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**AS2.2 - Logbook**  
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## "Wildlife in Byron Bay"

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## 1. Introduction

This logbook is referring to the AS2.1 Multimedia Project. The group has chosen the theme 'Wildlife in Byron Bay' for the realisation of the Byron Bay Tourist Council portal. Therefore the segment market cannot really be defined by an age scale, but is focused on eco tourism. The target customers are travellers and locals interested in discovering 'green' activities, restaurants and accommodation.

The aim of this portal is to propose a selection of services that have been judged as relevant by the development team, and to give the users the possibility of reading and writing feedback on these services.

We have tried through the whole process of the conception of the product, to keep focus on the targeted market; in the way of structuring the website, presenting the content, and choosing the graphical elements.

I will through this logbook analyse the product in itself, the techniques we have used, and provide a chronological overview of the production steps. I will also briefly mention what could have been improved, or been conceptualized differently.

Technically the project is using a MySQL database, and server side PHP scripting. So for easy access to the running project, please visit <http://www.neurocide.com/~as2>. The CD containing the sources of the project is supplied with the logbook of Mirja.

## 2. Reflective analysis

### 2.1 Team members roles

The project has been undertaken in a group of two, Mirja Drick and me. I've been assigned to the structural conception of the website. As a matter of fact, my main role was to be an interaction designer, to conceptualise the website, and then a functional designer, to prepare the skeleton of it.

Mirja was responsible for the layout and the content of the site. As she had chosen the thematic of the website, she was more inspired about writing personal experiences, doing investigations on the theme, and using her good Adobe Illustrator skills to create the layout.

### 2.2 Group dynamic

As Mirja is more involved in graphic art, and as I have got some background experiences in web development and programming, it was easy to define what we both have to do on that project.

We have clearly separated the tasks, and we have been able to work at the same time without having the problem of overwriting the work of the group fellow. The structure has been thought in the way of having a complex template page, that uses the *include()* PHP function to load the different parts of the page, created in different files, into a single one. That has a few advantages in this context. First of all, we were able to work on all the different parts at the same time. Secondly, as only *index.php* is linked to the CSS file and contains the structure of all different pages, we can easily change the layout or any graphic elements, only modifying two files. The disadvantage using this technique is that the indexation by search bots is not done properly. To solve this issue, we should have use URL rewriting in the .htaccess file, but this as not been implemented for this project.

Even if the structure has been thought in the way of having a simple collaborative work on the site, we had some problem with it. Mirja's skills in CSS are really poor, and she was not able to understand properly the code of the website. She did not have used in the past div containers and CSS for creating a layout, and she was only able to create static webpages using the Dreamweaver design interface. We resolve it in having a two-step process. She has done beta static versions of the pages models, and I had then purifying and extending the Dreamweaver generated code.

It was more like a customer – webdesigner relation, in which the website producer is receiving the content and the layout ideas from the customer, and then creating the web product. In that sense we had a good working team, because no one was walking on the feet of the other.

### 2.3 Individual assessment

My first idea was to do a community content-generated portal. Users would have been able to propose activities and services using a simple form, and then these activities and services could have been rated and reviewed by the users. As we decided to use the 'Wildlife in Byron Bay' as the theme for the campaign, we finally chose to make an appropriate selection of activities and services related to the theme. To create interactivity with users, I decided to maintain the review concept on the selected services. People often like to read comments from other users, before deciding whether or not they want to buy a product or use a service.

As we had at this time not yet studied the content management systems, I have not used any of them. The relatively basic structure of that website has permitted me to conceive it entirely without having to use a pre made system. Nevertheless I have, as mentioned in the references of this document, used the basis of a free HTML/CSS menu and a audio Flash player.

My background knowledge on web development has definitively helped me.

