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USABILITY REPORT ON SILVERSTRIPE CMS:
MAIN ACTIONS AND PAGE STATES

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Summary

The SilverStripe open source community (including SilverStripe Ltd) aim to create and provide a great user experience for all users of the software. Our goal is to make the SilverStripe software enable teams to achieve great results and provide an easy to use, intuitive interface for website administrators and content authors.

This report aims to consolidate previous user feedback raised by the SilverStripe community around the page state and publishing process. The results of this report will help to improve the understanding of this area of the CMS and guide future development of the open source project by focusing community contributions towards high value features and refinements for users of the CMS.

When testing the usability of the main actions and page states of SilverStripe Content Management System (CMS), we found that overall:

- the terminology through the CMS was inconsistent and misleading, resulting in confusion
- removing a page from a site was confusing because users were unsure of what the action remove from draft actually did
- users struggled to finding the appropriate site tree actions, for example the search and filtering options were too hard to find for the majority of users and the options located within the filter (e.g. show deleted pages) for the site tree were not in an obvious place
- the states of pages presented within the site tree view were generally not understood, for example “modified” and “removed from draft”
- users found it difficult to collaborate on content changes with others in their teams. Communication on content changes happened completely outside of the CMS.

A number of other areas outside of the focus of this report have been highlighted as problem areas which would require further investigation, refer to Other notable findings at the end of this report.

Background

This report outlines the results of the user testing of the SilverStripe CMS within six organisations’ websites, including feedback and observations from the users we tested. Those who took part in the user testing were from organisations of varying sizes in both the private and public sector.

The time that users spent using the CMS in a work week ranged between 10hrs–25hrs, users tended to work either as a single content editor/administrator, working with content providers, or as a small team of 2–3 people working with other content editors or content providers. All users performed both content editor and administrator tasks, including adding, editing, and moderating content.

We observed that users used either version 3.0 or 3.1 of the CMS. Some sites used Subsites with the Common Web Platform, but Advanced Workflow was not used by any users. Some users were still using IE7, however the most popular browser across all operating systems was Chrome.

The feedback we received about the content creation process was that most of the content was created externally and pasted into the CMS. The content was initially created and stored as Word documents, PDFs and also as HTML with help from tools like Dreamweaver.

