Report and Recommendations CLF Definition

Web Advisory Committee

CLF Definition Sub-Group

February 26, 2008

Table of Contents

Summary

The Web Advisory Committee created sub-groups to investigate certain aspects of the University of Waterloo (UW) Common Look and Feel (CLF) Standard. Our CLF Definition Sub-Group was tasked with identifying where the CLF is unclear and with providing a set of recommendations for areas that should be covered by the CLF.

Our group reviewed and discussed items currently identified in the CLF Standard (see Appendix A) and the CLF template. Our group also addressed items that were not included in the CLF Standard and the CLF template.

Another group, the CLF Navigation Sub-Group, was given the task to investigate the CLF navigation issues; therefore, our group did not investigate the navigation in much detail.

During our meetings, each item was discussed while keeping four things in mind:
1. what the CLF Standard and template currently state
2. current observations on campus websites
3. identifying and recommending short-term solutions for implementation
4. considerations for a future CLF Standard and template

Although there were seven meetings, some items were discussed in more detail within smaller groups and then the results reported at the next meeting.

We concluded that the CLF Standard has many unclear and missing areas. Some of these areas were either missed in the initial CLF Standard or were not considerations in 2004. This has resulted in confusion and inconsistencies as to what is – and what is not – allowed on UW websites.

Since the branding of UW is currently under discussion with senior administration, major changes will no doubt occur to the template in the future. Therefore, we believe there is no added value to completely replacing the CLF template at this time. We believe tweaking the current template, along with better documentation, will provide clarity and guidance to new and current webmasters and developers.

We recommend that
1. the current downloadable CLF template be tweaked with the recommended enhancements indicated for each item addressed in this document;
2. the WebOps team be tasked with implementing these recommended enhancements;
3. the tweaked-CLF template be encouraged for new websites;
4. the tweaked-CLF template be adopted by current websites – if resources are available;
5. better documentation be made available on the WebOps website; and
6. the noted future considerations be made available to the committee developing a new template.

We would like to thank the Web Advisory Committee for giving us the opportunity to bring these recommendations forward.

Sub-Group Members

Glenn Anderson (IST), Guillermo Fuentes (Arts), Eva Grabinski (Office of Research), Jason Greatrex (IST), Alan Kirker (IST), Pat Lafranier (IST – Chair), Megan McDermott (CPA), Isaac Morland (CS), Kevin Paxman (Graphics), Matt Regehr (Graphics), Andrew Smith (ES), Paul Snyder (IST), Kelley Teahen (CPA), Heather Wey (IST).

Meetings

The sub-group met seven times. Minutes and documents are available online:

October 11, 2007: https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/~twiki/bin/view/WebAdvisory/ClfDefinitionOct112007
October 14, 2007: https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/~twiki/bin/view/WebAdvisory/ClfDefinitionOct242007
November 15, 2007: https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/~twiki/bin/view/WebAdvisory/ClfDefinitionNov152007
December 7, 2007: https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/~twiki/bin/view/WebAdvisory/ClfDefinitionDec072007
January 23, 2008: https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/~twiki/bin/view/WebAdvisory/ClfDefinitionJan232008
February 5, 2008: https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/~twiki/bin/view/WebAdvisory/ClfDefinitionFeb052008
February 14, 2008: https://strobe.uwaterloo.ca/~twiki/bin/view/WebAdvisory/ClfDefinitionFeb142008

Introduction

In 2004, the University of Waterloo (UW) developed a Common Look and Feel (CLF) Standard for its websites. In February 2005, the UW Web Steering Committee reviewed and approved the standard.

While some aspects of the new "look" were mandated, developers were given considerable freedom in the implementation of their websites.

By mid-2006, the majority of campus websites, including some church colleges, made the transition to the new UW CLF. This required a great deal of resources, such as time, training, skill, software costs, and ongoing maintenance.

Although much progress has been made, the CLF and its implementation have their issues. The goal for the CLF Definition Sub-Group was to identify areas where the CLF is unclear and to provide a set of recommendations for areas that should be covered by the CLF.

The following *Discussion* section addresses items that are either unclear or missing in the CLF (referred to as **Item**). There is a summary for each item that describes what the CLF Standard currently provides (referred to as **CLF Standard**); what is currently being observed on UW websites (referred to as **Observation**); what can be done in the short term without replacing the template (referred to as **Recommend**); and what should be considered for the future, replacement template (referred to as **Future Considerations**).

