

Overview

May 30, 2015 9:31 AM

One of the things I am is slightly dissatisfied with the way forums work.

- Conversations are often lost, as they get buried in Page 12/60 of the thread or forum. "Thread necromancy" is discouraged, but this only encourages more posts on the same topic to fill up the forum.
- Organization is often poor. Threads are often placed in the wrong forum, don't fit one particular subforum, or fit several.
- Titles may be irrelevant to a user.
- Content is frequently full of infighting, or community in-jokes useless to a visitor.
- Users have little voice for personalization and self-expression.
- Many forums have cruft and fluff such as post count and join date that only serves to create an imaginary number people must increment and elitism. This is not useful to the community nor to visitors.

What this ultimately means is forums, while useful for inquiries and community building, are a poor fit for actual resources - stuff a user might want. The communities are insular and resources poorly placed. They deserve more than stickies.

Having both discussion services (a forum, IRC) and some form of resource service (a Wiki, content management) would be nice, or could be combined?

Another problem is that resources are often rarely fixed by the community/visitors/administration unless that is the site's primary focus, often making the discussion service the primary resource location, which is not ideal.

What about tags? They're often present, but used wrong, or not used at all.

Tags are useful for organization, but enforcement is rare and not frequently used by users. They can be used in resource or discussion scenarios, however.

Forum Layout

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Similar to the 68kMLA. Italics are possibilities. These could work in a tag system as well, with multiple combinations. Would a B&W Zire fit in ARM, or monochrome Palms? What about a Tungsten W, which is a 68k device in ARM clothing? This is why in a non-tagged system, things should be sorted minimally, and demonstrates the superiority of a semi-rigid tag system.

- Off-Topic
 - Off-Topic
 - *Conquests* (could be just a thread/tag)
 - *Meta* (could be just a thread/tag)
- Palm
 - OS 1-4 (68k)
 - OS 5 (ARM)
 - Applications
 - *webOS*
- Other Mobiles
 - Windows CE/Mobile
 - *Maemo (or Nokia? Symbian devices are important too.)*
 - Other

Special tags could be used for special cases, like Clies, Zodiacs, emulation, etc.

IRC

May 30, 2015 10:15 PM

At least for now, it is at [#pla](http://irc.oshaberi.ne.jp). Rules can be decided later.

Policies

May 30, 2015 10:16 PM

Keep it simple.

- Warez: Probably no, as to keep it legal. < butbutbut... wat about the archiving!
- Some policy to control shitposting/trolling. The problem is that it could be seen as moderator abuse. However, this can increase the quality of content. (user was banned for this post)
- For information storage, some "manual of style" to keep content consistent and consistently organized.

RE: Advice on running a forum

June 5, 2015 12:00 PM

Subject	RE: Advice on running a forum
From	Cory Wiegersma
To	Calvin
Sent	June 5, 2015 11:51 AM

hahaha lol.

"So You've Decided To Run An Old Computer Web Site!"
e-mail from calvin

1. Is your community the definitive resource for the whole scene, or is it a cog in a larger ecosystem of the scene for that platform? I think that this will probably ultimately dictate your choice in CMS/Forum, or even building a public web site (using mediawiki?) and keeping some discussions on some other platform (NNTP? Hotline? IDK) -- that's up to you.
 - a. I choose a *web* forum as the primary interface for 68kMLA. Most people treat it like the only interface, and that's fine.
 - b. TBH, when Uniserver announced that he wants to have a Mac big-boys' club on the 80 meter ham band, I almost vomited. The whole point of the 68kMLA the way it exists is because it should be easy for anybody to get into the scene.
2. Choose your battles very carefully. The rules you choose and the way you enforce them are implicitly going to become your battle.
 - a. One of my challenges is that YOCF has had a "no piracy" stance for a long time. Since I joined in 2002, before JT became a mod, and when LCG was one of the founding mods.
 - b. *Most* of my work at YOCF has, to be honest, involved enforcing the rules imagined by "The Old Guard"
 - c. But, I personally keep many of the rules around because I'm really not ready to provide the resources to do otherwise, or manage anything other than just a "forum"

The hard decision points for me would be about piracy. This is different on each scene. Nekochan is **really** strict about it, but like, most of the 8-bit scenes (except for a few weird Apple II things where Eric Shepard or Tony Diaz literally own the copyright to everything and its what puts food on their tables) consist almost entirely of piracy and cracking, and this is just the accepted state.

I don't know what the situation on Palm or other handhelds would be, the biggest thing I could say there is to do your due diligence. If it's true that most or all of the rights-holders for the platforms you're working with are gone, then I don't think it could hurt to put up something like an FTP/Hotline server.

Back in The BeforeTimes, a guy called QuadraJets ran a "68kMLA" Hotline server on his smokin' fast 768 kilobyte DSL line. (or whatever.) Mac-focused HL servers were still extremely common and I was probably on 5-6 of them over the course of a week. Sometimes I'd stay and chat, sometimes I really just wanted a particular file.

Of course, what exactly you use will depend on what your users are using, how networked their devices are, etc. You could set up a PPTP and SMB server for winmo users to connect to, but that won't work very well for almost every other handheld you can buy. So, there's that.

The other thing about that particular aspect is that you could also just run an FTP server, or even put things on HTTP, but it depends too on if yourh'e looking for "community" or "resource."

