
LS2 User Interface

Posted by jsonin - 2007/11/07 23:09

We need help on the LS 2 User Interface.

A very rough start at a question library and comps is located at <http://design.limesurvey.org/>

Note: currently, the DoJo javascript lib hasn't been re-hooked into the forms. It will be updated by Friday COB.

I'll post a few ideas/comps over the next week.

If you would like to participate in the UI design + engineering, please advise!

Looking forward,
Juhan

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/01/15 17:34

I really like the designs shown on the testpages. There are a lot of new and pretty good ideas and in general it looks much more modern.

Great job so far!

One question: Will there be a barrier-free design, too?

Best regards,
Mazi

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by jsonin - 2008/01/15 17:39

Mazi,

Barrier-free design = ?

Thanks,
Juhan

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by khalidsazmi - 2008/01/15 19:47

I checked out <http://design.limesurvey.org/> and i like the look and feel of new design for LS 2.0. Amazing work

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/01/16 10:32

Hi Juhan,

maybe I chose the wrong translation. In German it's "barrierefreie Website", meaning that websites should be designed in a way so that handicapped people can access them without any problems but it also means to use valid HTML, offer alternatives for javascript (which might be disabled) and so on.

Have a look at the wikipedia article:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accessibility#Telecommunications_and_information_technology_access

I have talked to Carsten and he said that this is a feature that would be nice to have. In Germany Limesurvey is used at universities a lot and there is a law saying that government websites should be "barrierefrei".

If you have any more questions feel free to ask.

Beste regards,
Mazi

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by jsonin - 2008/01/16 15:53

Gotcha Mazi.

Another term for barrier-free is accessibility.

Allowing disabled users to access surveys is one of our goals. Dojo has been on the front lines of accessibility (such as translating pages for screen readers). However, newer services leveraging the latest rendering + data viz techniques choke on outputting the data in a format that visually-impaired users can consume easily. At the recent Ajax Conference in Boston, an IBM engineer gave a demo of the latest and greatest accessibility options. Even her demo site which was designed for 'barrier-free' access, failed a good chunk of the time.

Side note: accessibility should be constructed and managed at the OS-level, not at the browser level... but that's a whole different discussion.

Mazi, we're conscious of the different folks who will use LS2. Our intentions are to construct a service that degrades gracefully (hopefully DoJo will help)... we can't guarantee every screen reader will nicely consume LS2. Once we get closer to distro/beta, we'll update the forum with our accessibility progress.

If you want to specifically participate in the QA and barrier-free construction, join us!

-Juhan

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/01/16 16:22

Hello Juhan,

thanks for the information concerning your planings for accessibility.

Unfortunately I don't have the time to join you as a full time developer. But if you have finished the first layouts I will try to help with finding errors or to make suggestions to improve the design. So if you are looking for betatesters feel free to contact me.

I'm really looking forward to LS2.

Best regards,
Mazi

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by jsonin - 2008/01/16 16:47

No need to be a full-timer. Most OS projects have contributors who engage with the community for just an hour a week.

Shoot us email and we can coordinate.

Thanks Mazi,
Juhan

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/01/21 11:34

Hi,

if desired, I can give you a list of what has to be taken into account regarding the accessibility. We have done some research on the accessibility-topic and the result is a list divided into the sections "must be considered", "should be considered" and "nice to have".

I don't know much about your background knowledge but as you are an experienced designer I think you are familiar with this issue.

Greetings from Germany,
Mazi

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/01/31 00:06

Hello

For everyone out there: I'm one of the designers along with Juhan working on LS2.0 - I work in Boston as a contractor for Juhan's company specifically on this project. I haven't posted yet (until now!) My role includes overall experience design, user interface/interaction design, and XHTML/CSS coding.

re: accessibility and barrier-free access; these are general terms that need to be qualified. There is no such thing as "it is accessible" because there have to be a set of guidelines by which you are being accessible and you have to be clear about what types of impairments you are accommodating. These guidelines are not well standardized (yes, I know about US's section 508 and various government rules but many of these lack adequate demos/samples and leave a lot to subjective opinion).

