

Contributing to Drupal: A Critique

by birdmanx35

Introduction

An important aspect of any open-source project is making sure that there is always a fresh source of new contributors. Therefore, it is critical that we are able to train excited new Drupallers as rapidly as possible. The Contribute tab is currently the major entry point for Drupal contributions, as it links to all possible methods for contributing. This report will attempt to review our current page, give some suggestions, and compare to other projects.

Getting to the Contribute Page

To click the Contribute tab, a potential contributor must first be at any drupal.org page. Let's assume they are coming from the front-page, as that is probably the most viewed page on drupal.org. There are six sections to the front page- the tabs at the top (including the contribute tab), a rotating image on the left that switches between things such as donation images and security announcements, the description of what Drupal is, the download links on the right, the news on the left, and the blocks on the right.

First of all, we should add a contribution image to that rotating queue. As I said earlier, attracting new contributors is vital and we should work on that from the first time someone lays eyes on drupal.org.

Second, there is no contribution link in the middle section that describes what Drupal is, and links to various areas of drupal.org. We should fix that.

The tab at the top is not very visible, but there isn't much we can do about that. When a potential contributor actually does click the tab, they see a well organized but plain page describing the various areas of Drupal contribution. The content of this page is mostly on par, but the presentation is not. As Drupal 6 has just been released, I was amazed at the release article, which was beautiful in comparison to the previous release article. It seems to me that this page is also a place we can let beauty grow.

Presentation of the Contribute Page - Review

First of all, the bottom right section of the page is a general resources section- we should move that next to the introduction text, and draw attention to it through some sort of borders. I imagine that list can be expanded to include things such as DROP and Planet Drupal, too.

Second, this page is just plain unappealing. I recommend that we move from this:

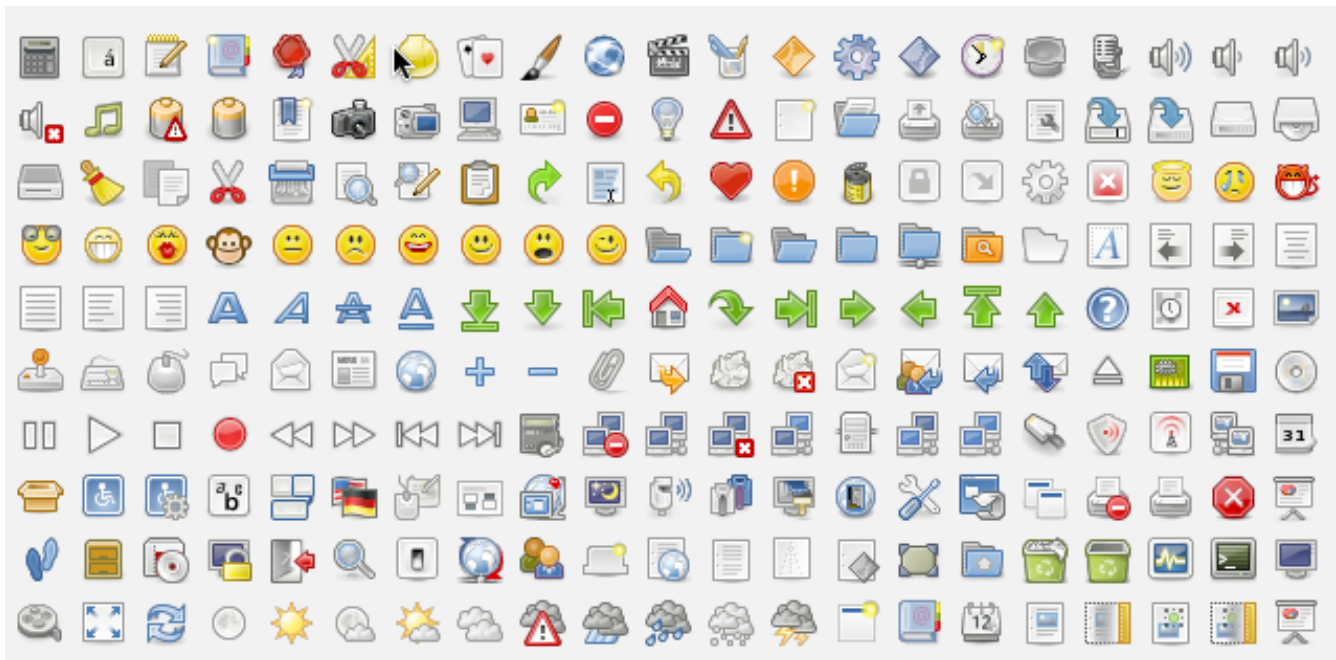
Title

Description / Links

to this:

Icon	Title
Description / Links	

As far as what Icons to use, we could go with two options. We could either use pre-made icons, such as those from the Tango library, or make our own. Both sides have their advantages, and I won't suggest one or the other, but I do think we should have some kind of icon or image next to each area of the contribute tab. You should see my mockup of this for a full idea of what it would look like (in the mockup folder). I did it rather sloppily, but it gives you an idea of what I am thinking. I picked icons that I thought would work, so perhaps those should be considered. Tango comes with .svg (I think?) files of each icon, and the ones I used were 32x32, so I think we should up those a bit to make them more visible if we use them.



Each of the pages linked to on the Contribute page are also just as bland, however, that is probably unavoidable. We could do a bit of cleanup to make them textually more presentable, but I think this first page is our biggest problem. The next section reviews the content in each of the pages.

Content of the Contribute Page (and its child pages) - Review

User Support

The User Support page is excellent. It links to the possible places to give support, and gives some suggestions for how to give support. There is one problem (it ends with an uncompleted section) but that can be easily fixed.

Documentation

The Documentation contribution page is also excellent. All possible resources are linked and explained.

The development section of this page could be improved, by linking to the CVS and Doxygen handbook pages (new contributors might not know what these are).

Translations

The links provided on this page are adequate, although I think there should be some kind of introductions and/or thanks at the beginning of it. State why it's important so they feel needed! Also, the first link (Contributor's guide) is seemingly irrelevant.

Testing

The parts of this page that are written are excellent, organized, and presented properly. However, the only part that is really written out is the reporting and verifying bugs section. The introduction could be beefed up- again, why is testing important?

There are two sections that are not written- Testing Patches and Usability Testing. That's not acceptable. I'd recommend linking to Bevan Rudge's recent post on starting to learn usability in the latter section. That can be found [here](#).

Also, the links in the end should be brought under a header, Testing Resources. Otherwise, they are just kind of thrown in there awkwardly.

Usability

This is acceptable; however there should be an introduction and header over the first part, because, again, those links are just kind of thrown in there. Remember: Drupal=appealing!

Donations

This is fine. I'd edit it a little if i had access but I don't, so I won't nitpick here.

Development

This is a great page. No problems here.

Themes

“Open source projects rely on contributors.” <sarcasm>NO!</sarcasm>. Yeah, so this is fine, just a little blank on the introduction side. It's acceptable though.

Marketing

Could we get a bit of an introduction and/or thanks? Pretty please?

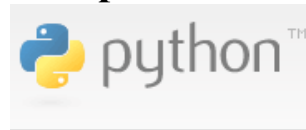
General Resources

This is fine, but as I said elsewhere, this should be at the top of the page (next to the content in a pretty box or something), and perhaps have a bit more resources. What about Drupal Dojo, or DROP? IRC or the forums? Drupal Dojo was formed on the core tenet of training Drupal ninjas, and that's what this

page is supposed to do, too.

Generally speaking, most of the provided information is accurate and usable, so I think the first thing to concentrate on is the *presentation* of the contribute page, and the *marketing* of that page. We want people to think Drupal is appealing from the start.