68kMLA started as a community, and there were other resources, and I think the thing that has

people so riled up about its classic piracy rules are that they are very much set in 2002-2005 when there were other "resources" that it sat adjacent to. These days, a whole lot of the other resources and areas for software are unavailable, and so it burns people a little that 68kMLA isn't bowing to that need. (And, it's one of the things I consider all the time, whether or not it's appropriate to consider running a file server of some sort.)

The other thing though, about things "like Hotline" specifically is that when you get into that kind of thing, expect it to turn into meta-the-main-site. Most people can't use hotline from their work computer, their Surface RT, iPad, or ChromeBook, so the users who can even use that resource are going to be kind of an elite class to begin with, and you'll ultimately end up creating what #68kMLA is -- #meta68kmla.org. That's a risk you'll have to run if that's what you want to do, though.

One more thing, Jackie! I suspect you're already basically on this train with me but I am surprised all the time by how many hyper compulibs are willing to have their community on reddit or fb, where you get almost no control over it, and no guarantee that posts you make will still be

Also, be comfortable with the ecosystem and maintenance of whatever sw you choose.

If you're starting new, I recommend spending some time trying out different systems, things that can be a forum, gallery, static web page content management system, etc. These will either be open source, you'll need to piece it together, or you'll need to pay for it, but it can be worth it. (TBH, if you can figure out either Hotmail/Live auth, or a good way to just make people domain accounts, or have a separate, non-domain SharePoint server, that tool would realistically do everything you need. The forum component is a little limited, but even that has some niceties, such as the fact that you can keep versions of posts around.

From: Calvin

Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2015 5:04 PM

To: Cory Wiegersma

Subject: Advice on running a forum

One thing me and Fink have been considering is running a forum similar to the 68kMLA, but with a Palm or general PDA/palmtop focus. However, I'm currently planning details. (Such as: What is the focus? What kind of resources could be put on? What forum software? Where are the people and how many?) I'd like to ask your advice for matters regarding care and feeding of a forum, possibly building a community. Your experience in running YOCF could be valuable.

object, post tagging on web sites

June 5, 2015 1:03 PM

Subject	object, post tagging on web sites
From	Cory Wiegersma
To	Calvin; Brian Adams
Sent	June 5, 2015 12:23 PM

One more thought about tagging: one of the disadvantages of invision so far is that i have found no way to edit tags after the fact, and there is also no way to tag individual posts within a thread, which means that even if an admin, a moderator, or some other kind of "community leader" is like, actively policing things, it's still possible for gems of knowledge to get lost within the forum, because full text search can be "A Thing(TM)" and it's ideal if you can use tags, or putting stuff in the correct forum to help.

Another thought I've had for the MLA (it's just a thought, these aren't forward-looking statements or plans) is to just get rid of most of the categories and have maybe five or so....

- News/Announcements
- Random Discussion (fold lounge and conquests into here)
- Hardware (all old hardware)
- Software (all old software)
- Development (for projects, and stuff.)

The other thing I experimented with *years* ago was *chan style software. Posts definitely expire out of it, so it's a lot more like Facebook where "this is what's trending" and community members are responsible for putting things in the wiki. (oh noes.)

But, if you're starting fresh, and if you have more energy and time than ulterior, Bunsen, and I do, you can definitely set the example and create the culture of "this is useful information, I should put it in the wiki."

TBH, forums are the lazy person's way to archive "information" -- most of what gets perpetuated in forums is lazy presumptions like that repairing disk permissions fixes every OS X problem and stupid things like that FAT apps are inefficient at RAM usage. Things that Elfen seems to think are true, even though they are demonstrably false.

Overview

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Forum software has changed very little, is often based upon outdated PHP code, and may not be the ideal platform for sharing resources and communication.

What to use?

There are CMSes with resource and discussion platforms integrated, but two different solutions could be used as well. Auth should be unified if so.

What do we want?

- Resources and discussions.
- Ideally, tags.

Possibilities

Combined solutions

- SharePoint: I actually like this. However, you would want to be on the latest version, which is a resource hog, you would need to worry about account provisioning, you need licensing for Windows Server, and the interface would need customization to be palatable for public facing sites. Discussions are also "meh." Ultimately probably too janky.
- Drupal: This is what Applefritter uses. Known to be janky and clunky, both for admins and for users.

Separate solutions

- MediaWiki: I have extensive experience with this for wikis. However, the experience for visitors is mediocre and new editors may have a hard time with the source-only editor, which may confuse an intermediate user by not accepting the standard Markdown used elsewhere. Solutions exist, but have been problematic for a long time. In addition, enforcing proper organization and templates are problematic.
- DokuWiki: Lightweight, doesn't use SQL. The simplicity means it may not scale to larger communities, and likewise shares UX weaknesses with MediaWiki.
- Vanilla: An early modern discussion platform. Lightweight to the user, better than most forums. I'm currently evaluating this. It's good but having some bugs with email.
- XenForo: Modernized VB.
- Discourse: Ruby on Rails, resource intensive. Has interesting ideas though.
- vBulletin: Paid for AND outdated. No.
- IPB: Paid for, decent though.
- phpBB: Recently updated after years without a feature update, but it's the arch-example of a crusty PHP web application.
 - SMF/punBB/FluxBB: Same shit, just stinks differently, and probably even more dated.
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_Internet_forum_software