Findings: Page actions



Creating pages ●

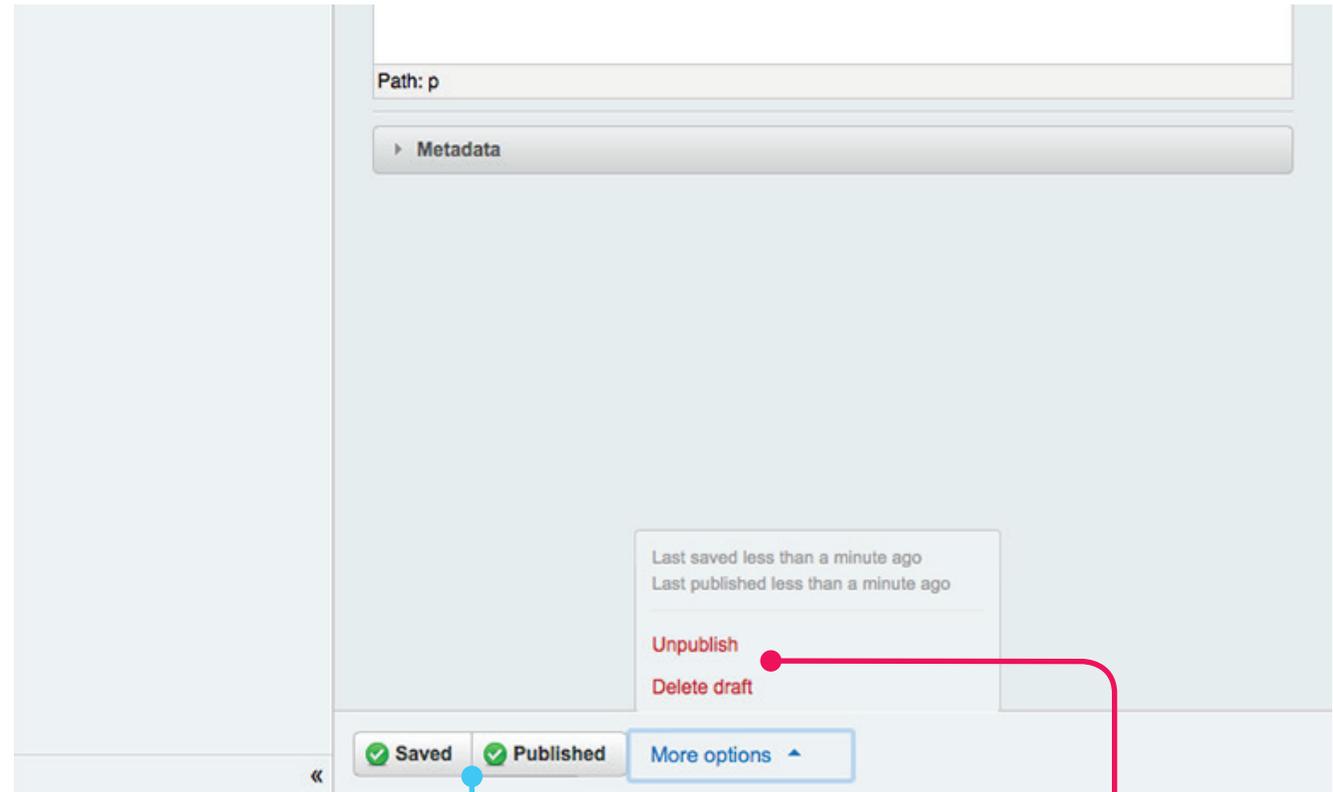
All users all demonstrated the capability to create new pages at different levels of the CMS site tree any without issues.

Delete ●

Most users found the term “delete” confusing and misleading, associating it with completely removing the page from the site without a recovery option.

“We are not used to delete, we don’t use delete, we use expired. For us delete means to FULLY REMOVE a page.”

– User quote



Save draft & publish ●

Users shared a common understanding of the CMS terms for *Save draft and publish* and presented no indication of issues using these actions.