Discussion

Header Elements

Item: UW Logo
CLF Standard:
1. mandatory on all levels
2. mandatory to use image supplied with the template
3. logo linked to http://www.uwaterloo.ca
4. left-aligned at top of the page

Observation: most departments across campus have followed the standard; however, there are a few areas that have not used the UW logo or have placed it in other locations on their web pages
Recommend:
1. must use the complete UW logo (for example, cannot use only the shield)
2. use logo and not a word mark
3. the file http://www.uwaterloo.ca/images/template/uwlogo.gif should be used, which is the correct size and colour

Future Considerations:
1. modify logo
2. enforcement

Item: Search Box
CLF Standard:
1. mandatory on all levels
2. right-aligned at top of the page
3. clearly labelled as to the search content (examples: "UW Search", "Arts Search", "Find Someone at UW")
4. recommend maximum of 3 search types on each page-search area with exception of the Library

Observation: most campus websites have implemented a search engine; many have expressed interest in a central search engine with flexibility to search multiple domains; others have customized their own search engines to accommodate these demands
Recommend allow drop-menu search
Future Considerations:
1. revisit Library's exception to limit of 3 search types
2. search results should lead through UW main search and should not be customized
3. a central search engine or a utility flexible to search multiple domains and its implementation within the CLF definition

Item: Unit Title
CLF Standard:
1. mandatory on all levels
2. right-aligned below the search box, and placed above the banner and the content
3. recommend that may include a link to the parent-faculty or -department home page
4. must be a graphic using font-name and -size specifications (Eidetic Neo Regular, 20 points is currently generated by UW Graphics script and is part of the CLF Standard, but has not been documented)

Observation: different fonts are being used for the unit title, and the unit title is not always linked to the corresponding unit home page

Recommend:
1. should be black in colour
2. must link to the unit's top-level page
3. specific positioning that is right-aligned below the search box, and is above the banner and the content

Future Considerations:
1. investigate replacement for unit font, which is currently Eidetic Neo Regular and is proprietary; this font was initially selected by UW for print design
2. with a multi-level title, link to the top level of the unit's main site, state the min-max sizes, note that the title must be a graphic
3. consider the use of regular text – instead of a graphic – as the unit title for usability and accessibility reasons; the use of text – rather than a graphic – enhances usability and accessibility by facilitating better and clearer resizing of the words, and header tags (instead of image alt tags) in the code better facilitate accessibility for those using screen-readers; a standardised font and size can be specified in CSS that controls the look of the unit title to help achieve a consistent look-and-feel across UW websites – taking into account that fonts render slightly differently across browsers and platforms

Item: Graphic Effect in Header
CLF Standard: no mention
Observation: website using an effect
Recommend:
Future Considerations: none

Item: Alt Attribute
CLF Standard: no mention
Observation: some websites are not using this attribute in the header, which is required to address accessibility needs
Recommend: mandatory requirement. Should use the alt attribute with appropriate wording to describe the function of each visual
Future Considerations: none

Image – Collage/Photo

Image dimensions: width of 755 pixels; height of 145 pixels

Item: Collage/Photo (a.k.a. Banner)
CLF Standard:
1. mandatory on the first-level page
2. image size of 755 x 145 pixels
3. recommend that, if a seasonal image is used, the image should change with the season

Observation: various differences exist in the sizes of campus website banners; many departments have incurred unnecessary expenses in acquiring a graphic and have accepted less-than-ideal solutions. Poor quality photos are being used on some websites.

Recommend:
1. default image to be provided as per CLF Standard
2. if using Flash, make sure there is a static replacement banner
3. multiple images in a single banner are acceptable
4. specify position – below unit title and above content
5. specify that the image should be saved as the specified size and not adjusted to size by the browser
6. note generally accepted rule that custom campus web applications (i.e. UW-ACE) exempt from banner on first-level web page although encouraged if possible
7. rotational quote within the banner, such as on the Faculty of Arts home page, is acceptable

Future Considerations:
1. make an image gallery available, and investigate a related publication agreement for use of the images
2. reconsider the position and size of the banner image in the UW website template; this will be impacted by the width and layout of a new template, which is addressed in the Template item of this document; reconsideration is recommended due to higher screen-resolutions and the related wider-standard widths of websites; consideration should be given to the target audiences of UW websites since this will impact on template dimensions, and hence banner-image size; as well, reconsideration should be given to the aspect ratio (in other words, the width-to-height ratio) of the banner image – concern has been expressed that it is hard to find and crop images that work well within the current banner-image aspect ratio

Other Images on a Web Page

Item: Secure Images
CLF Standard: no mention
Recommend: update template with a workaround for the secure files, which can be found at:
  css = https://info.uwaterloo.ca/www/css/
  images = https://info.uwaterloo.ca/www/images/
Future Considerations: universal method to link images for next revision

Navigation Elements

The CLF Navigation Sub-Group is investigating more thoroughly

Item: Left-Hand Main Navigation
CLF Standard:
1. mandatory on all three levels
2. occurs on left-hand side of main section of page
3. primary- or main-menu items on the first-level page
4. primary and expanded submenus on second-level pages, and likewise on the third level pages in order to provide a context for the pages
5. no more than seven items appear on the primary menu, and nine or fewer on the submenus
6. good design suggests that menu-item text should be: kept to a minimum; concise; descriptive; meaningful
7. CSS will enforce appropriate case settings
8. avoid departmental jargon and acronyms in the menus – if further explanation is required consider putting the link inside the content of a web page
9. faculties collectively determine a core set of menu items to be found on all faculty sites, and find consistent language and ordering for those items

