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WEB DESIGN IN PROGRESS

A web designer is an IT professional who is responsible for designing the layout, visual appearance and the usability of a website. A web designer's main job is to design web pages. There is a lot to consider in the design of websites which may not be immediately apparent when looking at a webpage for the first time.

The dark ages of web design (1989).The very beginning of web design was pretty dark, as screens were literally black and only few monochrome pixels lived therein. Design was made by symbols and tabulation (Tab key).

Tables. The beginning (1995).The birth of browsers that could display images was the first step into web design as we know it. The closest option available to structure information was the concept of tables already existing in HTML. So putting tables within tables, figuring out clever ways to mix static cells with fluid cells was the thing, started by David's Siegel's book Creating Killer Sites. The main benefit was that it was the closest to a grid we could get back then. It was also the time when so many developers decided not to like front-end coding.

JavaScript comes to the rescue (1995).JavaScript was the answer to the limitations of HTML. For instance, need a popup window, want to dynamically modify the order of something? The answer was JavaScript. Very often it is used as an easy patch for a lazy developer, yet it is very powerful if used wisely. Nowadays we prefer to avoid JavaScript if the same feature can be delivered using CSS. Yet JavaScript itself stays strong as in front-end (jQuery) as on the back-end (Node.js).

The golden era of freedom – Flash (1996). To break the limitations of existing web design, a technology was born that promised a freedom never seen before. The designer could design any shapes, layouts, animations, interactions, use any font and all this in one tool – Flash. The end-result is packed as one file and then sent to the browser to be displayed. Unfortunately, it wasn't too open or search-friendly and certainly consumed a lot of processing power. When Apple decided to abandon it on their first iPhone (2007), Flash started to decay. at least for web design.

CSS (1998). Around the same time as Flash, a better approach to structuring design from a technical standpoint was born – Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). The basic concept here is to separate content from the presentation. So, the look and formatting are defined in CSS, but the content– in HTML. The first versions of CSS were far from flexible, but the biggest problem was the adoption rate by browsers. To be clear, CSS isn't a coding language, it is rather a declarative language. Should web designers learn how to code? Maybe. Should they understand how CSS works? Absolutely!

Mobile uprising – Grids and frameworks (2007). Browsing the web on mobile phones was a whole challenge in itself. Besides all the different layouts for devices, it introduced content-parity problems – should the design be the same on the tiny screen or should it be stripped down. The first step to improvement was an idea of column grids. After a few iterations, the 960 grid system won, and the 12-column division became something designers were using every day. The next step was standardizing the commonly used elements like forms, navigation, buttons, and to pack them in an easy, reusable way. Basically, making a library of visual elements that contains all the code in it. The winners here are Bootstrap and Foundation, which is also related to the fact that line between a website and an app is fading.

Responsive web design (2010). A brilliant guy named Ethan Marcotte decided to challenge the existing approach by proposing to use the same content, but different layouts for the design, and coined the term Responsive web design. Technically we still use HTML and CSS, so it is rather a conceptual advancement. The main benefit here is the content parity, meaning that it's the same website that works everywhere.

The times of the flat (2010). Designing more layouts takes more time, so luckily we decided to streamline the process by ditching fancy shadow effects and getting back to the roots of design by prioritizing the content.

The bright future (2014). The holy grail of web design has been to actually make it visual and bring it into the browser. Imagine that designers simply move things around the screen and a clean code comes out! And I don't mean changing the order of things, but having full flexibility and control! Imagine that developers

don't have to worry about browser compatibility and can focus on actual problem solving!

Technically there are a few new concepts that support the move into that direction. New units in CSS like `vh`, `vw` (viewport height and width) allow much greater flexibility to position elements. Flexbox is another cool concept which is a part of CSS. It allows to create layouts and modify them with a single property instead of writing lot of code. And finally web components is an even bigger take. It is a set of elements bundled together, i.e. a gallery, signup form etc. That introduces an easier workflow, where elements become building blocks that can be updated and reused separately.