

Introduction

This glossary is intended to introduce you to an array of terminology commonly used when developing websites with Drupal.

What is Drupal

Drupal is a free software package that allows an individual or a community of users to easily publish, manage and organize a wide variety of content on a website. Tens of thousands of people and organizations have used Drupal to power scores of different web sites. Drupal is a type of software package known as a Content Management System, or CMS.

Node

The main building block of Drupal is a node. The word 'node' does not suggest that it is a part of some network. On the contrary, you should think of a node as a single puzzle piece that is placed onto the site by one of your users, or even yourself. A node can be part of a forum, a blog or a book, and by using the Content Construction Kit (CCK), you can create as many custom node types as you want. Remember that each node has a type, referred to as a Content Type. It also has a Node ID, a Title, a Body, a creation date, an author and some other properties. It is stored together with all other nodes in one big shoebox known as a "table" in your database.

CCK

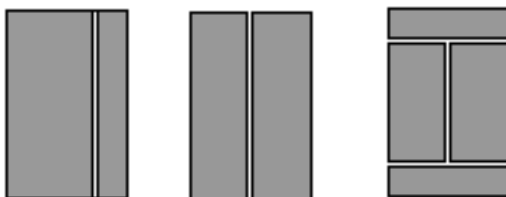
The Content Construction Kit, or CCK, mentioned above is a suite of modules that allows admin users to create new types of content. Content Types (like "recipe" or "Press Release" can have various fields to store data. The fields can store data of different types, like numbers, text or links, and can also have options for drop down lists or radio buttons, or date pickers.

Views

Views is another suite of modules that allows for the creation of "views" that display collections of nodes often filtered and sorted by specific criteria. The views module can create page views, block views or rss views. Views can be created to show full nodes, node teasers, or lists of nodes, even tables displaying node fields.

Panels

Panels is another module that when combined with views and blocks can allow a web developer to create different page layouts for specific areas of your website. A panel can organize multiple views and even specific nodes into an arbitrary layout.



A few examples of panel layouts (shown at left) are 2 column wide left, two column even, two column with spanning top and bottom areas. Views, Blocks and Individual nodes can be inserted into the different sections of a panel. The panel in turn can live within your website's theme.

Menus and Blocks

Menus are lists of links. The links can be internal to your site, or external. They consist of a “display name”, a “description” (which is displayed as mouse over text), and a link path. Menus can be hierarchical. The hierarchies can expand and collapse. Menus are generally displayed in blocks. Blocks are generally displayed in the columns at the left and/or right side of your web page. Menus can also be displayed in a horizontal “navigation” bar, sometimes at the top or bottom of your site. Often this will be referred to as “Primary Navigation” or “Secondary Navigation”.

All modules come with default menu items. Often you will only need to enable them. You can change a menu's location in the menu tree by setting its parent and you can change its title if you wish. In all cases it will only show up when you have rights to view the content. E.g. Administrative navigation items are not shown to visitors.

Block

Blocks are the navigational or content additions that generally live on the left or right side of a page when you view it in your browser. Your site may have many block regions in the theme. Some common ones are “header”, “footer”, “left side bar”, “right sidebar”, and “content area”. Some modules create blogs, and through block administration (Admin>Site Building>Blocks) you can control the visibility and positioning of blocks. Block visibility can be governed by user role, login status, url path (including the use of wildcards like a leading or trailing *). You can also create custom blocks. A custom block may contain an image promoting an event, for example. The Views Module allows you to create Block Views that may contain one or many nodes as a list, with teasers, or a table (for example a listing of events or recent blog posts could be displayed in a block).

Theme

A theme is a means of manipulating and describing (to web browser applications) how you want your content displayed to your visitors. This includes elements such as your header, icons, colors, font, font treatment, block layout, node display, etc.

A theme is a file or (usually) collection of files (php templates, css, jpg, gif, png), which together determine the look and feel of your site. These files are often used by one of the theme engines available for Drupal, which is a PHP file of functions which turn arguments into HTML markup. Drupal modules define theme-able functions which can be overridden by the theme file.

Style

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) are instructions for web browsers on how to interpret the code of a website and display it to the end user. A CSS file (or files) replacing the default CSS of a theme or engine, appears in the theme selection list with the same precedence as themes and templates.

Core or Drupal Core

Refers to Drupal's core programming and modules that are included with the Drupal project download. Core does not include contributed modules.

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Module

A module is a piece of code that extends Drupal to provide a specific piece of functionality. Core modules are those included with the main download of Drupal. Contributed (or "contrib") modules are available for separate download from the modules section of the Drupal site under "Downloads". Be sure that the version of the contrib module you wish to use matches your version of Drupal. The releases section lists modules by Drupal version. Often times, if custom functionality is required, a developer can program a new module to satisfy the discrete functionality needed. Many modules can work in concert with each other to satisfy very advanced requirements.