Observation: some sites have exceeded the recommended limits or have presented their main links across the top of the website; units with complex data have found the 2-level menu structure overly restrictive and have resorted to other non-standard navigation techniques

Recommend:
1. left navigation unless the page requires a "full view", such as an instructional page, complex on-line forms, the Daily Bulletin – which is recognized as a termination page, etc.
2. must not include neither "fly-out" nor pop-up menus due to accessibility issues
3. sub-navigation appears below section title only when in the section
4. clarification in the CLF Standard stating, "It is strongly recommended that no more than seven items appear on the primary menu, and nine or fewer on the submenus." (On the WebOps website, the section *Building Your Navigation* states "no more than seven to nine items appear on the primary menu")
5. although capitalization of navigation menu items is supposed to be enforced by the Central CSS, this is currently not occurring; recommend not implementing as it has the potential to "break" branded-navigation items (i.e. iPhone and eCommerce would be incorrectly displayed); also noted under the Central CSS item)
6. Clarification that the top-bar "content title" should contain text to match the navigation menu
7. menu indicator as to which item is active is acceptable but not mandatory

Future Considerations:
1. clarify requirement of a left-hand "home" menu item
2. if technologically convenient, consider the inclusion of a breadcrumb path at the top of the web page to assist users with navigation; breadcrumb paths are becoming more common with increased inside-website-page landings as a way to assist users with navigation; consideration is being given to breadcrumb paths by the CLF Navigation Sub-Group

Item: Secondary Navigation (a.k.a. rightnavmenu and secondnavarea in template; also referred to as a third column)
CLF Standard:
1. optional
2. must be right-hand column of the main-page area
3. recommend that this area could be used for links specific to a menu item selected (e.g., "Cool Arts Jobs" for Current Students submenu area), or which are transient, to replace the "buttons" currently in use, for additional images, news items (e.g., upcoming events)

Observation: there is no consistency in how the right column is being used
Recommend:
1. right-hand "navigation area" name change to "right sidebar" to avoid confusion and promote its versatility
2. does not have to be navigation

Future Considerations: should consider guidelines or limits in future implementations

Item: Tertiary Navigation
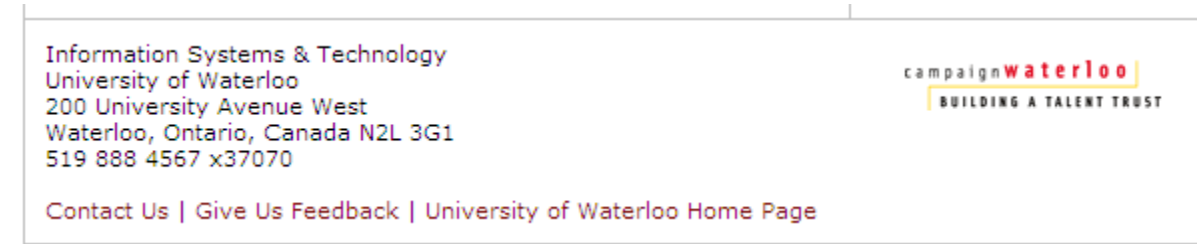**CLF Standard:** no mention
Observation: a few websites have introduced third level navigation
Recommend: the CLF Navigation Sub-Group is addressing this issue
Future Considerations:

Footer Elements

CLF Standard: must be at the "bottom of page"

Item: Official Unit Address Including UW Campus Location
CLF Standard:
1. mandatory on all levels
2. bottom of page, aligned on left under the body being displayed

Observation: inconsistency across sites with the type of information
Recommend: full unit address and unit title in header must match
Future Considerations:
1. mandatory address parts need to be discussed (i.e. building, room number, mailing address)
2. whether phone number and extension should be included with address
3. find a solution to allow the full unit address without taking up too much space

Item: Campaign Waterloo Promotional Logo
CLF Standard:
1. mandatory to use the Campaign Waterloo logo as supplied with the template
2. mandatory at all levels
3. bottom of the page, to right of the address, right-aligned
4. logo default- links to the main Campaign Waterloo website (http://www.campaign.uwaterloo.ca/) – this link can be changed to point to unit-campaign websites (which should have a pointer to the main Campaign Waterloo website)

Observation: not all sites are following the CLF Standard
Recommend: any new UW promotional logo needs to remain the same size; mandatory to point to the central image location http://www.uwaterloo.ca/images/template/littlecampaignlogo.gif
Future Considerations:
1. template allows flexible size for new logo dimension change
2. space allocated for central university promotional material