Comparison to Python



ABOUT	>>
NEWS	>>
DOCUMENTATION	>>
DOWNLOAD	>>
COMMUNITY	>>
FOUNDATION	>>
CORE DEVELOPMENT	>>
Why Develop Python?	
Implementations	
Intro to Development	
Development Process	
Culture	
Tools	
Patch Submission	
Buildbot	
Documenting Python	
FAQ	
PEP Index	
python-dev Summaries	
Python.org	
Browse Subversion	
Daily Snapshots	
LINKS	>>

Python Developers Guide

Python - why settle for snake oil when you can have the whole snake?

—From Usenet posting by Mark Jackson, June 1998

This page contains resources for people who want to help maintain Python itself by fixing bugs, adding features and maintaining and improving the documentation. If you're looking for information about writing Python programs, check the [documentation](#) or the [help](#) page.

Links for Developers

Python development takes place using a hosted Subversion repository, with other components at [SourceForge](#). You can find the following items there:

- [Python Project Page](#) - Subversion instructions, Subversion browser, and more
- [Issue Tracker](#), [Bug Search Browser Plugin \(Firefox\)](#)
- [Mailing List](#)
- [Python Enhancement Proposals \(PEPs\)](#) - Information on new language features, and some meta-information like release procedure and schedules (also available: [RSS Feed](#))
- [Developer FAQ](#) - Tips on SVN, SSH and patch submission
- [Documentation development](#) - Links and information related to the development of the documentation
- [Daily snapshots of the Python source tree](#)
- [Daily Windows Installers](#)

Explanations

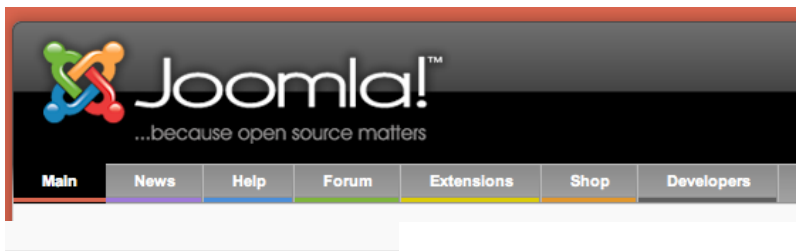
The following pages explain how to participate in the team of people working on the core Python interpreter, and how to work with the Python community.

- [Why Work on Python?](#)
- [Intro to Development](#)
- [Development Process](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Implementations](#)
- [Tools](#)
- [Patch Submission Guidelines](#)

Python's front page is much simpler than drupal.org's, and their tabs are on the left. They use the term "Core Development" for their contribute tab. The image on the left is what you see when you click this tab (I linked to it because it is a sort of outline).

This format explains why someone might want to develop Python (top and bottom sections) and links to all the resources necessary. I think this is simply a different approach, although we could incorporate some of it.

Comparison to Joomla



Getting to Joomla's Contribution page is a little more difficult than ours.



Reporting bugs

Well-written bug reports are incredibly helpful. However, there's a certain amount of overhead involved in working with any bug tracking system, so your help in keeping our ticket tracker as useful as possible is appreciated. In particular:

- **Do** read the [FAQ](#) to see if your issue might be a well-known question.
- **Do** [search the tracker](#) to see if your issue has already been filed.
- **Do** ask on [testing forums](#) first if you're not sure if what you're seeing is a bug.
- **Do** write complete, reproducible, specific bug reports. Include as much information as you possibly can, complete with code snippets, test cases, etc. A minimal example that illustrates the bug in a nice small test case is the best possible bug report.
- **Don't** use the tracker system to ask support questions. Use the [joomla forums](#), or the [#joomla](#) IRC channel on freenode for that.
- **Don't** use the trackers to make large-scale feature requests. We like to discuss any big changes to Joomla's core on the [developers forums](#) before actually working on them.
- **Don't** reopen issues that have been marked "not a bug". This mark means that the decision has been made that we can't or won't fix this particular issue. If you're not sure why, please ask on [developer forums](#).
- **Don't** use the tracker for lengthy discussions, because they're likely to get lost. If a particular artifact is controversial, please move discussion to [developer forums](#).

They have one longer page with each key area of help, and each section has a nice presentation of how to do it properly, and what to do. It isn't all Do's and Don'ts, as on the right, but it's very well presented.