MPS115/116 Presentation Lecture 8: An introduction to CSS

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1 Cascading style sheets

Separating style and content

As with writing mathematical documents, the best way to create websites is to keep the content separate from the styling. HTML is used to specify *what* goes on the page, and this is separated out from *how* the page should look. The look of a page is controlled by a *cascading style sheet* (CSS) file. This is like how the LaTeX file contains the contents and the document class determines the look. This approach makes creating pages much quicker, and allows for a complete change of style easily.

Finding the CSS file

If you view the source for the course webpage, you will find plain HTML – headings, paragraphs, images and tables – but no commands for alignment, colour or size. Instead, there is a line in the head of the document

```
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
href="css/course_pages.css"/>
```

which tells the browser to use the CSS file at the relative URL `css/course_pages.css`.

The form of a CSS file

The CSS file consists of a list of style specifications.

```
html {
    background-color: #fff;
}

body {
    font-family: "arial", "helvetica";
```

```
    color: #423;
    background-color: #ffffe4;
    border-color: #423;
    border-style: double;
    width:700px;
    ...
}
```

The form of specifications

Each of these specifications takes the form

```
selector {
    property: value;
    property: value;
    ...
}
```

The simplest type of selector is an *HTML element selector* which corresponds to HTML elements created using the HTML element tags. The selectors `html` and `body` come in this category, as do `p`, `img`, `h1` etc.

Basic properties: colour

It's easy to understand what a lot of the properties correspond to. For example, the `background-color` property changes the background colour of the element. Hence,

```
html {
    background-color: #fff;
}
```

tells the browser to format everything that sits between the `<html>` and `</html>` tags with background colour `#fff`, which means 'white' (see later). This gives the course webpage its white base colour.

Basic properties: font

Similarly,

```
body {
    font-family: "arial", "helvetica";
}
```

tells the browser to use the font Arial for everything in the body of the document (that is, between the `<body>` and `</body>` tags) and Helvetica if Arial isn't installed on the user's computer.

We will play around with CSS selectors, properties and values in the lab.

2 Colours in CSS

Colour names

There are 140 named colours in HTML and CSS. These include common colours like `black`, `red` and `darkblue`. For main heading which are dark blue text on a white background you can use

```
h1 {
    background-color: white;
    color: darkblue;
}
```

However, in general, not all colours you want will have names and you can't necessarily remember all those names, so referring to colours numerically is more common. This gives you access to over sixteen million colours.

Hexadecimal numbers

The standard way to specify colours in CSS is to use *hexadecimal numbers*. Hexadecimal is the number system in base 16; its 16 digits are

$$\texttt{0}, \texttt{1}, \texttt{2}, \texttt{3}, \texttt{4}, \texttt{5}, \texttt{6}, \texttt{7}, \texttt{8}, \texttt{9}, \texttt{a}, \texttt{b}, \texttt{c}, \texttt{d}, \texttt{e}, \texttt{f}.$$

For example,

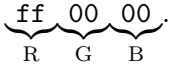
- `a` in hexadecimal corresponds to 10 in decimal,
- `12` in hexadecimal corresponds to $1 \times 16 + 2 = 18$ in decimal,
- `eff` in hexadecimal corresponds to $14 \times 16^2 + 15 \times 16 + 15 = 3839$ in decimal.

Hexadecimal RGB colours

Every colour can be made by mixing the three primary colours of light: red, green and blue. Importantly this is about adding colours of light, not colours of paint. We specify colours by giving their red, green and blue (RGB) components. These components can range from 0 to 255 (in decimal); that is, from `0` to `ff` (in hexadecimal).

Example. To specify bright red we set the red component to maximum (`ff`) and the green and blue components to minimum (`0` and `0`).

We encode this as the six-digit hexadecimal number



Sample colours

Similarly,

- bright green is `00ff00`,
- bright blue is `0000ff`,
- white is `ffffff`,
- black is `000000`,
- the number `aaaaaa` represents a grey,
- the number `660066` is a dark purple.