Item: Three Key Links (Contact us | Website feedback | Faculty of …)
CLF Standard:
1. mandatory at all levels
2. bottom of the page, aligned on left under the body and under the department address

Observation: some links have not changed from the default
Recommend:
1. "mailto" links should be avoided because mail clients on public computers not configured
2. clarify each setting:
   a. recommend "Contact Us" link should link to a page of contacts with various methods of contact (phone, fax...)
   b. recommend "Website feedback" be a link to a form or a web page containing contact information – the contact should be the appropriate person or group responsible for website maintenance

      c.   "Faculty of …" should be a link to the unit home and the link should be the home-page URL

Future Considerations:
1. "Contact Us" and "Website feedback" links can be merged if information is handled by the same person but this should be given careful consideration before implementation
2. Recommend a standard feedback form

Additions to Footer – either being used or being questioned

Item: Department/Unit Logo
CLF Standard: no mention
Observation: exist on some websites; the physical positions of the logos vary (in the footer or on the banner)
Recommend:
1. dimension is no larger than UW Promotional logo
2. positioned to the left of the unit address in the footer
3. logo links to unit home
4. only one logo allowed
5. not a promotional logo but a unit /department logo
Future Considerations: none

Item: Department/Unit Campaign Logo
CLF Standard: alludes to being on a separate web page and not in the website footer ("The UW Promotional logo can be linked to this page.")
Observation: clarification needed due to various degrees of non-compliance
Recommend: none
Future Considerations: recommend the Campaign Waterloo Committee advise

Item: Copyright Text and Symbol
CLF Standard: no mention
Observation: some sites have added copyright information (text and symbol) in the footer
Recommend:
1. not required
2. if used, place copyright in the footer to the right of the "Faculty of…" link
3. if not linked elsewhere, recommend linking to a disclaimer issued from UWinfo (http://www.uwaterloo.ca/copyright.html)
Future Considerations: as stated by UW's Copyright Officer
1. advise putting a copyright notice on the website; there is no prescribed format for a copyright notice
2. include the date to represent the year of creation; one can put a range of dates, or one can put just the current year if the website is frequently updated
3. provide a note that a copyright notice does not imply taking ownership of the material on the site – it merely indicates that the site as a whole is owned by UW; individual components of the site may still be owned by different persons or entities; this is standard practice; to clarify this, one may wish to include mention of this on a copyright-information page
4. consider amount of information to be included on a copyright notice for a webpage; recommend further investigation of other university websites and of government, non-profit and law-firm websites to determine what type of notice is appropriate for specific purposes – or seek legal advice

Additional Items

Template

Item: Screen Width
CLF Standard: template implementation only offers fixed width – although not stated as such in the CLF Standard
Observation: standards for screen width have changed from the original design of 800 x 600 pixels to both larger standard sizes and smaller for mobile devices; some sites have gone beyond the standard's defined fixed width (larger fixed width, 100% width, liquid)
Recommend: must ensure design integrity (i.e. collage) if implementing variable-screen or greater-fixed-screen width
Future Considerations: consider offering alternatives to the fixed width keeping flexibility in mind that will allow an easier adaptation to evolving technology

Item: UW CLF HTML Template
CLF Standard: uses transitional XHTML
Observation: often code within the template is not transitional
Recommend: must use a minimum of transitional XHTML if not using the CLF template
Future Considerations: need to investigate what code is best

Item: Template Code References
CLF Standard: references to web.uwaterloo.ca and jrodgers@admmail
Observation: references are out-of-date
Recommend: remove or update these references in the template
Future Considerations: refrain from personal email accounts being used in a template; use a generic account with a forward to the appropriate personal account(s)

Item: Only Dreamweaver Template Provided
CLF Standard: only one template is offered with optional properties, such as second navigation and banner
Observation: approximately 25% of campus sites have implemented the CLF Standard using other solutions; some areas have partially or completely re-written the default HTML and CSS with varying results
Recommend:
1. for a non-Dreamweaver template, state which XHTML components are mandatory and which can be overridden
2. strongly recommend that sites use only the provided template code and link to the Central CSS
3. if re-coding is necessary, the result should match the CLF Standard as closely as possible
Future Considerations:
1. more flexibility by providing different templates; these templates need to be consistent and point to the Central CSS
2. provide program-generated template, perhaps a cgi script
3. provide SSI version of the CLF Standard that includes the program-generated portions
4. provide links to externally created templates and twiki/WordPress skins in a central repository
5. template should be revised more frequently to keep up with the new web coding standards and techniques

Item: Options Available
CLF Standard: only one template is offered with optional properties
Observation: many websites have varied the format of the default template; some successfully, others achieving an effect that does not support the high reputation and standards of UW
Recommend: none