Users

Any person visiting your site is considered a "user". Drupal, by default, has 2 types of users, or roles: anonymous users and authenticated users. There is also user 1, the root user. Often, when configuring a site, additional user roles will be created. See below for more information on roles.

Roles

Roles are sets of permissions that can be applied to individual users. Users can take on more than one role. Two roles, authenticated user (those users that sign up for an account) and anonymous users (those either without an account or who are not logged in) are supplied by default with Drupal installations, but they can be configured, and the first user can create additional roles.

Permissions

Permissions control access to content creation, modification and site administration. Administrators assign permissions to roles, then assign roles to users. The first user id of a Drupal site (uid=1) automatically receives all permissions, no matter what role that user belongs to. Any anonymous user is uid0.

Taxonomy

A Taxonomy is a way of characterizing "stuff". It can be used for grouping, selecting, and protecting stuff. Often the concept of "taxonomy" is confusing to new users, seeming alien or complex. However, virtually all of us had an introduction to taxonomy in school: classifying living creatures (i.e. the Linnaean taxonomy). In that taxonomy, we classified living things according to kingdoms (plant or animal), phylum, class, and so on, down to genus and species.

In Drupal, "Taxonomy" refers to the entire classification system. The highest level of taxonomy description is the "vocabulary." It is used for defining the terms, or tags, that actually end up on your content to be used for various purposes. In the above example, think of "Living things" as the vocabulary. Each vocabulary has one or more "terms" that are used to tag (i.e. define or describe) your content. Terms may be hierarchical; that is they may exist in levels. Genus and species would be hierarchical terms. The vocabulary is assigned to content types (e.g. stories, recipes); terms are assigned to a given piece of content (e.g. "Groundbreaking Research on Macadamia Nut Yields" or "My Fabulous Macadamia Brittle"). Notice that I said "terms" - plural - because an individual node may have more than one term associated with it; for example, the "Research" news article may be assigned to "Nuts," "Trees," and "Harvesting." It could then be viewed through any of those terms (or keywords), while the recipe could be assigned to "Nuts", "Macadamia", "Confection", "Dessert".

Taxonomy is literally "the science of classification". Drupal uses taxonomy to describe the category system, which you can use to classify and organize content on your web site. In Drupal, a taxonomy is a set of categories. There is additional information on the taxonomy system in the Drupal documentation.

- Term - a category or tag or keyword (i.e. what gets assigned to nodes). Terms can be children and parents of each other to create hierarchies. Terms are the only hierarchical part of the system.
- Vocabulary - a collection of terms that share some sort of relationship with each other. The vocabulary isn't part of any hierarchy as such.
- Taxonomy - the name of the whole system and the name of the module that implements it. This used to be the name of the menu item in the administration menu.
- Category - the more recent "user friendly" name for Taxonomy and the new name for the menu item. It was changed a couple of versions back because newbies seemed to be scared of the word "Taxonomy" - but the ambiguousness of the word "Category" seems to have created more confusion than it solved.

Breadcrumbs

Breadcrumbs is a term borrowed from Hansel and Gretel, who left crumbs of bread along their path so they could find their way back out of the forest. In current computer parlance, it refers to the section, usually near the top of the page, that shows the path you followed to locate the current page. For example, it might show Home > Macadamia Nuts > Current Events > News Articles, meaning that you started at the home page, clicked on "Macadamia Nuts" in the menu, then selected "Current Events" in the sub-menu, and finally selected, "News Articles."

Database

A database is a container for containers. It is a collection of related "tables" that are generally used for a single application (such as Drupal). A table is a collection of data used for a specific purpose within that application, such as identifying users. Within a table, each individual grouping of data is referred to as a row (or in traditional terms, a "record"). Each row is identified by one or more keys that allow easy retrieving of the row. Each row is then broken down into columns (often called fields, although this is more appropriate for forms on which the data is displayed). A column holds a specific piece of information for the row, such as a user name or country.

Server

A server is (generally) a computer that provides services to the Internet. These services may be things like running the database or managing the gathering and dissemination of information.

A browser is the "program" that you use to display content from the Internet. In reality, it is usually a set of programs, not a single one; it is also a set of tables (e.g. settings) that are used to control its display. Examples are Internet Explorer, Netscape, and Firefox. This operates on the client, or user, side of the presentation.

HTML

HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is the standardized language of the web. It has its own "vocabulary," consisting of tags, elements, and descriptors. A tag is the basic component and is used to say, "The following content is to be displayed according to these rules." An example of a tag is a level one heading (<H1>). Most tags can have additional information to tell the browser more specifically how you want it to render the content. This specification is called an element. Most elements require more information to make them work, namely the descriptor, which really should be called "value." For example, if you want that heading centered, you would use the "align" element and give it a descriptor (value) of "center." So , completely constructed it would look like this: <H1 ALIGN="CENTER">.