TPAC 2017: MDN + W3C Breakout Session

Matt from MDN is running the session.

Goals of new MDN board

- Documentation and standards have a better relationship.
- Another more specific goal to publish together in one place, MDN.
- MDN - MDN stands for developer network now (trying to move away from browser specifics).
- Find bridges between documentation sets.

[Product Advisory Board composition](#)

Questions

- Will there be others at the table?
  - Yes, we approached more groups than what is there now, and expect to grow.
- MDN has lots of Mozilla stuff on it, will this remain?
  - Mozilla specifics will move off of MDN.
- Are we only documenting web technologies that are part of browsers? (Dan)

Topics of discussion

- Both W3C and MDN write documents about web technology. What are the useful ways in which we can work together?
  - Some of Dom's ideas on how this might work:
    - Once you start a new spec, make it easier for us to review it and understand it, including writing an explainer doc about how to use the spec. This was brought up in TAG, as part of improving spec.

      Some examples of good explainers that the TAG has identified:
      - https://github.com/w3c/ServiceWorker/blob/master/explainer.md
      - https://github.com/zkoch/paymentrequest/blob/gh-pages/docs/explainer.md
      - https://github.com/WICG/web-share/blob/master/docs/explainer.md
      - https://github.com/WICG/ViewportAPI/blob/gh-pages/README.md
      - https://github.com/WICG/EventListenerOptions/blob/gh-pages/explainer.md

    - Dom's idea to make this explainer as input into the documentation. Maybe the explainer could be done in MDN, and then shared outward to other documentation site owners (like W3C).

- - - Style guide for CSS, JavaScript at MDN, and maybe we could bring that style guide into the earlier stage of specifications.
    - One of the big values of MDN are the compatibility tables-- browser compatibility. There may be some useful sharing based on a test suite on browser compatibility.
    - It is very hard for W3C groups to get input from the developers (audience). A lot of developers know MDN and go to MDN to get documentation. Find ways to establish communication between W3C standards, and the actual way in which developers use the APIs. Developers will have a central place to input feedback on the actual web standards themselves.
  - Joe Medley's ideas
    - Base API page in MDN as the defined format for API docs, which the explainer doc could feed easily into.
    - Explainers are meant to be most beneficial to users of API, rather than the implementers. Need to make sure that is stated fairly clearly.
      - Dan responding to that specifically on the Explainer-- he is working with Alex Russell on what a good explainer looks like. Try and write this from the perspective that you are a developer, and you need to understand how you would use this feature.
      - Explainers would be living documents, quite often written before the specification itself. They should be material that can be drawn upon, that can produce the eventual documentation that might sit in MDN.
      - MDN docs could link directly to the explainer doc. TAG group is encouraging authors of explainers to think from the implementation point of view.
- Re-iterating the possibility of letting developers give feedback on the API itself through MDN-- so let's say there's a question about how to implement something across browsers, and the developer has trouble understanding the actual API complexities, that developer can give feedback directly to spec owners.
- Simon Peters from bocoup
  - MDN might lag behind the specification work, so is there a way to figure out what is working through web platform tests, put some expectations on updating documentation as part of intent to ship.
  - Patrick - possibility of requiring explainer docs as part of having specifications move forward.
  - Simon-- we don't want to put more stress on specification authors.
- Matt (MDN) - One of the goals of having an advisory board, is to have more people working on the documentation. There's only so much of the docs that can be automated. More parties will feel that they have an investment, so we will want to improve the quality of the documentation.

- Joe Medley: MDN documentation takes over at the point the explainer document ceases to need to be. If it is something that's new or still in development, which is when the explainer is active. But when the specification stabilizes, the explainer and updates to it move to MDN.
- Matt: we need to define a set of criteria for when a new page gets made.
- Tzvia: I have a spec, I have many best practices, how do I get that into MDN?
- Re-examination of how we write developer docs.
- ACTION: PAB to evaluate addition of EPUB documentation / best practices to MDN (and get back to Tzvia)
- Joe - MDN tables have been constructed by hand (browser compatibility tables). Now maintained in [JSON github](#) repo. Ability to generate boilerplate for pages for new API content. Beyond page generation, what if your autocomplete could have a little symbol next to it to see if something is widely used, and could go to MDN.
- Greg - currently what I see in caniuse is browser usage, not API usage.
- Dan - having come out of the polyfill session, this topic is relevant. When should something be considered usable.
- Matt - talking about caniuse. Ton of great opportunity here to connect up to caniuse with MDN.
- All of the dashboards are already ingesting all the dashboards on Web API usage. Browser Status pages are already built from well-defined data sources, and there is ongoing work in aligning their formats.
- Bocoup very interested in taking on more responsibility in how we document the web. How do we identify the areas that are lacking
- Meggin and Patrick discussing how we can better identify the highest priorities for developers, and target these priorities in our docs. For example, chromestatus.com tells us which APIs are most widely used, and we could be better driving good docs for these most used features.
- Matt - MDN has quite a bit of historical content on browser compatibility. Can we get something very simple, like a button that allows you to test if your browser supports a particular API. We should be driving browser compatibility more from the perspective of web platform tests.
  - Greg - There are a lot of people not in the room who are not for using WPT to determine compatibility support.
- [Confluence tool](#) developed by foolip can serve as input to mdn-compatibility.
- Simon - Sharing [Web Platform Test dashboard](#).
  - It should be possible to have some sort of way to tag tests that matter, that are in web platform tests, and use that as input for MDN.
  - There are tests that show if the feature works. Doesn't go into error handling, or edge cases, but at the basic level, says if the feature is usable by web developers.
- Dan - I don't know how the other members of the board think about this, but a lot of people ask Dan, 'Didn't we already do this, isn't it called webplatform docs?' It didn't reflect reality. When someone comes to MDN, and it gives them not great information,

that will create a bad reputation for MDN doc. We need to make sure that we drive it from the perspective of web developers and what gives them the best chance for success.

- Documenting bugs in the platform is hard-- better to open a ticket in the platform rather than documenting it in MDN.
- ACTION: PAB to review intersection of WPT and MDN Compat tables
- If you ever looked at caniuse structured data, there's a footnote section that says if something works. That's extremely valuable information.
- Meggin - question about the ability to make suggestions to change/improve the infrastructure of MDN itself: https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/MDN/Contribute/Tools/KumaScript.
- Jake: is there a formal pattern for titling pages?
  - It might live in Chris Mills' head.
  - (From Meggin - this would be a good thing to get on paper.)
  - Dom - do you think there should be some kind of group to handle the naming conventions? Perhaps a more formalized approach, and the naming convention might come up.
  - Jake has a lot of ideas on how to name better. ACTION ITEM - Meggin to get more specifics on this, as she couldn't type fast enough.
- Matt: compounding the naming thing, MDN's onsite search could be better ('not awesome'). It is still pulling up older pages.