All that said, I actually have a lot of background (relative to most people) with web accessibility and don't consider it a secondary add-on to the design process. So, I am working this stuff into designs now. Some things that I can offer to date:

- * AJAX is a problem; no question there. Right now, most of the LS2 stuff is not requiring extensive AJAX stuff. We are using DOJO, who's accessibility considerations I am not entirely familiar with. The primary issue will be screen reader access to DOM-written content and being aware of new content on the page (this is the largest issue with AJAX and screen-reader accessibility). To date, I have yet to hear of a solution for this issue (juhan, that goes for DOJO too).
- * Motor impairments: access keys can be enabled for functions when we get closer to a firm alpha. We are serializing the markup/code such that as you tab through pages, the ordering makes sense. Skip links can also be added once we get closer to a final design for key areas.
- * Partial-vision/color impairments: LS will be entirely skinnable. This can mean starting completely over with your own css (not recommended!) or just swapping out the color and font files with your own. All color rules are being isolated into one sheet so that it is easy to create high-contrast versions etc. The current design is sorta rough and any contrast issues (lack thereof) can easily be fixed at a global level.
- * text-resize in IE6 will be supported natively in the browser.

If there are specific items that you'd like us to address, or you know have existed in LS1, please let me know. Maybe there is a bug track list for these items? I havent checked yet.

thanks!
Brian

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by cwittenb - 2008/01/31 01:14

Hey!

One quick comment from me here.

I took a very brief look at the issue of accessibility of dojo. Most writings seemed to be positive about their accessibility considerations (i.e. <http://www.optaros.com/blogs/ajax-accessibility-with-dojo>).

I will make a note in my head for now and write in to the project wiki when it is available such it it won't be forgotten.

cwittenb

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/01/31 02:39

Hi

Yes, but this is forward-looking. There are two sides to this whole discussion -

* build for "standards" - let the assistive technology catch up. That's all good and nice, but you leave people who have either older technology, or even the latest technology (but which hasn't yet adopted the standards) in the dust
* or, you design for what actually is true: people using jaws and other predictable screen readers which, while crappy, are understood.

ARIA is very new, and a great idea; but as far as I know, the assistive technology is NOT yet caught up and even if it was, the chances of the majority of folks having the latest and greatest is slim given the cost of software and hardware for people with severe disabilities. JAWS alone is expensive and it's still way behind on its rendering of web pages.

So, I generally am judicious with use of AJAX, regardless of the framework, and use it sparingly unless I know for a fact there is a strong agreement to create and support fallbacks gracefully for non-JS solutions.

b

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/01/31 18:32

brianthedrummer wrote:

there is a strong agreement to create and support fallbacks gracefully for non-JS solutions.

Do you plan to create a special version that's also running when users have turned javascript off?

Best regards,
Mazi

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/01/31 21:27

This is better question for one of the developers and juhan. I can design fall back solutions in; the survey conditionals will be a tough place to have JS turned off. however, JS is not necessarily an accessibility problem and it is extremely rare to find JS turned off in browsers. I've not seen this for a long time (heck, I've seen 100% turned-on rates on large-scale

website with 1000s of users). is there a specific reason you are asking for this?

I'd be more concerned about trying to be accessible against known issues with screen readers (The most difficult accessibility measure to achieve) than designing fallbacks for JS although I like the philosophy of progressive enhancement in general.

b

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/02/01 00:59

I was asking because our company - which is developing software for universities in Germany - is always providing alternatives within its internet software if javascript is turned off. We do this because it's part of our accesibility directive. The solution is quite easy. We just add a refresh button near elements like drop-down lists that use javascript reloads. If javascript is disabled the refresh can be executed using the this button.