Future Considerations: provide a set of complementary, professionally designed templates to all units with some variety while achieving a common look and feel for UW

Item: Separating Content from Presentation
CLF Standard: not mentioned
Observation: the navigation structure of the current template is embedded in each HTML page making changes to the CLF difficult and time consuming
Recommend: none
Future Considerations: template formats be reviewed to see if a greater separation of navigation and content can be achieved

Item: Right Navigation Forces Itself Into Footer Space
CLF Standard: not mentioned
Observation: right-navigation areas overlap into the footers when right-navigation area is too long
Recommend: current way to fix is adding carriage returns at the bottom of the main-content area
Future Considerations: make allowance in template to correct

Item: Browsers Render Differently When Implementing CSS
CLF Standard: current template addresses IE7 printing problem
Observation: browsers will render differently
Recommend: inline comments should be documented in the code specifying the rendering difference for the browser and platform (if applicable)
Future Considerations: have a progressive method to serve different CSSs, if necessary

Item: Central Custom Style Sheet (Central CSS)
CLF Standard:
   1. use the Central CSS, which controls page layout
   2. can create own custom CSS to override the central CSS
   3. comment statement within UWblank.css states "YOU MAY NOT COPY THIS CSS BUT YOU MAY LINK TO IT"
Observation: some have copied the Central CSS to their own servers; some are using their own CSS
Recommend: although capitalization of navigation menu items is supposed to be enforced by the Central CSS, this is currently not occurring; recommend not implementing as it has the potential to "break" branded-navigation items (i.e. iPhone and eCommerce would be incorrectly displayed); also noted under Left-Hand Main Navigation item
Future Considerations: provide various CSSs: tables, lists, sidebars, mobile version…

Item: Custom CSS
CLF Standard: although not mentioned in the CLF Standard, the WebOps website provides a downloadable starter custom CSS file that mirrors the Central CSS formatting
Observation: noticed custom CSSs over-riding Central CSSs
Recommend: define degree of CSS as it shouldn't dramatically alter the UW CLF template structure
Future Considerations: have two CSSs: mandatory default, and customizable but with noted restrictions

Item: CSS Code References
CLF Standard: references to jrodgers@alumni.uwaterloo.ca and also to web.uwaterloo.ca
Observation: references are out-of-date
Recommend: remove or update these references in the CSS files
Future Considerations: refrain from personal email accounts being used in CSS files; use generic account with a forward to a personal account

Item: Font and Font Sizes for Body Text
CLF Standard: not stated that cannot modify
Observation: noticing different fonts and sizes being used – so no uniformity
Recommend: should use the default of the CLF template
Future Considerations: none

Item: Colour Schemes
CLF Standard: none
Observation: some websites implement colour combinations that do not comply with common website usability-and-accessibility guidelines and standards for colour use on websites – examples include (1) red-green and blue-yellow colour combinations (such as red font on green background) that result in web content that is impossible or difficult to see with colour blindness, and (2) insufficient contrast between foreground and background colours resulting in content that is impossible or difficult to see particularly with certain visual impairments
Recommend: adherence to website usability-and-accessibility guidelines and standards on colour use results in websites that are more usable for all users especially those with visual impairments; adherence to W3C 'Web Content Accessibility Guidelines' is recommended; main recommendations are to (A) ensure sufficient contrast between foreground and background elements (i.e. dark font(s) on a light background are recommended for the main-content area, and light font(s) on a dark background should be used sparingly – for example, navigation areas and feature sections), (B) avoid placing content on textured or complex-image/graphics backgrounds (i.e. content-area font on top of a patterned background – instead of a solid-colour background – makes the content much more difficult to read), and (C) verify that colour combinations can be viewed by people with visual impairments (such as colour blindness). Perhaps colour schemes should be only done in consultation with a trained graphic designer
Future Considerations: determined by design and/or branding team. Perhaps provide samples in a Toolkit

Item: Favicon.ico
CLF Standard: none
Observation: various departments have created specific favicon icons
Recommend: allow the usage of a UW favicon and also allow unit's favicons ???
Future Consideration: future considerations to be determined

Item: Print Style Sheet
CLF Standard: template settings have "print.css" as the only stylesheet that is applied when printing
Observation: this means that all settings in all other stylesheets must be recreated in "print.css" (a maintenance headache as changes are made); it is unclear that the current print.css is actually recreating everything; a particular problem is with "custom.css" as this is user-edited and many are unaware that they have to copy style changes - thus leading to pages that look different on screen versus printed
Recommendation: in the template, change media type of non-print stylesheets to "screen, print"; if necessary, add additional rules to print stylesheet to override any newly-inherited settings that adversely affect printing; do not remove now-redundant declarations as this will break printing from old versions of the template
Future Considerations: call main stylesheet with media type "all", and call additional stylesheets for specific media types such as "print" and "handheld" that override the main stylesheet only as necessary