### 3. Chronological overview of production

- 08/04/2007 Meeting with Mirja. We decided to take the 'nature and wildlife' as a main theme for the project.
- 14/04/2007 I went to the tourism office in Byron Bay to take prospectuses related to activities in the Byron area.
- 12/05/2007 I did some preliminary investigations on the Internet. The aim was to visit a few tourism information websites to see what is present on such portals.
- 17/05/2007 Meeting with Mirja. We defined approximately the different sections of the website, and share some ideas on it.
- 16/06/2007 Meeting with Mirja. We did a planning for the project, and assigned the different tasks.
- 15/07/2007 Mirja sent me an Illustrator exported layout for the website. I created the FTP account used for the project, and folders on it to organise the data properly for the project. I sliced the layout using Photoshop, and uploaded an alpha version of the website structure. The *index.php* was created and contains different divs, with the layout slices as background images. The index is getting the parameter *page* to build in itself, using the PHP *include()* function, all the different pages of the site.
- 18/07/2007 Meeting at Mirja's home. I explained more in details how the website's structure will be managed. I realised at this point that some used concepts are not clear for her.
- 19/07/2007 The database is built after some research on how and what data will be present on the website (cf. Appendix).
- 22/07/2007 Mirja sent me a sample page of an accommodation. I created the template *service.php* which displays the content from the table *services* of the database. The file is used to display the selected accommodation, restaurant or activity, using an *id* parameter.
- 23/07/2007 I did some investigations on the Internet to find a free to use, IE6-IE7-FF working horizontal menu. One is found, redesigned using the CSS, and integrated in the site. Mirja had recorded birds sings with an audio student, and sent it to me. I cut it properly using Adobe Audition and I integrated it in a popup, using a free to use audio player in Flash. I chose that solution to make it possible to loop without being reinitialised during the navigation through the site.

- 24/07/2007 Mirja sent me the content for the accommodation, restaurants and activities sections. I added it to the database, and transformed the horizontal menu items to be generated from the database's entries.
- 25/07/2007 I created the dynamic left vertical menu that is also automatically built upon the database entries. The reviewing option is added on the services page. It uses the *reviews* table from the database. Each review got a *serviceid* parameter that is equal to the *id* parameter of the service to which it is related.
- 26/07/2007 I did the final check and debugging of the website. I commented properly the PHP files where the code needs some explanations. The personalized HTTP errors messages have been declared in the .htaccess file, and are now opened in the layout. That permits to the user, in case of any errors, of having always access to menu of the website.

## 4. Critical analysis of the product

### 4.1. Technical elements

The structure of the website should permit an easy add of new content. There is no redundant information, as almost everything is taken from the database to be then displayed in the different pages. The elements of the horizontal and vertical menus are built automatically using the *title* of the entries in the database. The PHP function *strtolower()* is used on them to make them appear in lowercase in the menus, this to maintain a logical aspect of the elements, as the menu entries as been sketched by Mirja in lowercase.

Another point that needs to be noticed is the fact that I have not created an administration section. In a real project for a customer, it would have been made to permit the customer to add new services or edit the current ones, without having to use phpmyadmin to access the database.

A search and a sitemap have not been implemented in the website, but after a testing on a small group of users, it seems that they clearly understood how the content was organised and presented.

Also as mentioned before, the use of PHP to dynamically generate the pages makes them less visible for indexation to web crawlers, but this issue can be solved using URL rewriting.

In spite of these elements that could have been improved, the website has been planned and constructed upon a professional methodology.

#### 4.2. Aesthetic elements

The colours and images reflect the chosen theme for the portal. The use of a single page that is generated through a *switch case* conditional statement, permits to change easily some graphical elements, and having all the different pages of the website corrected at once.

Mirja has maintained the same graphic line on the layout and packaging, and that makes the product feel realised.

Some CSS improvements could have been made, and we could have benefit of the background images to make the website even more shining.

#### 4.3. Content

I think the content is appropriate and has been conscientiously selected according to the selected theme. Meanwhile the content should have been generally more personalized. I have not spent too much time on it, as I have been assigned on the technical aspects of the website. I was thinking of using *Google Maps* API to include links to maps for the accommodation and restaurants sections. Time was against me, but this is probably a feature I would have added. A mash up with Flickr could also have been used for the *Local Wildlife* section, in order to browse images relatively to the different animals.

