

Getting your feature adopted: learn to work with technical writers

Short link: bit.ly/tpac-owd

IRC: [irc.w3.org / #techdoc](https://irc.w3.org/#techdoc)

Zoom:

<https://w3c.zoom.us/j/86540071286?pwd=Qzl1VGkvdVg1SUIWVVBVR1kyZ1hkQT09>

Attendees

(Please add yourself to the list!)

- Florian Scholz (Open Web Docs)
- Patrick Brosset (Microsoft)
- Rachel Andrew (Google)
- Dominique Hazaël-Massieux (W3C)
- Dan Murphy (Google Chrome)
- Oriol Brufau (Igalia)
- Fuqiao Xue (W3C)
- Gautier Chomel (EDRLab)
- Shawn Lawton Henry (W3C)
- Laurent Le Meur ([EDRLab](https://www.edrlab.org/))
- Brian Smith (Mozilla)
- Ruth John (Mozilla)
- Daniel Beck (independent, on contract to Google)
- François Daoust (W3C)
- Sam Macbeth (DuckDuckGo)

Agenda

- Brief introduction to technical writing for the web platform. Importance of feature adoption, and about docs being the only way web devs can really use features.
- What's OWD and how can we help you? What makes a good collaboration with technical writers from OWD and elsewhere?
- Discussion & questions from the queue

Question Queue

(Please add your question!)

- (Florian Scholz) How can doc sites like MDN better keep track of changes in ever changing living specs? (and at the same time avoiding documenting “spec fiction”).
- (Florian Scholz) How can we group more effectively to plan educational content? I think this now happens for the first time with the “Secure the Web Forward” workshop for security related documentation. Could it happen with other topics or working groups? How are working groups thinking about (helping to) create educational content for their APIs/technologies right now?

Notes

- Florian: MDN Web Docs is one of the most popular site documenting the Web platform, including browser compat data; We Web Docs writers read the specs so that Web developers don't have. If your feature doesn't have public documentation, chances are that most developers won't know about it
- Florian: OWD is a non-profit open collective, donation-based, a team of technical writers contributing mostly to MDN Web Docs; would like to establish closer collaboration with WGs to get more effective with documenting features you're specifying
- Rachel: on the Google side, we have a lot of features that don't have documentation; I've been investing a lot in documenting some of the Chrome-only features. Having features documented help noticeably with adoption - more so than release time in Chrome, documentation release time is a critical inflection point.
- Patrick: many of you may recall MSDN the Microsoft-specific documentation platform which included documentation of Web features; we then decided to re-focus our efforts on standardized features in MDN
- Rachel: we document origin-trial features on web.dev and then migrate them to MDN once they become stable; we think the actual references should be in a central space
- Mike™: I review PRs and triage issues on MDN content; we have a pool of code owners for MDN that the bot uses to assign PRs automatically; we're doing a very good job of managing PRs. But there is a core set of 600-700 open issues, some of them are blocked for lack of domain knowledge. Getting more subject matter experts would help get these issues to the right reviewers. I'm also interesting in hearing experience on other projects how they deal with this large amount of issue triage that is needed
- Rachel: issues get stuck often for lack of subject matter expertise; this is about maintaining the relationships (and not just at the time of the release)
- Patrick: I've worked on a number of after-the-fact documentation - e.g.. A year after release; at that point, it becomes really hard to get accurate up-to-date information, even as someone working at a browser company
- Rachel: that's one reason it is worth investing in documentation at the moment when the feature is landing, when there is still lots of momentum and interest

- Mike: MDN content gets 169 per month, we resolve 170 - compared to the top hundred projects; MDN content is in the top 14 in terms of issues get each month; we do a pretty good job, but I imagine we could do better and would like to learn from other projects
- Rachel: there are unresolvable issues; e.G. when the issue becomes into a stalemate due to divergence of opinions on the right approach to documenting a given piece.
- Dan (Google Chrome): creating a space of actionable issues; those that are expected to be unresolvable should be moved out of the way of contributors. As an implementor working on installable Web apps - I mostly work with devrel; I'm interested in how we could incorporate working with MDN in our processes.
- Rachel: it's a standardized Web platform feature, we can get it on MDN
- Ruth: we should distinguish issues that are blocked because of a statement, vs needing SME, vs other situations; the trickiest part is getting focus not on new features, but on features that are no longer under the highest focus. The Google Developer Experts team might a group worth approaching for help.
- @@@: re triage - we put a lot effort on categorizing and labeling issues on the repo
- Mike: we label issues as "good first issue" and with estimates of how long they might take; some of the incentives though attract not necessarily the highest quality of contributions
- Patrick: relatedly, keeping track of spec changes?
- Florian: a lot of the work on MDN to get web platforms documented can take 2 forms:
 - Getting new shipping stuff documented
 - Maintaining existing documentation, and keeping it in good shape as a set, not just individual pages
- Florian: OWD tends to focus more on the latter, and we've worked e.g. on PWA, or Web Performance pages; this has been successful, but only when we work with a team of SME to bring this type of documentation to the next level. The "Secure the Web Forward" workshop is exploring among other topics the state of developer documentation material and its impact on securing the Web. Do we need tutorials? Curriculums? More info about security concepts in browsers? We need experts to develop that kind of more holistic look at the landscape of documentation. That kind of approach also helped reducing some of these longstanding issues
- Rachel: in general, detecting the signal of many issues on a given topic is a good way to detect situations that need a more holistic approach on documentation set; it's good OWD is leading this (e.g. compared to the focus of my team which is more on plugging gaps due to new features)
- Florian: please come talk to me / OWD to identify potential gaps in existing documentation that might be relevant to your group / your technologies
- Shawn (W3C, WAI): I'm a former tech writer; in WAI, we desperately need skilled technical editors; if we can have the information that W3C provides be more well-written, it makes it easier for additional documentation you provide on MDN or elsewhere. If you have any suggestions for resources, folks that might be interested in the technical editing on the accessibility resources we develop at W3C, it would be greatly appreciated. A heavily used set of resources that could use most help in technical editing is the "[understanding WCAG](#)" docs.

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/new-in-22/> is a succinct overview of what's new, with links for each of those to an "understanding" documents. There are opportunities to make them more usable and understandable.

- Patrick: are those on MDN already?
- Shawn: no; I looked at MDN materials on accessibility a while ago; one good question is what should be on MDN vs W3C; e.g. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/ARIA/apg/>
- Florian: there may be a useful broader conversation on dev materials MDN vs W3C
- Patrick: this should be a conversation with MDN, OWD
- Dom: I'd be happy to help organize a structured conversation on this; this is also relevant to I18N
- Robert: MDN had a satisfaction survey; is that still happening?
- Ruth: @@@
- Robert: making sure there is a feedback loop on docs sounds like a useful thing
- @@@: each page has a link to the github repo to file an issue or PR
- Robert: getting a thumbs up/thumbs down feedback might be useful sentiment analysis