



EDTC617: Website Critique

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Website: JavaPowered.com!

URL ▶ <http://www.javapowered.com>

I visited this site to look for appropriate applets for my website. Although it is more a catalog than a java support site, I get the sense that the builder would be happy to help if you Email or use the form to ask a java-related question. This website is for anyone looking to add a little “pizzazz” to his or her own website. In addition, it also offers access to a plethora of more professional services and web-related software distributors. I would recommend the site with a word of caution: The free offerings appear to be promotional materials to expose you to a lot of advertising on the home page and commercial sites. That said, some of the applets and modules could be useful.

The website, updated weekly, offers free Java applets and Flash modules. The developer includes a bare-bones tutorial on how to include these objects in your webpages, which is very easy to follow. The above URL leads you to count-down, Flash splash page that transfers the visitor to the site’s Home page after 10 seconds. For the purposes of this paper, a Home page is defined as the top-level page of a hierarchical-structured file organization, which is how a website is typically organized.

The Home page uses a simple green-on-black graphic design theme, with a horizontal navigation bar incorporated in the top header graphic and a bottom navigation bar in text, using a horizontal a table. There is also a sub-menu, following the site description section, which highlights several “about”-type information. In-site links from this page include a Java tutorial, Java applets, and a Java “Arcade” (along the top); FAQ’s, a What’s New, tutorial, and showcase, (sub-menu); Java News, a feedback form, email, site search, site map, and virus alerts (at the bottom). The home page also includes links to disclaimer and privacy statements.

The home page contains a paragraph that defines the mission of the website, a featured commercial resources list, with the rest of the page a mix of commercial advertising banners and animated graphics. The site is apparently advertisement driven, as the top page is approximately 20% content and 80% advertisement. The top Navigation bar is also a Java applet-driven, drop-down menu that brings the visitor to specific sections of the tutorial, the nine Java applet categories, and a list of sample applets. Feedback & Submit forms were used. They are functional and necessary, and I “enjoy” the fact that they are there but these forms are strictly business, which is appropriate.

All pages appear to be table-based, with no frames. Subsequent pages are 80% blank! The site is about java applets, so many examples are present. There is some JavaScript, for example the script for writing to the status line is used often. The site was fully

¹ Image: Microsoft Clip-Art Online, downloaded 9/14/2003 2:02:49 PM

functional on my Custom built, AMD 2100, XP computer, running the latest Internet Explorer, fully patched. From a design perspective, I found the home page busy and navigation somewhat confusing, and though the pages were consistent, I believe they were designed inappropriately. In many instances, the developer did not follow his own design recommendations in the tutorial.

It is the author's opinion that the splash page animation – like all splash pages – is pointless. Thankfully, the splash page includes a link to continue without having to wait. The home page in-site links a use cross-hair pointer as opposed to the standard pointing finger as a navigational symbol, but this use is not consistent. Some off-site commercial links also use the cross-hair pointer. The top horizontal bar is incomplete, which leads to some confusion as well. Further, the top graphic and navigation are not carried through the sight. Finally, there is no site author is listed by name, which for a business is acceptable. Revenue is generated through heavy use of advertising, driven by the number of visitors seeking help in Java!

Overall, I think the design elements and information are great, but the design of the website could be improved. After several years of informal web design research and this course, I've come to the conclusion that presentation is content driven. Most of the content is simply a catalog of available objects. These objects are offered through a set of discontinuous pages; where you find the object you want on one page with pop-up examples, and then move to another page to download the object. In my opinion, catalogs of this type should be frame driven! When entering the catalog from the Home page, the top frame should carry the site graphic and navigation bar. Below that, there should be a left frame to display the category selected from the drop-down menu, and the list of applet titles. Selecting a title should display the example applet output in right, main content frame. Finally, the use of the cross-hair pointer for in-site navigation is a good idea, but it is useless if it is not consistent. Also, another pointer should be used instead of the cross-hair because it is hard to see.