It should be quite easy to test if javascript is turned off and to just add these buttons dynamically.

What do you think? In my opinion this is a nice and easy to implement feature. Thinking further I would say that a highly accessible survey software will surely be a unique selling point for limesurvey.

Greetings from Germany,
Mazi

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/02/01 01:06

I guess my thoughts are that accessible does not mean 'no javascript' - basically, screen reader accessibility for users with major/complete vision loss is the only area that this could/may impact, and to me, we should test our work to see what is working and what isn't before we just start adding blanket fallbacks everywhere (I do agree your solution will indeed likely require more submit buttons but that also could introduce other issues such as page refreshes , thereby losing track of cursor, requiring new skiplinks that are context sensitive etc.)

If there are problems with the UI in screen readers, we should create accessible alternatives for those specific area. Having some blind users test some of our stuff such as a sample survey from our developers using DOJO would be a good starting point.

I don't believe in just meeting lists of requirements from Accessibility groups because you can "pass the requirements" and still not create an accessible product. I will take real people testing out a UI over poorly-created requirements list any day of the week! (most of the accessibility requirements lists suck and do not contain usable, up-to-date modern examples of how to properly implement AJAX and other web 2.0 type design patterns).

Mazi, do you use a screen reader or know anybody who might be willing to denote time to helping us test our designs?

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/02/01 04:08

Just a short note: After what I have read I think that your guys really know your work.

Brain, I do mostly agree with you. But we seem to have a little different undertanding of the accessibility term. You are very much arguing from the "screenreader side". For me accessibility also contains creating a good style of code meaning W3C compliant and stuff like that. Into this field I would put the javascript issue and the offering of alternatives for disabled javascript. It's a little bit like the screen resolution issue. Nearly every developer has a 19" TFT screen where everything looks fine but there are still people out there with a resolution of 1024x768 or even 800x600. These

things - to me - also belong to accessibility. But as I have read LS2.0 will scale any solution using css and a floating layout, doesn't it?

I will report back on Monday when I'm back at work. I will have a talk to a colleague who has done most of the accessibility research if he has contact with some screenreader users that might help us. Furthermore I remember that I must have a list of some development tools (which you might already know about).

Best regards,
Mazi

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/02/01 04:19

Hi Mazi

So, I hear you. You are talking about what I call "machine accessibility" and progressive enhancement ... so, I understand your points. The site will follow web standards methodologies in terms of using validated xhtml 1.0 strict and css when possible (FYI: Dojo breaks this rule by it's very nature of attempting to extend XHTML elements by adding new attributes). We had a healthy argument here at MITRE about DOJO and the team decided to go with DOJO.

However, the dom-rendered markup and non-DOJO-impacted screens will attempt to follow all the goodies of web-standards-based code. This means IE6+, Firefox 2+, Opera 8 (maybe 7+), and Safari. We will likely use conditional comments for IE6/7 and probably that new meta-tag route that IE8 has introduced.

Screen sizes: we're using a fixed layout as provided by Blueprint which uses floats. I think it's fine and flexible to develop with. It is not perfect, but not bad either. In the US here, 800x600 is very very rare; 1024x768 is by far the most common screen res and in 2nd place are screens 1280x1024 and higher. 800x600 makes up a very small fragment of users. These stats have held true on a variety of sites I have worked on, large and small. I don't know the situation in Europe etc.

Blueprint, by the way, is set to about 960px wide I think (we'll need to break this in a few places probably). If you have a huge screen, the site will center itself and not go wider than that. If somebody wants to offer a CSS to "correct" the site for 800x600, I see that as something the community should offer later.

And of course, skinning will be available - as little or as much as you want. I will be isolating all typography, color, layout, and question-library code into separate sheets with the largest sheet being one called main.css which holds all of the rest of the page-styles etc. If you just wanted to do something like a high-contrast color version, or change all the typography, this could be done site-wide in minutes with minimal QA.

