

Blinking Maps!: Help Me Help You

Posted by [Brian O'keefe](#) Apr 22, 2016

So I've been working on converting out the old Flex maps in favor of the new JSAPI / WAB flavored versions of all of our web maps. During this process, in what I think was a side-note for them because they don't understand, I was told to include "help files" for the map. So that end users can better navigate the web maps.

Well, since we're talking about a seriously complicated set of tools and because there isn't a 'template' for help files I can't just dump rubbish onto a screen and feel good about it. So... I started developing the help system and I think I finally have something that is worth something.

I talked management into getting me the Adobe Creative Cloud because of my experience with it and I've been using Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign regularly for various projects and presentations we give from our group and a few I've given at local SCAUG gatherings. So I use Illustrator to layout, vectorize and piece meal things, photoshop to clean up raster images, InDesign to package them for pamphlets, and Dreamweaver to lay them out on web pages.

First I started on my tablet. Looking at some layouts, trying some things out with Adobe Comp.

Like this...



Title of Help File Section



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So I have some place to start. I tried working this idea in Illustrator on some Artboards. Meh? It didn't suck. It came together alright, but I noticed that I was creating Artboards (think sketch notebooks for the non-adobe literate) for each of the Widgets. Well, I jumped into Dreamweaver and started laying out an HTML page. I figured I would use the About widget and include a link to a separate page using `_blank` to put it in another tab and voila.

Back and forth, trying out templates in Dreamweaver, and I'm ready to pull my hair out. I'm a Wordpress guy, I can knock out a phenom site in Wordpress in minutes. Building web pages from scratch is what I did when I was a kid and had hours of my life to throw away. I don't have that now. I also don't have Wordpress. City servers won't run it (firewalls, no apache, etc). So I plod in and started thrashing around like a drunk in a pool. It wasn't fun.

Then, searching out a template for dreamweaver that I could just modify I remember [Adobe Muse](#).

And voila. I trashed EVERYTHING from Dreamweaver and began hitting Muse full force.

I'm now envisioning creating a network of help sites. One SITE to rule them all, but each widget gets a network of pages that provide help for that widget. I'm going to create a generic featureset on our server (points, lines, polygons) and generate a REST service, create an ArcGIS webmap, and then build a WAB for each Widget. Once I have a WAB built I can grab screen shots from each Widget in action, maybe grab some video too, then with each Widget fully covered, I just have to create a HEADER PAGE for each web map I make in the future.

If Map X has Widgets A, C, and E in it, then I build the HEADER PAGE in Muse and a navigation menu that points to Widgets A, C, and E. This way I can move the help files to their own place, and have them be Map-Independent. If I end up with Map-Dependent help files that are needed, I can add them to this network. The HEADER PAGE will be the only page that has navigation TO the customized Widget Help Files, so I can keep everything unified and clean, and SIMPLE...

If you would like to see what I have so far... here is our sandbox.

[Home](#)

So yay. Progress, a System, and more. And it has the potential to look sleek and sexy as well.

As of this writing I haven't made it responsive yet, but for those who have worked with Muse you know making it responsive is what you do once you are done. Because it's so fricking easy.

Well, that's all I have for now...

Peace, Love and Clay Software

455 Views Tags: help files, web app builder, adobe, creative cloud

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[Darren Gemoets](#)

May 4, 2018 2:59 PM

Hi, does your help system still work? The URL is unavailable. Do you have any help content to share?



[Finbar Gillen](#)

Jun 30, 2016 10:04 AM

Hi Brian,

Trying to access your sandbox but link doesn't seem to be working.

Regards

Finbar



[Brian O'keefe](#) *in response to [Venus Scott](#) on page 3*

Apr 22, 2016 3:15 PM

lol... Thanks. I'm a LOT more excited to be using Muse. I'm hoping I'll have more excuses to play with After Effects for the Video editing...



[Venus Scott](#)

Apr 22, 2016 3:00 PM

Brian...you are such a geek! This is great work man! I really need to take the time to develop something similar for our, uh hum, astute customers...