Item: Back Button
CLF Standard: not mentioned
Observation: new windows opening without a need to do so; redirects that break the back button
Recommend: do not break the back button unless your third-party application prevents you from doing so
Future Considerations: none

Item: What Is a Top-Level Site?
CLF Standard: shown in the CLF Standard Appendix
Observation: varying degrees of what is considered a top-level site; the CLF Standard Appendix mentions what it could look like but doesn't mention what it "must" look like
Recommend: specify:
1. Every top-level page must have:
   a) a custom banner graphic;
   b) a new unit title (the graphic title, not the <h1> element);
   c) its own contact link at the bottom;
   d) its own menus, not directly related to the containing site.
2. And every non-top-level page must have:
   a) no banner graphic (of course, could have other images);
   b) the same unit title as the rest of its site;
   c) the same contact link as the rest of its site;
   d) the same menus (except expanded differently).

Future Considerations: none

Item: 404 Error Message (Broken Links)
CLF Standard: friendly version not included
Observation: current default is neither friendly nor useful
Recommend:
1. determine a campus default that's friendly; suggestion: http://uwaterloo.ca/404.php
2. offer other campus default error messages for: 500 Internet Server Error; 400 Bad Request; 403 Forbidden message
3. could be customized per unit and perhaps include a link to the site index if there is one

Future Considerations: provide a friendly default with the template

Item: Toolkit
CLF Standard: not available
Observation: duplication of efforts and inconsistent implementation of the CLF
Recommend: provide link to CPA's Style Guide: http://communications.uwaterloo.ca/ (*Resources* section)
Future Considerations: Official Toolkit, including style guide, analysis tools, common scripts, plug-ins for browsers

Item: Areas Exempt from CLF
CLF Standard: small research groups, individual academic websites, corporate applications whereby their interface is unable to adapt, church colleges
Observation: some sites that are not exempt are not following the standard, which causes confusion as to what is allowed and what is not; others then follow these "non-standard" websites
Recommend: official enforcement
Future Considerations: perhaps CLF criteria met before website "live"

Item: Authentication
CLF Standard: none
Observation: no standard or consistency
Recommend: authentication should be done over https
Future Considerations: see following item

Item: https
CLF Standard: none
Observation: IE produces error message if style sheets are linked "as is"

Recommend: make available an https stylesheet and template
Future Considerations: make allowances in future

Recommendations

The following recommendations are the result of our discussions:

1. the current downloadable CLF template be tweaked with the recommended enhancements indicated for each item addressed in this document;
2. the WebOps team be tasked with implementing these recommended enhancements;
3. the tweaked-CLF template be encouraged for new websites;
4. the tweaked-CLF template be adopted by current websites – if resources are available;
5. better documentation be made available on the WebOps website; and
6. the noted future considerations be made available to the committee developing a new template.

Appendices

Appendix A – Web Standards for UW Common Look and Feel Document

Web Standards for UW Common Look and Feel

Recommendations for a UW Common Look and Feel for Web Sites

Reviewed and approved by the UW Web Steering Committee (February 2005)

Introduction

The UW "Gold Standard" for web pages has had very good adoption across campus over the past three and a half years, and has helped facilitate a fairly common look and feel to most Faculty and department web sites. Evolution of web page creation tools, emerging accessibility standards, and a desire for a simpler web page creation and update system has lead to a revamping of the "Gold Standard" implementation.

This document outlines the technology architecture (based on template elements and Cascading Style Sheets, CSS) and the recommendations on how they should be used for the UW Common Look and Feel. The UW Web Steering Committee has approved these recommendations, suggesting that this document should be reviewed in a year's time. This document is not directed towards end users. The technical details of the template elements and the CSS and other materials for end users will be developed under the guidance of the UW Web Operations Team.

Assumptions

- The UW Common Look and Feel guidelines are directed at University units which present web sites to the outside world, including the **main UW site, Academic Support, Faculty and Academic Department, Centre, School, and Institute sites**. Less public sites such as those for small research groups, projects, and personal spaces are encouraged to use the model, but are not required to do so.

- Template elements and CSS should be kept stable with an established process for revisions (through the Steering Committee) before release of an official update.

- The Dreamweaver template mentioned in this document is one implementation of the elements of the UW Common Look and Feel. There are other web tools which can provide the same effect without using Dreamweaver.

Principles

What principles drive the "UW Common Look and Feel" development?

- Separating the content from the design;

- Sharing a common, professional UW look and feel;

- Supporting accessibility by embracing World Wide Web Consortium standards;

- Easing the job of content providers;

- Allowing UW-wide web changes to move into place more easily (e.g., changes to the UW "branding" or enhancement of accessibility guidelines).

1 of 7

Putting the Principles into Practice

We strive to put in place an environment which is in keeping with the principles, facilitating their implementation by the following activities.

