

SuSanA Forum Update - work progress log

By Steffen Eisser, 5 May 2017

This is in response to Output from results tracker

2.2.2 The Forum software (Kunena) and Content Management System (Joomla) have been upgraded to the most recent versions of this open source software and the customized features have been re-programmed in the new versions

Indicator: Short documentation of work carried out for software upgrade

1. Preparing and strategy

Initial situation:

- Forum website runs on an 8 years old open source CMS software Joomla! 1.5.x with the free forum component/extension Kunena in version 1.7.0
 - Over the years the core files of the CMS and Kunena component has been modified with own code to implement new functions the systems not providing. For example connections to mother website to register new users, change password and manage them in the SuSanA member area. Post by e-mail function, send messages between users inside forum, special statistics, email digest, changing the “thanks” button to a “like” button system wide, etc.
 - Current / actual version of Joomla was 3.6.x and Kunena extension 3.6.5
 - Research and trying if possible to update the existing systems
- result → to old and to many steps between that a stable and proper ability to run could not be reached and guaranteed. → Decision to install a complete new actual Joomla! CMS and Kunena extension and write update programs to import users and data.

2. Install / update / migrate new Kunena in an actual Joomla! CMS

- Install, config a new Joomla CMS
- Write an import script to migrate users from old forum CMS to new CMS by keeping all user information (IDs, username, passwords)
- Import old user Kunena tables in to new database and rename database tables
- try to use auto install from Kunena component → failed, tried different older versions of Kunena compatible with new Joomla! CMS → failed (Error when update during Kunena program routine to change database tables)
- Trying on different server systems and different versions of Joomla → failed (always same error)
- Check out options to write own scripts to import all Kunena data (categories, messages, users, subscriptions, attachments etc.)

Result: would be to much effort and cost a lot of money

- Back to Kunena auto update process and with a lot of research a solution was found → change the old forum database collation to actual one and the data migration worked
- Writing scripts to import user files (avatars and attachments), write scripts set user rights and access in new Joomla and Kunena forum database
- Checking and testing all functions of new system with the Joomla and Kunena base templates,
- Fix smaller bugs by settings in Server, Joomla and Kunena configurations and in Template params (some research needed)

3. Implement own functions

- For keeping the systems updateable with minimum effort own functions should be implemented via a template override and not in the core files of the CMS and Kunena (possible by 98%). Future update with less effort is also addicted to current used Template of Joomla and Kunena. They are still need to be compatible with the new versions of CMS and Kunena. If not templates must be recreated.
- Implemented following functions:
 - o Highlighted discussion threads
 - o Send user message (e-mail) directly from thread list
 - o “Likes” instead of “thank you” system
 - o E-mail digest of new forum posts
 - o Create, program own forum and user statistics
 - o Connections to the mother website and member administration, user registration, change details and password reset function for users
 - o Connections to mother website module for showing recent posts (start page), last post in categories (working groups) and any posts (MENA, Indian chapter)
 - o Support Arabic language inside post titles and messages besides the system still running in English
 - o Post by mail function

4. Responsive Template

- Creating wire frames / sketches for a new forum template based on UX-study results and SuSanA website brand
- Create / program new responsive template for Joomla! CMS and Kunena forum based on the standard templates of the systems to make sure that all functions still work proper
- Adjusting all styles for a responsive look for all pages and menus
- Especially for the forum it had to be done for a lot of subpages / sub layouts

5. Update

- Create test system with all server and database configuration
- Do an complete update process from install, import scripts and manually add own functions and templates
- Write a log documentation and time needed value, catch some process optimisations to keep the offline time for forum and user registration functions as minimal as possible for the real update
- Doing the real update
- Fine tuning for template and functions (still in progress in the next months)