

**DrupalCon Chicago 2011**  
**March 7 – March 10, 2011: Chicago, IL**  
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Through the generous support of LIBRAS, I was able to attend DrupalCon Chicago this past March. DrupalCon is a conference that educates users and developers for the Drupal content management system. The conference, which is held over three days, covers a wide variety of topics related to Drupal development and web design at a variety of levels. As a beginning Drupal user, most of the sessions I attended were geared towards those getting familiar with Drupal and its processes and web development in general.

The first day of the conference the keynote speaker was Drupal founder and developer, Dries Buytaert. He spoke about the history and future of Drupal as a content management system. Throughout the rest of the day I attended sessions on the basics of Drupal theming, wireframing and designing mobile interfaces. The session on theming taught me about design frameworks as well as the basics of creating custom themes for the Drupal interface. In a session about wireframing Russ Unger, user experience designer, talked about different methods and tools for wireframing, such as Balsamiq, Omnigraffle, Axure RP Pro, and Adobe Fireworks. He walked the audience through wireframing a single project using each of the four software and talked about the benefits and drawbacks of each. In a session about designing for the mobile world Steve Fisher spoke about designing a simple mobile site for users, and what considerations need to be made when you're deciding what needs to be included in a mobile site.

Day two of the conference began with a keynote by Clay Shirky, a writer, consultant, and teacher on the effects of new media on society. His talk focused on how we, as web designers, can impact social change through social media. He explored the concepts of lead users in web design and how they influence web site usability. Later in the day I attended a session on using the Views module in Drupal and how it can take types of content on a website and display them in a more visually appealing format for your users. The session presenter, Rain Breaw, discussed modules that can help to create better content for use with Views and the changes that occur between the Drupal 6 and Drupal 7 versions of Views.

In a later session Jared Ponchot, Jen Simmons, Samantha Warren, and Steve Fisher discuss design thinking. Design thinking is a discipline that uses the designer's sensibility and methods to match people's needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity. It's a methodology for practical, creative resolution of problems or issues that looks for an improved future result.

The final keynote was Jared Spool, a user interface engineer. His talk, titled The Unintuitive Nature of Creating Intuitive Designs, talked about designing websites based on a user's knowledge and how to uncover that knowledge. He also talked about designing based on current knowledge vs. target knowledge and how to differentiate between the two types of knowledge and uncover what they are for your users. I also attended a session on how to appropriately construct themes for Drupal and how to organize them so they're easy to use and re-work.

My experience at DrupalCon Chicago was excellent and I hope to attend the conference again in future years as my knowledge of Drupal grows and I begin to work with it more. Thanks again to LIBRAS for their support in funding my attendance at the conference.