1. Provide a starting point framework for web pages which establishes the common look and feel.

2. Provide a framework that allows for changes to be implemented across UW main web sites without major efforts on the part of the web site editors.

3. Recommend and support tools which allow web site editors (web designers and web content providers) to update their documents easily.

4. Establish recommendations and guidelines on how to use the framework; e.g., which elements are required and which are optional.

The framework noted above is provided by means of named **template elements** (known as DIV tags) which make use of **Cascading Style Sheets (CSS),** discussed next. It allows for accessibility and usability for web browsers, and also for screen readers and hand-held devices.

A Dreamweaver template will be made available, and it is expected that many campus units will use Dreamweaver and Contribute to put into effect the new look and feel. However, other web tools could be used to create the same effect. *We emphasize that all implementations should address the issue of accessibility.*

UW Web Template

What is a template? A template provides the basic layout, components and design for a new web page. A template defines the "container" for the page contents. By the inclusion of centrally maintained Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) it determines the position of the primary navigation menu and the collage on a UW web page. The template is generally changed only by knowledgeable web editors, but is "applied" to all web pages. The template editor can designate which areas can be modified by content providers.

In addition to the positioning of elements on the web page, CSS are used by the UW template to set up desired formatting for web page elements, such as specifying the default font or that all first level headings are bold and blue. CSS help keep the look consistent throughout the set of Web pages.

Using The Template's Mandatory And Optional Elements

The template is structured into areas – header, navigation, body, and footer – each having various elements. Some elements are deemed mandatory and others are optional. Below we offer an explanation of each element, its intended use, and whether it is mandatory on the various page levels.

Page levels explained: We consider three page levels or types. Some sites may require more, but having no more than three levels is of benefit to web site visitors, and is strongly recommended.

- **First** level - the Home page or "splash" page; the normal entry page for the web site.

- **Second** level – the Main menu pages, those reached by clicking on the main menu navigation.

- **Third** level – the Secondary menu pages, those reached by clicking on items in the expanded submenus, or by links on other third level pages.

Refer to Appendix I for a depiction of how these three levels of pages might appear.

Header elements

- Logo/Crest

  o Mandatory at all levels. Mandatory that the UW web site be linked from the image (http://www.uwaterloo.ca). Mandatory to use the image supplied with the template.

  o Left-aligned at the top of the page.

- Search area

  o Mandatory to have a search function at all levels, clearly labelled as to the search context. Examples:

    🕐 '*UW search'* on UW main page

    🕐 *'Faculty search'* on Faculty page

    🕐 *'Find someone at UW'* on UW main page

  o Right-aligned at the top of the page.

  o Recommendations:

    🕐 Maximum of three search types on each page search area.

  Note: The Library may need to handle the search area differently in order to ensure clients do not unintentionally bypass the wealth of information resources available from the Library web site.

- Unit Title (Faculty, Department, Centre, etc.)

  o Mandatory at all levels. All pages must have the unit title (e.g. department) to identify these pages in the overall UW web structure.

  o Right-aligned below the search and above the content.

  o Recommendations

    🕐 The department title may include a link to the parent Faculty or department home page.

Image elements

- Collage/photo

- Mandatory on the first level page. A default image will be provided with the template.

- Size: 755 x 145 pixels

- Recommendations:

  - If a seasonal image is used it should change with the season.

Navigation elements

- Left-hand main navigation

  - Mandatory at all three levels. Primary or main menu items on the first level page. Primary and expanded submenus on second level pages, and likewise on the third level pages in order to provide a context for the pages.

  - Left hand side of main section of page.

  - Recommendations:

    - It is strongly recommended that no more than seven items appear on the primary menu, and nine or fewer on the submenus.

    - Good design suggests that menu item text should be: kept to a minimum; concise; descriptive; meaningful. CSS will enforce appropriate case settings.

    - Avoid departmental jargon and acronyms in the menus. If further explanation is required consider putting the link inside the content of a web page.

    - **We highly recommend that Faculties collectively determine a core set of menu items to be found on all Faculty sites, and find consistent language and ordering for those items.**

- Highlights/advertising area

  - Optional.

  - Right hand column of the main page area.

  - Recommendations:

    - This area could be used for links specific to a menu item selected (e.g., "Cool Arts Jobs" for Current Students submenu area), or which are transient, to replace the "buttons" currently in use, for additional images, news items (e.g., upcoming events), etc.

Footer elements

- Official unit address including the UW campus location

  - Mandatory on all levels.

   ○ Bottom of the page, aligned on left under the body.

 • Campaign Waterloo promotional logo

- Mandatory on all levels. Mandatory to use the Campaign Waterloo logo as supplied with the template.

- Bottom of the page, to right of the Address, right-aligned.

- Recommendations:

  - Defaults to link the logo to the main Campaign Waterloo web site (http://www.campaign.uwaterloo.ca/). This link can be changed to point to unit Campaign web sites (which then should have a pointer to the main one).

