To: Chris Lindgren

From: Zoey Thao

Subject: DITA topic model design rationale

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**Introduction**

Although I learned how to apply the float property to certain parts of my historicizing project, there was more about it that I wanted to learn, particularly using it to build a layout. Hierarchy of the topic tasks is based on a design flow that I, personally, follow; determine a web layout, then work down the page from there, starting with the navigation bar and then the content. I also assumed that users would already be familiar with HTML and have an HTML code to work with already, which I also included as a prerequisite for all my tasks.

It was difficult identifying task topics because I had to include other CSS properties and attributes in my task topics that were actually really design decisions only the users could make for themselves. Also, my topics had to do with writing HTML and CSS code, so I felt like the topics were too short. I also had a hard time thinking of what kind of concept and reference topic I could include, and how many I would need.

**Task Topics**

My first task topic was using the float property to create a homepage with a header, footer, left content and main content. I based the first topic off of a basic layout I found at <http://www.w3schools.com/> that used the float property. The first time I exported these instructions, there was an error, and I thought it was because I needed to place the closing cmd element at the very end of a step. However, after doing that, there was still an error. So, I scrolled through the command terminal and noticed the repeated words of a missing child element. I referred back to Bellamy et al to see which element I needed if I wanted to include an unordered list. I repeated this a lot as I was creating my DITA files. I found that the easiest element to use that would get the structure I wanted was to include an info element. After inserting that into my code, the export was a success.

For my second task topic, I wrote on using the float property to create a horizontal menu. When I first started my historicizing project, I didn’t know that menus were created as an unordered list, and that the default layout was vertical. I used similar instructions to when I created a horizontal menu with links in a list for my historicizing project.

Since I only applied the float property to the image I included in my historicizing project, for the third task topic, I had to research steps on how to float an image with a caption. I found these steps at <http://css.maxdesign.com.au/floatutorial/>.

**Concept Topic**

As for my concept topic, which is applicable to all my task topics, I chose to thoroughly define the float property since I didn’t know what a float property was. As I researched for this project, I found it useful to know what the definition of “float” is because, although using the property may be simple, it has so many uses.

**Reference Topic**

Finally, for my reference topic, which is also applicable to all my task topics, I thought it would be beneficial to know what the resulting floated element(s) would look like or do after being applied. This would allow users to quickly decide on what they need and move on with their design.

**Structure**

Overall, I was still confused about exactly what our DITA projects were supposed to include and how the final outcome of our projects should look like. I didn’t know if it was supposed to have all the information from the task analysis, or if it needed to be structured like an official manual, complete with an introduction and everything. So, I chose to include what I knew needed to be in the project, which were the three task topics, a concept topic, and a reference topic.

I included the task topics first because that’s what users look for immediately, the how-to section. I inserted the concept topic next because I thought that was what users would be the most curious about next; they know how to use the float property now, but they may not be clear on all the ways it can be used. I included the reference topic last so users could have an idea of what floated elements should look like and compare their results to it.

**Conclusion**

Even though I was confused by this entire project, I still think I learned a lot from it. I particularly like how I can create a PDF from it and think it’ll continue to be something useful in the future. Through this DITA project, I also learned a lot more about the float property and how I could use it for any future web design projects I may take on.