Delete from draft & unpublish ●

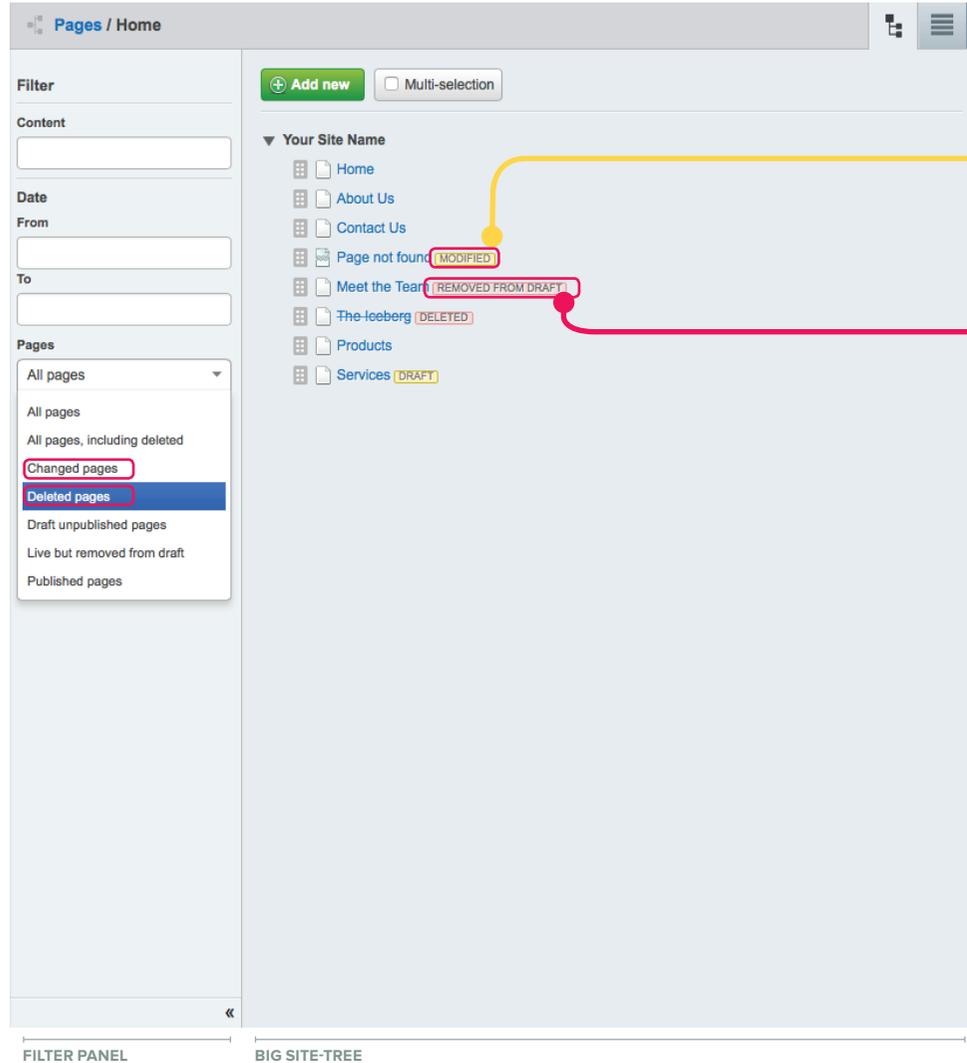
Users were unclear what the differences between *Delete draft* (Some versions says *Delete from draft site*) and *Unpublish* were, and what would be the outcome of selecting the *Delete from draft site* option.

Findings: Page states

MAJOR PAIN POINTS

FOUND CHALLENGING

GOOD FEEDBACK



Draft

When testing page states, we found that most users had a good understanding of the *draft* state.

Modified

It wasn't obvious to some users what *Modified* meant i.e. that there are differences between the draft and published versions of the page.

Removed from draft

Removed from draft didn't make sense to the majority of users.

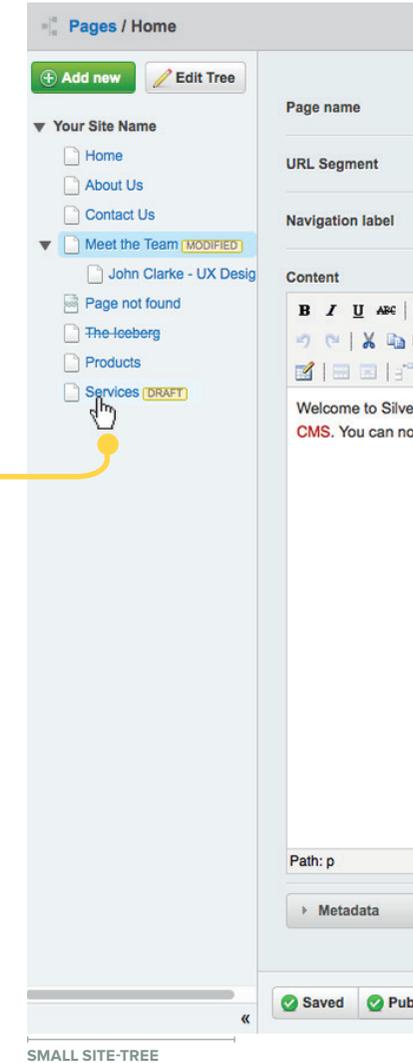
Site tree hover

In the smaller site tree view, some users noticed you had to hover on each page name to display the state. But other users were not aware how they could view the page states.

Terminology

The states of pages did not use the same terminology as the states that were used in the Filter panel options or within the Multi-select panel. Two examples of this are *changed* being used within the filter, while *modified* is used as a label, and *removed from draft* being used as a label and *deleted* used in the filter.