Probably a few other sections could have been imagined, but we have tried not to deviate from the theme, and not to overload the website with non relevant information.

### **5. Communication strategies**

The website is addressed to nature lovers. We have supposed that they mainly are only casual Internet users. We have tried to have a simple and effective navigation through the website, using conventions as much as possible, but trying to have an appealing design. The colours and images tend to be a vector of nature's vision. The ambient music is also there to immerge the user in that environment.

Interaction has been encouraged with the audience through the possibility of viewing and posting reviews on the selected services. The expected impact is having the users trust in the selected activities and services, after a subjective analyse of the different people opinions.

We did not elaborate a strategy on how the website itself will be promoted.

## 6. Remaining issues

The webpage looks different in the different browsers. This is probably due to the fact that the divs are inside a global table, and the three bottom divs have a height fixed at 100%. The idea was to have the three bottom layers always at the size of the biggest of one of them. But all the different browsers apparently do not understand the height defined with a percentage. This has been partially fixed in using the property `valign=top` on the table row of these three elements. Even if it still does not look the same on both web browsers, it is not disturbing in the viewing of the website. Some parts should have been implemented and designed twice, like the menu, for the different web browser layout engines, that are mainly Gecko (Mozilla, Netscape) and Trident (Internet Explorer). WebCore (Safari) and Presto (Opera) usually respect the same open Internet standards as Gecko. The website has been mainly designed and tested in Mozilla Firefox 2, and some more work could have been done to make it look exactly the same on all the engines.

## 7. Conclusion

Through this project, we have learnt to plan efficiently a group work. We were lucky as both of us were complementary in our skills.

Nevertheless, if I would have to start again on it, I would probably have tried to manage a theme on which I would be able to be more interested in the content. I do not know anything about the Australian wildlife, and even less about the different accommodation and restaurants that Mirja has selected. In spite of this, I think that I have well managed my tasks how they have been attributed, as I had to do much more of what I thought in the planning process.

I also have to mention that the website infrastructure has been realised in approximately 10 days, and reflects probably the conditions of a real business work. In this case, the Byron Bay Tourism Council would probably have given to the developers the content and the selection of the services. It is in that sense that I think that the project has been well managed. The website could be now easily extended with more elements in the different sections, using a basic administration console that should be implemented.

We have tried to use mash ups when they were possible and useful. Some *YouTube* videos have been used for the *Local Wildlife* section, and on the right part of the layout, the current temperature in Byron Bay, with a link for the weather forecast. I

really wanted to add a *Google Maps* visualization of the several restaurants and accommodation. Even if it has not been actually done, the data has been organised in the database to permit to extract every single elements like the address, the zip code, the town, etc. That makes the data being usable with the *Google Maps* API or another geomapping service.

I also tried to have a really clear structure on the web server, with a folder *assets* that contains all the different files required on the pages, like the images, the ambient music, and the PDF files; a folder *sources* that contains the executable code, in our case the PHP and CSS code; and a folder *resources* in which are located the files not required by the website, but that have been used in its creation. I also commented my PHP code when it was apparently needed. That should permit an easy understanding of the web structure, for an eventual reuse of the site by another committed web development team.

I will conclude saying that the group project was an interesting collaborative practical work, that can without any doubt be compared with the different small mandates I have as a freelance.

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## Appendix

### Database: neurocidecom7

Table: reviews	Table: services	Table: wildlife
id {bigint(20)} timestamp {timestamp} serviceid {bigint(20)} author {varchar(40)} subject {varchar(40)} message {longtext} rating {char(1)}	id {bigint(20)} timestamp {timestamp} category {varchar(40)} title {varchar(60)} description {longtext} image1 {varchar(40)} image2 {varchar(40)} name {varchar(40)} address {varchar(40)} town {varchar(40)} zip {varchar(5)} phone {varchar(20)} email {varchar(40)} url {varchar(60)}	id {bigint(20)} timestamp {timestamp} title {varchar(60)} description1 {longtext} description2 {longtext} image {varchar(40)} reference {varchar(60)}

Structure of the project database

## Notes