• Three key links (Contact us | Web site feedback | Faculty of …)

  - Mandatory on all levels.

  - Bottom of the page, aligned on left under the body and under the department address.

Tools for Web Pages
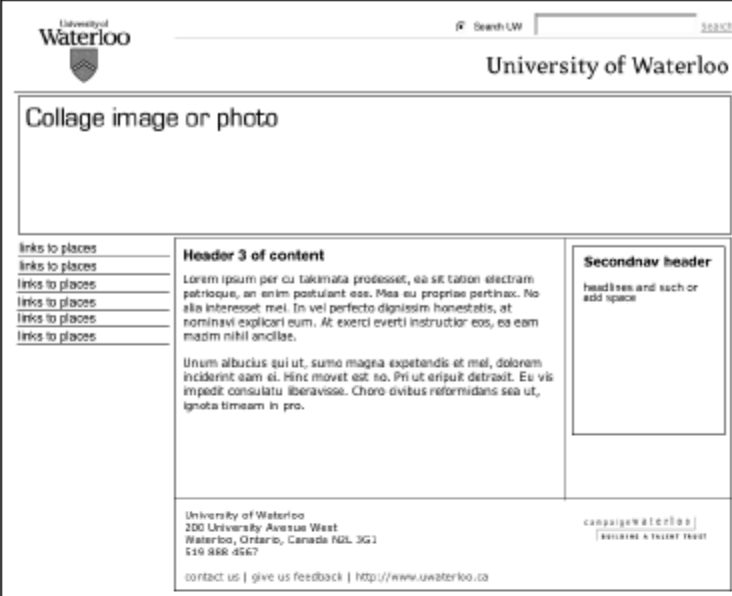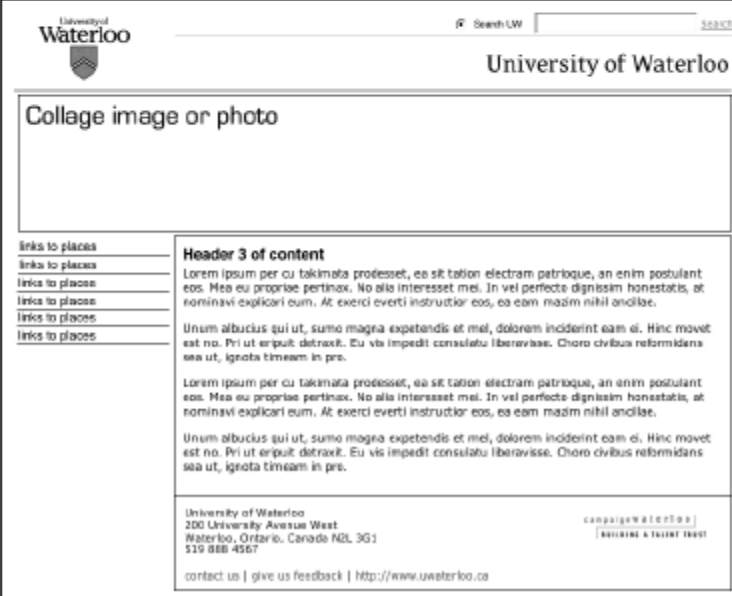
Minimally, a customizable Dreamweaver template, including links to the central CSS, will be made available. This template can be modified for use by individual Faculties or departments using Dreamweaver on both Macs and Windows systems. (Note: Modifications should be in compliance with guidelines and recommendations above.) Using this template, web pages can be constructed with either Contribute or Dreamweaver. It is likely that this template can be adapted for use by other web development tools such as Wiki.

More details will need to be provided in documentation for the end user.

Drafted by Carol Vogt (IST), Jesse Rodgers (C&PA), Andrea Chappell (IST) on behalf of the UW Web Steering Committee.

Appendices

Appendix I: Web Page Levels

First level - the Home page or "splash" page; the normal entry page for the web site depicted with three columns.

First level – same as above but with two columns.

Second level – the Main menu pages, those reached by clicking on the main menu navigation, with second-level navigation showing. A three-column page is not 'required' at the second level. Both second and third level pages are interchangeable in that respect.

Third level – the Secondary menu pages, those reached by clicking on items in the expanded submenus, or by links on other third level pages. A two-column page is not 'required' at the third level. Both second and third level pages are interchangeable in that respect.

Appendix B – Definition of Terms

CLF – Common Look and Feel
CLF Standards – Web Standards for the UW Common Look and Feel
CSS – Cascading Style Sheets
Favicon – favourites icon
HTML – HyperText Markup Language
WebOps – UW Web Operations Team
XHTML – eXtensible HyperText Markup Language

Appendix C – References

WebOps website: webops.uwaterloo.ca
UW Web Development: web.uwaterloo.ca