ONLINE NORTHWEST

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

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Cascading Style Sheets

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The idea of style sheets is not new to electronic documents. It is just now becoming available for web pages. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) recently announced the first public working draft of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) version 2. However, Microsoft and Netscape have already implemented key features of CSS in their Internet Explorer 4.0 and Navigator 4.0, respectively. CSS is a way to overcome the default style sheets inherent in the two web browsers. As with any style sheet, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) allows web authors to separate document formatting from content. We can use a single style sheet to define style for an entire web site. Multiple style sheets can be used together. Style sheets allow the control of exact page appearance. You can control what fonts are used and specify their size in various forms as well as control what color they appear as. CSS allows for the easy maintenance of web pages, especially if there are many of them. CSS is also less demanding of bandwidth than other styling methods B a user just is loading text in the form of codes and HTML tags instead of large GIFs and JavaScript applets and whatnot. This presentation will cover CSS and how you can use it to make your web sites look nifty and easy to maintain.

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Style sheets are not a new idea. They have been around for quite some time in other venues. In word processing and desktop publishing, for example, applications use style sheets for improved efficiency. For instance, Microsoft Word allows you to create a specific style and then apply it to elements of text. If you want a style called "Big headline" that calls for 36-point bold type set in the Times font face, then simply create a new style and call it "Big headline". You label each line of text of your document with this " big headline " style, and instantly these lines take on all of those characteristics. The wonderful thing about the style sheets is, if you decide later on you would rather use Garamond instead of times, you simply change the style itself, and instantly all the instances of those headlines change to Garamond. You don't have to change each one individually.

However, style sheets are something to get excited about because: they enable you to separate the structure of the content on your page from the form or appearance of that content, they do never before possible control with exact page appearance, from precise layout to specific fonts and styles, they are band-width friendly, they are the easiest way to change and maintain web pages, especially if you do with many pages, and they are friendly to all browsers, although they may not always work correctly, depending on the browser.

Style sheets are based on the principle of separating form and structure. When you use style sheets, the content exists in a clean form, uncluttered by work-around HTML tags. Style is treated separately and applied to that content. This makes page creation easier and faster because there's less coding. It also makes content conversion to the web easier, because you can convert the content first and worry about style later.

With style sheets, you have more precise control than ever before over how your web pages look. You can set the type of font you want to use. You specify the size of text in points, the tools, and many other units. You can set specific top, bottom, left, and right margins on text or images. You can add any color or background color to elements. You can set a background image behind specific elements, and control where it is located and how or if it is tiled.

A style sheet is just ordinary ASCII text. It is just like HTML, you write your code, save it as a common text file, and then upload it to your server. When people visit your style page, they only load text and code. Style sheets don't require huge graphics files, Shockwave applets, compiled Java applets that take forever to run or crash your machine, and so on. All your style sheets download just as fast as your styled content.

One style sheet can be used for multiple pages. A change to just the style sheets itself will effect many changes across the web pages that reference that style sheet. Furthermore, you can use several different style sheet documents on multiple pages. This is why they are called cascading style sheet. For example, let's say you want to create a web page about a new service that comes from your department. You can't start from scratch, because readers services already has some guidelines about what web pages should look like and so does the overall library. These guidelines can take the form of style sheets documents. For instance maybe your campus has a policy that dictates a certain color green for the background or that the font should be in Times. Therefore, you simply reference these various style sheets to your new web page and you save yourself a lot of trouble making your new web page comply with the various pollicies.

Another handy feature style sheets is that they degrade well, which means that you're pages can look fine in older browser that don't support style sheets.

Example 1: H1 { font-family: Helvetica }

This example is a basics style sheet consisting of one rule. If we were put this into a web page, all the text throughout the page with H1 tags would display in Helvetica, assuming that Helvetica is installed on your computer.

The style sheets rule consists of two parts: the selector and the declaration. The selector is the name of the style. It is what links the style to the HTML document. In this example, H1 is the selector. The declaration defines what the style is, and consists of two parts: property and value. In this example, font-family is a property, and Helvetica is its value. All the HTML tags that you're familiar with can be used as selectors. Therefore, you can easily make all code text

the text.

Online Northwest 98

The Fifteenth annual Online Northwest conference was held recently and several LRC representatives attended. The day-long conference, sponsored by the Online Coordinators of the Oregon State System of Higher Education, focused on the specific technological and procedural skills necessary for working in the information age. John Ober of the California State University at Monterey Bay was the keynote speaker.

Sessions included developing Web-based Virtual Library tours, Distance Learning, HTML-editing software evaluation and design guidelines for Web pages. Some of the presentations proved rather low-tech for an "Online" conference, according to attendee Paula Simon. The Virtual Library tour, she observed, was simply a PowerPoint presentation. However, a panel report on a pilot project making reserve materials available through the Web and a presentation by a senior researcher at Microsoft's library on how to optimize your Intranet were very informative.

Dave Lippert of Rock Creek LRC was drawn to the discussion presented by Arthur Hendricks of Portland State that introduced a new technology in Web site production called "Cascading Style Sheets." The idea of style sheets is not new to electronic documents, but is just now becoming available for Web pages. CSS allows Web authors to separate document formatting from content and to use a single style sheet to define style for an entire Web site. Creating a style sheet template makes changing specific elements of a tag much easier. For more information on this technology, visit the WWW Consortium's site at http://www.w3.org/TR/.

If you would like to see copies of the conference's executive summaries, please check out the home page (listed below) and let Paula Simon know what interests you. She will copy the summary and send it to you. Some of the presenters gave their Web URLs and have their presentation available for viewing. She will send that information along as well. (Paula Simon, Rock Creek LRC, x7433. email: psimon)

Online Northwest '98 home page

Librarians and Instructors
Instructors and Librarians

The PCC Learning Resource Centers reference staff often "team up" with instructors to offer library instruction tailored to the needs of specific courses. Because there is a phenomenal rate of change in information resources and products, both students and their teachers benefit from these sessions.

Melding course instruction and LRC experiences enriches students' learning at PCC. As the private sector embraces information technology and resources, knowing how to find and evaluate information resources becomes an increasingly important skill in the workplace environment. There are over 10,000 corporate, technical and legal libraries in the U. S. Employees often now perform research right at their desktops, using a variety of electronic information resources. Here are some examples of ways in which