HTML Form Input

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Introduction

- Formatting text over/for the web can be complicated, especially when dealing with laymen.
- Many methods have been introduced to simplify this process.
- Today we will talk about some such methods.

Plain Text

- The most basic approach to formatting text is to disallow it!
  - Users can make use of capitalization ("I am NOT…"), underscores ("I am _not_…"), asterisks ("I am *not*…"), etc.
- Ex: e-mail

HTML

- Another approach is through HTML.
- Users can make use of many tags and formatting options.
- Often too complicated for the average user.

Markdown

- Markdown is a text-to-HTML converter.
- Relatively simple to use syntax, but they still have to learn it.
- Embed HTML for more advanced formatting.
- Only works with Perl/PHP backends.

Textile

- Much like Markdown.
- Slightly easier to understand syntax, but still unfamiliar for most people.
- Still only works with Perl/PHP backends.

TeX

- Popular among researchers and in academia.
- Very powerful, but slightly too involved for the average user.
- Lack of integration with (X)HTML and the web.

WYSIWYG

- (W)hat (Y)ou (S)ee (I)s (W)hat (Y)ou (G)et
- Provides a Word-like interface for managing text.
- The user often becomes more interested in style than content.
- Can generate valid XHTML.

WYSIWYG (cont'd)

- A large element of WYSIWYG editors is the implementation.
- Many commercial and free editors exist and differ in features, compatibility and usability.

Demo?

- We will now investigate how to create your own WYSIWYG editor (Mozilla only).
  - Mozilla – Midas
  - Microsoft – MSHTML
  - Javascript
  - ActiveX
  - Flash

Summary

- Formatting text for the web is tricky.
- Many methods exist for doing this, but none are quite perfect.
- WYSIWYG editors, arguably, provide the easiest interface and can be quite powerful.