"It would be good to see all the pages under development if they haven't been touched in a long time - keep track of things"
– User quote

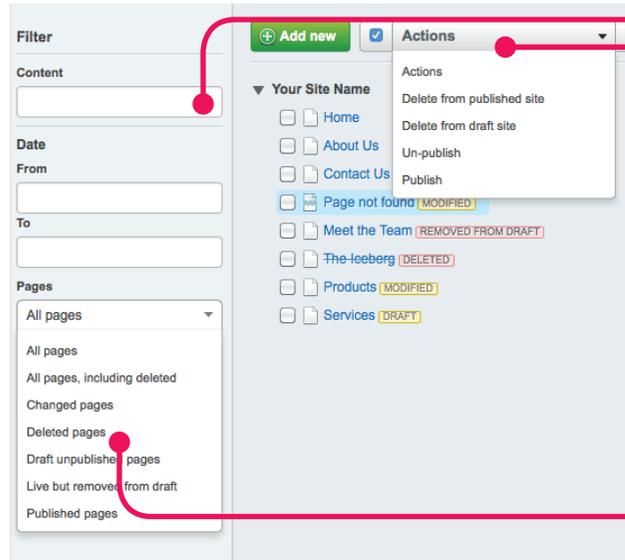


Findings: Site tree and actions

MAJOR PAIN POINTS

FOUND CHALLENGING

GOOD FEEDBACK



CMS search location

The CMS search was hidden and hard to locate. Most users said they would use their website search rather than the CMS search. Only a couple of users found the search inside of the filter panel and used it to successfully find a page. One user suggested changing this to a visible search (with filtering options) rather than hiding it.

Selecting multiple pages

The majority of users who were asked to select multiple pages didn't know about this functionality and struggled to find the multi-selection options. We observed most users were looking for it on the smaller site tree panel.

Retrieving deleted pages

The most challenging task given to users was to retrieve a deleted page by using the Filter panel. Most users said that this was not an everyday task and that finding a way to complete the task wasn't obvious. Some thought the Reports or History sections would help to find deleted pages. The only user who achieved this task had learned it in a training session.

List view tab

The list view of pages was not used by our users. Some thought it could be useful, although they mentioned it was not obvious that it was there.

Delete from draft

Most users knew how to take down a page (unpublish) but some were sometimes put off by the option "Delete from draft site".

Creating, saving & publishing

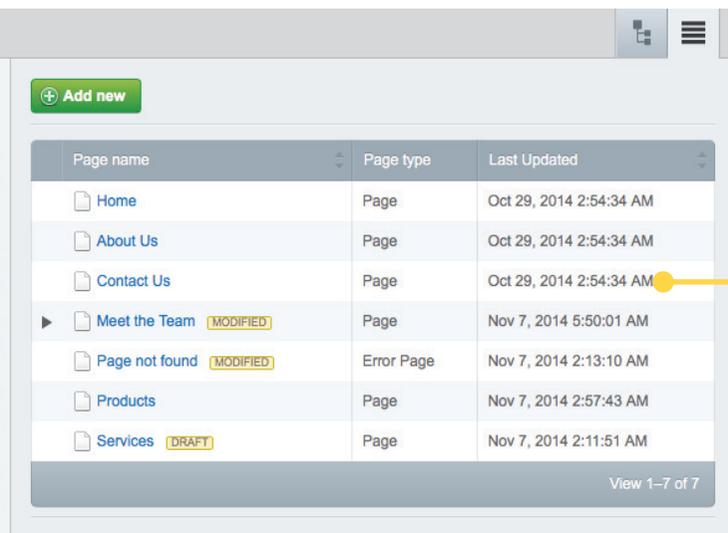
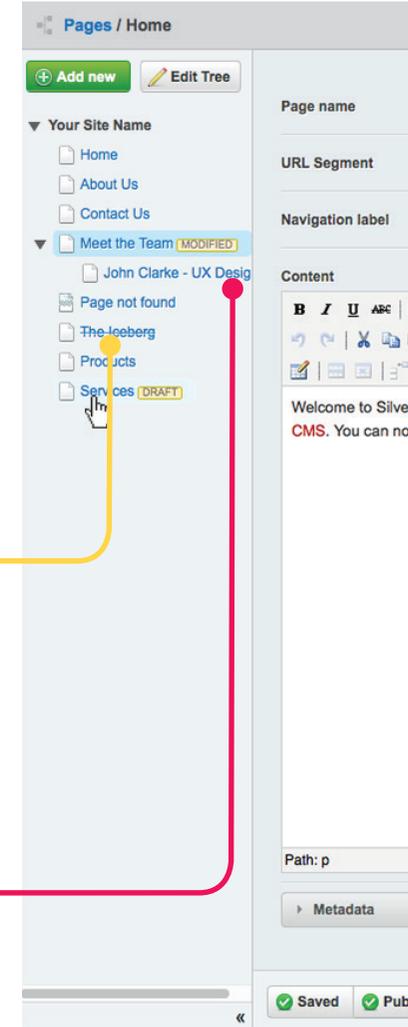
Users had no trouble creating, saving and publishing pages.

