Page Forms: State of the extension

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About me

"Enterprise MediaWiki" developer, entrepreneur, author, podcaster.

My consulting company: WikiWorks

Page Forms

- MediaWiki extension, first released in 2007

- Now at version 5.2

- Lets you define forms for creating, editing and querying structured data within wiki pages

- My first (and still most important) extension

Page Forms: where the development work lies

- Semantic MediaWiki and Cargo seem to be (more or less) fully developed

- Same with most of the other "Enterprise MediaWiki" extensions? I welcome thoughts on this.

- Page Forms seems to have the most room for improvements and new features.

1. The OOUI-ization of Page Forms

OOUI

- A JavaScript "toolkit library" created for use within MediaWiki.

- Theoretically usable anywhere, but I don't think anyone outside of MW uses it.

- OOUI = "Object-Oriented (JavaScript) User Interface"

- The name is dumb, but the library is good!

Advantages of OOUI

- Comes pre-installed in MediaWiki
- Will not be discontinued for a long time? (or, if it is discontinued, will be replaced by something with all the same features??)
- Ensures consistency with core MediaWiki look-and-feel
- Good mobile + accessibility support
- Excellent i18n support
- Pretty comprehensive functionality

Autocompletion in Page Forms: a history

- 2007-2008: Scriptaculous
- 2008-2010: Yahoo! User Interface (YUI)
- 2010-2014: jQuery UI
- 2014-2020: jQuery UI, Select2
- 2020-2021?: Select2, OOUI
- 2021? - ?: just OOUI?

(Scriptaculous, YUI and jQuery UI are all unmaintained now)
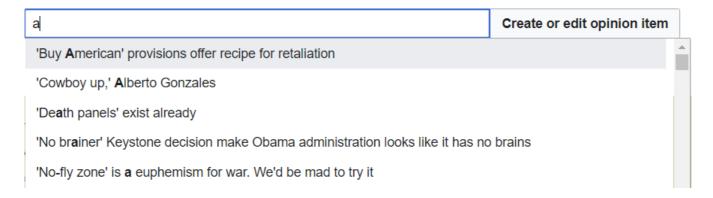
And actually...

- OOUI's days are probably numbered too. :(
- OOUI will probably be replaced with Vue.js in the next 3-8 years (my guess)
  - See https://techblog.wikimedia.org/2021/01/22/2020-the-year-in-vue/

- Still, hopefully migration will be easy

Demo: #forminput
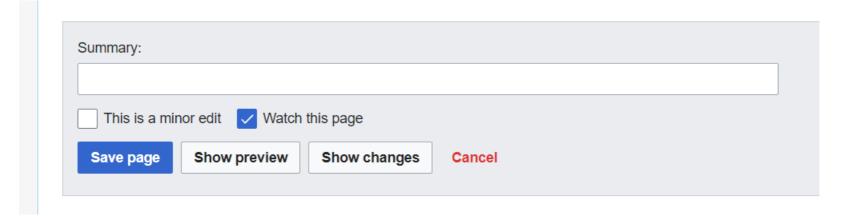
Old (jQuery UI + HTML):

New (OOUI):

Demo: standard form bottom

Old (HTML):

New (OOUI, plus CSS for background):

By the way

If you don't have any customizations to the bottom of your forms (all the "standard input"s besides "free text"), consider removing them all from the form definition – the layout will look nicer.

2. Simplifying the syntax

Simplifying template and form syntax

- Templates and forms are still too hard to maintain, in my opinion.

- Both Page Forms and Cargo now support a simpler syntax for templates and forms, as of:

  - Page Forms 5.2
  - Cargo 2.8

Syntax for template top

Previous recommended syntax:

```
<noinclude>
This is the "City" template.
It should be called in the
following format:
<pre>
{{City
|Country=
|Population=
}}
</pre>
Edit the page to see the template
text.
{{#cargo_declare:_table=Cities|
Country=Page|Population=Integer}}
</noinclude>
```

New recommended syntax:

```
<noinclude>
{{#template_params:Country|
Population (label=Pop.)}}
{{#cargo_declare:_table=Cities|
Country=Page|Population=Integer}}
</noinclude>
```

Syntax for template bottom

Previous recommended syntax:

```
<includeonly>{{#cargo_store:
_table=Cities|
Country={{{Country|}}}|
Population={{{Population|}}}
}}
{| class="wikitable"
! Country
| {{{Country|}}}
|-
! Pop.
| {{{Population|}}}
|}
</includeonly>
```

New recommended syntax:

```
<includeonly>{{#cargo_store:
_table=Cities}}
{{#template_display:
_format=table}}
</includeonly>
```

#cargo_store can now get its information from #cargo_declare, and #template_display from #template_params.

Entire new template syntax, w/ PF and Cargo

```
<noinclude>
{{#template_params:Country|Population
(label=Pop.)}}
{{#cargo_declare:_table=Cities|
Country=Page|Population=Integer}}
</noinclude><includeonly>{{#cargo_store:
_table=Cities}}
{{#template_display:_format=table}}
</includeonly>
```

Reasonable question: why in Page Forms?

- Why is Page Forms defining #template_params and #template_display, which have nothing to do with forms?

  – For the same reason it defines #arraymap, #arraymaptemplate, Special:Templates and Special:CreateTemplate.

  – ...because it's easier than putting them somewhere else.

Possible next step for forms

For templates that call #template_params:

Current syntax:

```
{{{for template|City|
display=table}}}
{{{field|Country}}}
{{{field|Population}}}
{{{end template}}}
```

Possible future alternate syntax:

```
{{{template|City}}}
```

(Only for very simple forms, but still!)

3. Pre-packaging data structures

Page Exchange

- New-ish MediaWiki extension (May 2020)

- https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:Page_Exchange

- Lets you define "packages" of wiki pages that can be installed, updated and removed on any wiki that has Page Exchange (PX) installed

- Typical use case: templates, forms, Lua modules, etc. for a data structure

Page Exchange install screen

Packages: Books demo (Cargo)

< Packages

A data structure for information on books and authors, using the Cargo and Page Forms extensions.

Website: https://github.com/WikiWorks/Page-Exchange-packages

Publisher: WikiWorks

Author: Yaron Koren, Ike Hecht

Pages:

- Template:Book - there is a local copy of this page that differs from the external version.
- Form:Book
- Template:Author - there is a local copy of this page that differs from the external version.
- Form:Author
- Genres

Language: en

Required extensions: Page Forms, Cargo

Install

In the future...

- Maybe most wiki installations' templates and forms will be (or at least start out as) elements of an outside package.

You can help!

- Many, many data structure packages could potentially be created.

- This could be a good topic for the EMWCon Create Camp.

- See also: Enterprise MediaWiki Hackathon, May 24-26 in Dallas, Texas

Thank you

Questions / comments