



Directorate-General for Translation

# Standards for multilingual web sites

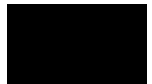
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M.T. Carrasco Benitez

EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION



# Multilingual Web Sites (MWS)

- Web sites with multilingual parallel texts
  - Texts that are translations of each other
- Most EU institutions are MWS
  - <http://europa.eu>
- Necessary for a real multilingual WWW
- Great practical relevance



# Principles

- **Break nothing**
  - Forget about changes to the basic standards
  - Enter the dance without causing any missteps
- **It will take a lot of work and time**
  - To create the standards and programs



# Two sides of the same coin

## ■ User

- Readers of web sites
  - Admittedly, users are often content contributors

## ■ Webmaster

- Builders of web sites
  - An idealised function that are in fact many functions

## ■ This is a simplification

- The real world is more fuzzy



# Present situation

## ■ User

- No consistent multilingual user interface
- User have different experience when visiting unrelated MWS; and even in the same web site
  - **The user should always have the same experience in MWS**

## ■ Webmaster

- Bespoke systems are built each time
- It should be possible to built a new MWS with standard off-the-shelf software
  - **Existing software are not interoperable**
  - **Each CMS keep the data in their way**



# Point of views

## ■ User

- Mostly monolingual or get a second-best language
- Language selection is just hurdle
- Like localization (L10N)

## ■ Webmaster

- Must manage a multilingual system
- Building and maintaining systems with parallel texts is complex
- Like internationalization (I18N)



# Characteristics

- **User**
  - Grand public
  - A small additional complexity could be disastrous
- **Webmaster**
  - Professionals
  - A bit more adventurous, but not much



# Interfaces

## ■ User

- Interface browser ↔ server
- Standards: well established
  - **Additional guidelines are needed**

## ■ Webmaster

- Interface server ↔ content
  - **Even the directory based content is not fully compatible**
- Standards: practically none





# User 1

- User interface - best practice guide
- Interface browser ↔ server
- Main functionalities
  - Get the best page
  - See other variants (linguistic versions)
- Implementations
  - Browser side
  - Server side



# User 2

## ■ Browser side

- Language button in the browser
  - Using HTTP header fields
  - Implementable with current specifications
- Transparent Content Negotiation (TCN), cookies, etc
  - Very good, but little used – it might be too smart
  - Language is just one of the dimensions in TCN

## ■ Server side

- A reserved URI – `http://example.com/mypage/variant`
  - This will show all the variants for the page “mypage”
  - Another approach is a federation of server a la Wikipedia
    - ☐ `http://de.wikipedia.org` - `http://fr.wikipedia.org`



# User 3

- Translation request
  - As potentially available language – a variant
    - Immediately or referred
    - This will integrate machine translation
- Variants might have to be extended
  - Previous versions could be a variant dimension
  - Or a new *metaresource* concept would be required
- It should also be valid for wikis



# Webmaster 1

- New standards as they do not exist
- Interface server ↔ content
  - General requirement - not limited to MWS
  - Web server ↔ content management systems (CMS)
- Solve MWS and leave hooks for the others
  - Otherwise, it might take forever



# Webmaster 2

- Content ↔ content generation
  - Basic functionalities might be part of MWS
    - Page generation
  - A full translation system should be out of scope
    - Further interfaces or hooks
- The full framework
  - Authorship, Translation and Publishing Chain
    - ATP-chain
- Translation is expensive



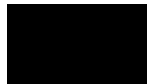
# Next step

- Create a new working group
- It should be in the I18N Activity of the W3C
  - What is the procedure?
- If the W3C is not interested
  - In an exiting one, such as the IETF
  - A dedicated initiative



# To do list

- Two "standards"
  - *Multilingual web best practice guide for user interface*
  - *Multilingual web best practice guide for content management*
- Paper + running code
  - Reference development
- Implementing early mechanisms already in the standards and server side
  - Language button
  - Variant URI



# End

- Interested parties have a look to
- [MultilingualWebSites.org](http://MultilingualWebSites.org)