Hope that helps!

Brian

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/02/04 12:21

brianthedrummer wrote:

Screen sizes: we're using a fixed layout as provided by Blueprint which uses floats. I think it's fine and flexible to develop with. It is not perfect, but not bad either. In the US here, 800x600 is very very rare; 1024x768 is by far the most common screen res and in 2nd place are screens 1280x1024 and higher. 800x600 makes up a very small fragment of users. These stats have held true on a variety of sites I have worked on, large and small. I don't know the situation in Europe etc.

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And of course, skinning will be available - as little or as much as you want. I will be isolating all typography, color, layout, and question-library code into separate sheets with the largest sheet being one called main.css which holds all of the rest

of the page-styles etc. If you just wanted to do something like a high-contrast color version, or change all the typography, this could be done site-wide in minutes with minimal QA.

Hello Brian,
what you wrote sounds really great. The new design seems to be well structured and elaborate.

Just a few numbers concerning the screen resolution which mostly fit your observations. In Europe the following screen resolutions are used:

640 x 480 = 0,5%
800 x 600 = 17%
1024 x 768 = 60%
1280 x 1024 = 18%
> 1280 x 1024 = 5%

There is an extension called "AIS Web Accessibility Toolbar" which helps developers to regards accessibility issues. This tool can change the resolution, turn CSS on/off, show table structures... It can be downloaded at <http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/info.aspx?page=1569>
Maybe this tool might be helpful?!

I didn't meet my collegeue to ask him if he has contact to some screenreader users. I will report back when I have talked to him.

Best regards,
Mazi

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/02/04 14:38

I didn't meet my collegeue to ask him if he has contact to some screenreader users. I will report back when I have talked to him.

Just as a short feedback: I couldn't yet establish contact with people who are using screenreaders beacuse of a certain handicap. But I have a colleague who is testing our applications with a screenreader so she is familiar with this issue.

If you have any questions I can forward them to her. When the first alpha of LS2.0 is released I could ask her to test it and give us some feedback.

Greetings from Germay,
Mazi

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/02/07 22:30

Great feedback here in the report. Whats the diff between Public private and commercial? those terms dont seem to be mutually exclusive to me.

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/02/07 22:32

in regards to the questions here: where did the stats about screen res "in europe " come from? If 800x600 is that high, we may need to consider that int he core css.

I am familiar with that toolbar but i use the Web Developer extension in firefox which already does that (note that table

structures wont be present except in data tables ;-)

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/02/08 04:18

brianthedrummer wrote:

where did the stats about screen res "in europe " come from? If 800x600 is that high, we may need to consider that int he core css.

Well, the first explanation is that people in Europe are too poor to buy bigger screens ;)

A serious explanation is that these stats aren't "up to date". I think we can disregard the 800x600 resolution.

(note that table structures wont be present except in data tables ;-)

That's the way a good application should be designed. You know your work :cheer:

Best regards,
Mazi

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/02/08 04:41

Maybe you all need to move places with lower tax rates ;-)

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by ITEd - 2008/02/19 12:52

I appreciate the careful thought going into the development of future LimeSurveys.

The prevalence of 800x600 screen resolution seems to be around 7 - 8%. Can one afford to inconvenience 1 in every 12 potential survey takers?

Of course the actual useful browser window size is potentially quite a bit smaller than the nominal screen resolution. Ideally I would hope that the layout would be flexible enough that the minimum window width only begins to matter when it becomes smaller than the width essential for the widest question type. If my ideal of flexibility is impossible, at least devising the survey layout for 800x600 would allow comfortable use at the most common resolution.

I don't know if it's just the convenience of using the blueprint template or functional necessity that sets the 960px minimum width, but it requires a dedicated, maximised browser window on minimum 1024x768 screen. It won't allow frames for survey-hosting sites or applications. For example, I would want to provide surveys on the institution's web sites, leaving the default navigation bars, logos, etc. intact - and I'm sure that's a very common approach. I doubt the Joomla integration that some people have been working so hard on would work too well either. And users would have to close any browser side panels. Or have I misunderstood, and provision is made in the 960px for such things?

