Paris Tango: Development Journal

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March 14, 2019

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1 Project Summary

This project sets out to modernise the current, static, Paris Tango website, originally designed by me in 2008. Since then many things have changed: desktop programs allowing visual editing of the static code have been dropped and are no longer usable. Smartphones and tablets have become the norm, and now demand a new level of targeted development to ensure not only that the website displays correctly to mobile users, but also that it is appealing to use, and that visitors use it for its inteded purpose, finding out about tango events and booking them. At the same time, and no less driven by mobile devices and their variable connection speeds to the internet, images and videos now have to be given special treatment, optimising each media asset to load as quickly as possible on a visitor's device. Also, there has been a complete shift on the internet to encrypted communications, so that contact forms can't be *listened to* as they are submitted by a visitor and sent to the event organiser. To do this, all modern websites now need a TLS (formerly known as SSL) certificate.

All these changes, and a few besides, are now carefully watched by Google, whose directory will ruthlessly down-rank any website not matching all these criteria, which is ultimately disastrous for new business, as it makes it less likely that Paris Tango will be discovered by a random search.

The aim of this project is to make it easy for the site's administrator to easily update content, without needing to hire a web designer every time she needs to, to automate asset optimisation, to make it effortless to obtain and renew TLS certificates, and to remove any further need to worry about website hosting, concentrating only on the content.

2 Preparation

2.1 Requirements-gathering

2.2 Collecting necessary technical information

2.3 Obtaining all assets

To build a completely new website, we need to use a completely new set of images; in the process of first developing the site, it was enough to get images (photos, newspaper and magazine scans) with a resolution of up to 1024 pixels, as all visitors would browse the site from their home desktop or mobile laptop, using Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari and Opera as browsers.

Since then, iPhones and all the other smartphones became popular, and their use now dwarfs the number of visits from desktop and laptop computers, as well as tablets, which also didn't exist at that time. All images now have to be made *responsive*, so that each device and browser only download the quality of image that they need. For example, a low-end smartphone on a slow 3G connection will download a low resolution version of an image, while a high-end tablet on a 4G or WiFi connection will download a very high resolution image, for the site to present well. This makes it necessary to start with very high resolution imagery (1600 pixels and above), *and* to provide that same image in multiple resolutions to satisfy a very wide range of devices which people will be using to visit the site.

With this limitation, it is no longer possible to use images from the first site; even in that period it was important to select a target resolution and to optimise the image. In the process of optimisation and resizing, the image is further compressed, losing detail in the process. So, for any images which are to be reused, it is important to go back to the highest-quality original and prepare it for use, again, or to select a better, newer and higher-resolution image instead.

Finally, one of the design decisions was to make the new site more graphical and less text-heavy. With that in mind, Brigitte and I—as well as Conny—went through all photos accumulated over the intervening years and events to find a new set of all images that can be used both in generic, non-specific settings to add atmosphere to the website, as well as images of specific events whose presence is going to be kept up to provide *history* and artistic merit.

2.4 Creation of all necessary service provider accounts

3 Building the Site

3.1 Preparation of new website repository

3.2 Preparation of special content types

An events type of page is necessary to deal with organising and presenting a growing list of tango events. This requires the definition of a specific *archetype* as well as *layouts* or *views* for presenting the events as individual pages or a listing.

3.3 Migration of existing content to new platform

In this stage, all the content from the legacy site is copied from the existing, legacy website to the new Hugo-based one. All pages are recreated, and any *custom* content, events in our case, are modelled and built as *fields* in the site generator.

3.4 Asset optimisation

All imagery used is uploaded onto the Cloudinary server, where Forestry.io can find it to use it in the content management system. But, it isn't enough to simply upload all the images as they are; many photos are huge, which is useful to get the best quality out of them, but it's very wasteful, too. As a preliminary step, all photos will be resized to a maximum width of 1920 pixels, then optimised heavily, before uploading to Cloudinary.

The images are optimised by creating a copy of the containing folder, after which all images are opened in macOS Preview, and resized to a maximum of 1920 pixels width.