There are lots of colour charts in existence which you find on the web.

Three-digit and six-digit colour codes

You may have noticed that the example we gave earlier (where `#fff` represented white) doesn't quite fit this description. In fact, in CSS the code `#fff` is short-hand for `#ffffff`. Similarly,

- `#423` is short for `#442233`
- `#1ae` is short for `#11aaee`.

It is fine to use either the three-digit or six-digit representations for colours as you choose.

3 Webspace and domain names

Web servers and webspace

So far, the webpages we have created have been *offline*, that is stored on just one computer. To turn the pages into part of the world-wide web requires the use of a *web server*. A web server is a computer which allows users to connect to it and access its files. It is possible to set up your own computer as a web server, but it's more common to obtain *webspace* (that is, filespace) on a dedicated web server. The web server is often called the *host* of the site.

The University as a host

The web server (or host) that is used for the MPS115 website belongs to the university. The URL `https://maths-skills.group.shef.ac.uk` points to our filespace on the university's server. Accessing `https://maths-skills.`

`group.shef.ac.uk` via a browser makes the web server return the `index.html` file inside that filespace, which the browser displays.

Options for students

Unfortunately, the university doesn't offer webspace to students. You might have access to google sites, but that does not allow the use of HTML and CSS. However, there are many companies that offer webspace. Some offer it free in exchange for adverts on your site, others charge an annual fee. You shouldn't have to pay much money for webspace.

Domain names

The final step to running a website is to obtain a *domain name* (such as `bbc.co.uk` or `channel4.com`). There are lots of companies that will register domain names online and the registration process is relatively simple. After registering your domain name, it needs to be configured to point to your webspace. Once this is done, your website will be complete. Domain names are not free, but most of them are cheap. There is an annual fee for renewing the domain name, but this is small.

4 Mini-project peer assessment

Accessing the projects

Now that all projects have been submitted, it is your job to read and comment on some of your peers' projects as part of the peer assessment process. Each student has been assigned 3–4 projects to assess. To view the projects you will assess, log into the upload system:

- `http://somas-uploads.shef.ac.uk/mps115`

The projects are confidential and must not be shared, in particular, they must not be shared with (uploaded to) any generative AI such as Gemini or ChatGPT.

MAS115: Project Uploads

Mini Project 1	Thu 12 Nov, 01:00 am		Past deadline	View pdf, tex, py		

You are in Group 0

TO MARK		
[redacted]	View pdf, tex, py	Leave feedback
[redacted]	View pdf, tex, py	Leave feedback
[redacted]		
[redacted]		

Logge

MAS115: Peer feedback

You should leave feedback on Mini Project 1 for [redacted] below. You should comment on each of the programming, the extension, the typestting (LaTeX) and the standard of writing. These comments will be read by the student.

What was good about this project?

What could be improved?

Save peer feedback | Save and view peer feedback

Here's what you need to do.

- Carefully reread the project brief.
- Carefully reread the assessment criteria.
- Read through the PDFs.
- Download the Python files (right-click, save-as) and open them in Spyder.
  (Each file might contain several Python programs so look carefully.)
- Look at the LaTeX files.
  (Note that it might not compile properly as, for example, images files won't have been included with the upload).

- Leave comments on the upload system on what was good about the project and what could be improved.

At this stage you do not come up with a mark.

You will receive 2 marks for taking part in the peer assessment. To receive these marks the following are required.

- You must complete the comments online.
- You must take part in the peer assessment session in Week 10.
- Your comments must take the form of one or more full sentences.
- Your comments must demonstrate proper engagement with the process.
- You must not leave the same comment for more than one project.

The deadline for submitting the comments is 2pm next Monday (Week 10). Next Tuesday, in this slot, you agree on marks in your groups. We will send an announcement summarizing this process shortly.

The projects are confidential and must not be shared, in particular, they must not be shared with (uploaded to) any generative AI such as Gemini or ChatGPT.

About this week's lab

In this week's lab we will experiment further with CSS, getting used to affecting the layout of pages.