Regards.

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by brianthedrummer - 2008/02/20 19:00

Hi

Given the scope of our work , we've decided to design for a min res of 1024. BluePrint CSS framework actually uses a 960px (i think) area for the page, a 24-unit grid system (40px wide columns). 800x600 is fine for the question area but it is not wide enough to accomodate the entire interface needs of LS.

If a designer want's to work on a 800x600 wide layout, they should be able to do this fairly easily with adjustments to one CSS file (or even just adding an additional css file and overriding the blueprint layout file). In addition, for most surveys, the only part that will be cut off is the column of tips/help stuff (per question) that appear to the right of the form questions. the questions (form elements) themselves should fit in 800x600 area (note the tips are not actually in a real css column - they are inside the fieldset/div for each question so they serialize properly but visually, they appear to be in a column).

Many surveys wont even have help boxes anyways. Screen sizes are only getting bigger and 800x600 is rare. Mobile devices are the exception but those require a different approach on a number of levels beyond just the column layouts. We hope to get to that in the future as well.

Please send data on the Joomla integration; that is news to me. Right now, the surveys we are designing are also not exportable (e.g. you cant just drop a script tag onto an external website off the LS install domain and take the survey). But thats on the roadmap.

This is how I understand all of this to date; Juhan may have other comments.

B

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by ITEd - 2008/03/14 10:58

Hi,

Sorry about the long delay. I was reminded of this discussion when I encountered the Blueprint Grid CSS Generator, a tool which allows one to customise the number of columns and column, margin, and page widths of the default Blueprint framework. But perhaps you're already aware of it?

I haven't used Joomla, but the Limesurvey extension for it, JooSurvey, was discussed in the fora. mainly here and a few other mentions. It's apparently based on an older LimeSurvey version and it's not clear to me whether the developer will continue with it.

Regards.

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/03/14 11:48

I think we should try to contact the joosurvey developer(s) and ask them if they want to join the LS2.0 dev team. It would be great to have a joomla extension based on LS2.0. Joomla is very widespread and by doing so we could extends the LS community.

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Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by c_schmitz - 2008/03/14 12:02

Hello Mazi,

I have talked to them before and offered that.

They did not even bother. Also they expressed that they only developed it for their own purpose and it's very unlikely that it will be developed further.

Also they are barring access to the download by mandatory registration.

They had 1200 downloads in almost 5 months, so they have 600 installations at maximum. We have this number of downloads in 3-4 days. Another reason why i think the effort of integration isn't worth it as the number of potentials users

is small compared to the effort integrating it.

So, nothing to see here, please move along. ;)

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/03/14 12:05

Thanks for the information about that. Thought joosurvey was more widespread because there have been some questions in the forum.

So no LS2.0 for joosurvey users.

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by Mazi - 2008/06/02 12:28

brianthedrummer wrote:

If there are problems with the UI in screen readers, we should create accessible alternatives for those specific area. Having some blind users test some of our stuff such as a sample survey from our developers using DOJO would be a good starting point.

Hey Brian,

can you please get in contact with me when there is a first LS2 survey available for testing?! I think the one offered at the SVN (LS2 alpha) isn't suitable, is it?

I'll try to find someone to test as soon as there will be a complete survey (and UI) you consider worth testing available.

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by bstaats - 2008/06/02 21:57

The Roadmap maintains weekly updates on LS2 progress in addition to features slated for the near future. Keep tabs on this schedule and you will gain an idea of when LS2 will be ready for testing.

Re:LS2 User Interface

Posted by jsonin - 2008/08/02 05:37

<http://design.limesurvey.org> has been updated.

A few BIG changes coming in the next three weeks to the builder user interface (in terms of comps).

-Juhan