

Intro by Jim Zaun

J.Z.

Tuesday, November 11, 2008

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These pages are a set of ongoing technical ideas, designs and concerns regarding James Burke's Knowledge Web vision and how to realize it. If you don't know what the Knowledge Web (KWeb) is, then please go to this website: www.k-web.org.

In this iteration, we are trying to get a minimally functional Knowledge Web up and running using various off-the-shelf technologies which all fall short of James Burke's UI vision. Our previous attempts to roll our own version of the KWeb have also fallen way short of a usable environment due to a serious lack of features (like text searches). Despite the fact that we have built some cool looking demos along the way, we still don't have a usable prototype after 8 years of part-time effort. The attempt this time, is to leverage TheBrain as the central UI and content management system and tie it together with other off-the-shelf technologies that fill in what TheBrain is missing. Most of all, we need to get all 2500+ nodes into the KWeb as the completeness of the content is as important as its usability.

About me. I am a software architect and former computer design engineer. I'm presently the Principle UI Engineer of a web-based, interactive, real-time, geographic dashboard system that helps fire, police and hospitals deliver mutual aid during emergencies. It's kind of like a multi-user computer strategy game except it's for real and it's for a good cause. The interactive demos I did for the KWeb were key to landing this rather cool job. That's my way of saying that getting involved in the KWeb may have nice career benefits later on. While I now work mostly in Flash, I spent the previous few years as a software architect designing data-driven web applications (mostly in J2EE/Struts/ Oracle). Here's a summary of my career over the past three decades.

In the 1980s, I designed compilers and operating systems with Mike Ball, (now Sun's Distinguished Engineer in C++). Then, I moved into the development of Integrated Development Environments (IDEs) developing Common LISP and C++ IDEs (with Richard Gabriel, Rodney Brooks, Jamie Zawinski and others) on UNIX platforms.

In the 1990s, I moved into C++ embedded-systems IDEs for 68K and ARM processors (working with Neal Gafter). However, IDE and software tools development is very intense hard work. After developing IDEs for over 15 years, I just got totally sick of it. At age 50, I decided to transition into something more visually creative: the web. I started by studying Java, web design, graphic arts and animation at the Univ. of California Extension.

In 2000, I joined a web consulting firm, as the Systems Architect, where I designed J2EE applications for large corporations like Genentech. One example: I designed the Java CMS system used to manage FedEx's entire website of ~100,000 pages in a dozen different languages. Our efforts paid off and FedEx received the best transportation web site award in 2001. The Playtex site was fun mostly because I got to learn so much about women's breasts and bras. My interests moved to 3-D and I developed the Looking Glass KWeb demo for Sun Microsystems with Stephen Kobourov at the Univ. of Arizona who developed the 3-D layout algorithms. The demo was shown at the 2005 JavaOne conference in true 3-D (when wearing special glasses). That work landed me a research contract with Yahoo! Research Labs. And, that led me to the idea of converting the Looking Glass KWeb demo into Flash by designing my own 3-D rendering engine. You can see it [here](#). Now that Flash 10 has 3-D built-in (and is many times faster than my 3-D rendering engine), I think we could really turn James Burke's vision into reality.

Current Server Setup

Friday, December 19, 2008

12:12 AM