Drag-and-drop

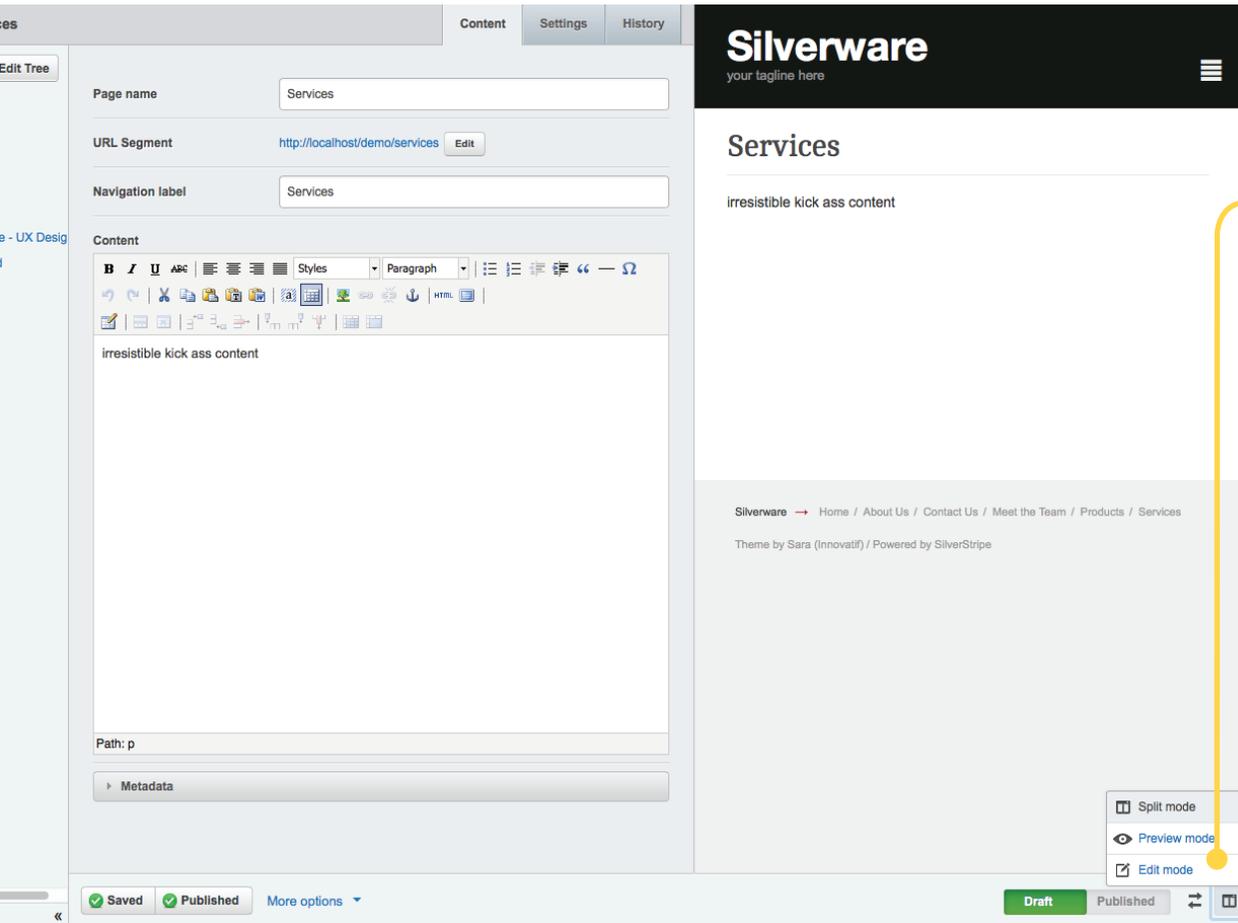
All users were able to move pages around the site tree, however, it was unclear to some that the tree had the ability to perform drag-and-drop in the first place. Additionally, drag-and-drop functionality only works some of the time, which frustrated some of the users.