3.5 Crafting a new look for the web site

3.5.1 Selecting and installing a theme

To keep development costs down, instead of designing a fully custom them, we will make use of one of the existing, provided, *themes* for Hugo: Forty, and customise that to a limited extent. Forty was chosen out of a possible further choice of Tracks and Aether. Aether is a very elegant and beautiful theme, but it is primarily targeted at blogs, which may later make it harder to customise for general purpose websites. While Tracks is also very good, Forty just seems to be both more recently maintained, and more generally flexible for generic website use.

3.5.2 Customising the base theme

Forty, the theme we're basing the entire look of the new site on, at least in early 2019, carries its own developer's opinions which show up as aesthetic choices across the theme. While this theme is elegant and looks good, it's not desirable to leave it as is; Paris Tango has its own established look and feel, and it will not benefit the business to use the theme and look like countless other websites also using it. Thus, the theme needs to be customised, at least superficially, to give it more of the previous, but modernised, *Paris Tango* look.

To start with, the biggest graphical element on the site is the image of the *burning* orange curtains. Forty expects this image to be called `banner.jpg` and placed in the `static/img` folder. As whatever image is placed in the top banner is likely to have distracting elements, vivid colours and many changes of contrast which will make the overlay text difficult to read, an overlay is used to dampen the image, to reduce its contrasts. Forty comes pre-built with a blue-tinted overlay, which has to change to better hew to the orange hues of the website. My starting point is to use a more complementary colour for the overlay, to fit the orange theme, and to make the background image more vivid while at the same time reducing its contrast. To this end, I've chosen the Pantone colour of the year 2019, *Living Coral (16-1546)*, with a peachy-orange hue (RGB: 250, 114, 104 | Hex: FA7268), with an opacity of 0.5 to hide certain dull details present in the image.

4 Deploying the New Website

4.1 Change DNS records

The domain name is registered with GoDaddy, using their default nameservers:

1. ns09.domaincontrol.com
2. ns10.domaincontrol.com

The following are all the DNS entries recorded for paris-tango.co.uk:

Type	Name	Value	TTL
A	@	160.153.129.215	10800
A	admin	160.153.129.215	10800
A	mail	160.153.129.215	10800
CNAME	autodiscover	autodiscover.outlook.com	1 hour
CNAME	cpanel	@	10800
CNAME	selector1.domainkey.paris-tango.co.uk	selector1-paris-tango-co-uk.domainkey.paristango.onmicrosoft.com	1 hour
CNAME	selector2.domainkey.paris-tango.co.uk	selector2-paris-tango-co-uk.domainkey.paristango.onmicrosoft.com	1 hour
CNAME	webdisk	@	10800
CNAME	webdisk.admin	@	10800
CNAME	whm	@	10800
CNAME	www	@	10800
CNAME	www.admin	@	10800
CNAME	_domainconnect	_domainconnect.gd.domaincontrol.com	1 hour
MX	@	paristango-co-uk01c.mail.protection.outlook.com	1 hour
NS	@	ns09.domaincontrol.com	1 hour
NS	@	ns10.domaincontrol.com	1 hour
SOA	@	Primary nameserver: ns09.domaincontrol.com	1 hour
TXT	@	v=spf1 include:spf.protection.outlook.com -all	1 hour
TXT	selector1.domainkey	selector1-paris-tango-co-uk.domainkey.paristango.onmicrosoft.com	1 hour

4.2 Implement final corrections

5 Time Log

Table 1: Clock summary at *[2019-03-14 Thu 01:17]*

Headline	Time		
Total time	**30:13**		
Project Summary	1:01		
Preparation	7:15		
Requirements-gathering		2:00	
Collecting necessary technical…		1:10	
Obtaining all assets		2:19	
Creation of all necessary service…		1:46	
Building the Site	18:51		
Preparation of new website repository		1:26	
Preparation of special content types		1:59	
Migration of existing content to new…		4:38	
Asset optimisation		2:25	
Crafting a new look for the web site		8:23	
Selecting and installing a theme			2:50
Customising the base theme			5:33
Deploying the New Website	3:06		
Change DNS records		1:05	
Implement final corrections		0:22	