writers:

<https://telecommatt.github.io/diamond-dust-writers/>

Github profile: <https://github.com/telecommatt/>

Structured Authoring with XML Assignment: <https://github.com/telecommatt/diamond-dust-writers/tree/master/structured-authoring-xml-assignment>

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1. "What Is XML?" Lynda.com - from LinkedIn. Accessed October 14, 2018. <https://www.lynda.com/XML-tutorials/What-XML/661763/703446-4.html?autoplay=true>.
 2. "XML Attributes." Accessed October 14, 2018. https://www.w3schools.com/xml/xml_attributes.asp.