Site tree width

A common comment was that the small site tree panel was too small for large sites and users would like to see more of the page names.



Findings: Site preview & split view mode



● Component preview

Pages that are used as components aren't shown in the draft site preview as they would appear on a published page. This makes the site preview and split view inaccurate and unusable.

● Split-screen usage

A large number of people did not use split view even with larger screens, preferring to preview it on another window or tab. Most people liked the idea of it, but in practice users preferred to view their site without it being confined to a smaller area. If the user was already used to working in tabs, then they tended to default to tabs rather than using something new.

● Collaboration limitation

A main issue for collaboration was the lack of sharing modified draft content with others. Users found workarounds like sending screenshots, publishing the page but hiding it in the site menu, and logging into others' computers to show changes.

● Separate browser view

Some users preferred to view the site in a separate browser to confirm the site looked OK when not logged in.

User preference

The data we collected was insufficient to clearly identify whether users preferred using tabs or other windows over using *preview mode* for viewing content changes. Further user testing of the site preview area would be beneficial and would provide more conclusive results.

"It's not easy to see the front-end in one click" – User quote

Other notable findings

User guides

For many users, User Help wasn't an obvious place to go to for help with the user interface. The process of how users sought for help varied. The first point of call for most people was to resolve an issue with face-to-face communication with a colleague or by using a client helpdesk. Googling for information came a close third.

"User help guides seems a little basic, it's not written from a content editor's perspective. It seems like its written from a developers opinion of what a content editor wants"
– User quote

Image usage information

Users thought the CMS should have a message to showing which pages use the file, on top of displaying the number of such pages.

Bulk moving features

Users found moving multiple files tedious i.e. one by one and desired the ability to bulk-move files with one action.

Common Web Platform sharing

One user requested that a list of available modules from other CWP (Common Web Platform) users be shared.

New release notifications

There are no notifications of new CMS releases and their features.

Additional upload information

It would be good if there was more information about the type of content needing to be uploaded, like the file dimensions for the upload field.

Interface bugs raised/observed

The Filter bar was noted to be unclickable except for the arrows below.

The breadcrumbs of pages are extremely long for some users which forces the top tabs down a lot, taking up much of interface space.

When right clicking on the site tree (towards the bottom of the screen), the popup menu goes off the screen and partially not visible.

Othe postive feedback

Users liked that there were more notifications in the CMS than version 2.4.

Areas requiring improvement

Users disked that:

- the Workflow process was hard to comprehend (for example, one user said "is there anything to show the Workflow process so we can understand it?")
- there are conflicting messages within the user interface
- Notifications which appeared at the top right of the CMS were too quick and could not be reviewed once they disappeared
- there's not enough reporting of outdated content
- there's no direct channel to resolve issues presented within the CMS
- the Files area was confusing (users expressed that they didn't like navigating the area and further user experience design of the Files area will be required)
- adding and sharing files between sites using Subsites is not intuitive.