

Google Web Toolkit

What, Why, and How



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A Simpler-Than-Possible Explanation of GWT

Why AJAX Matters

GWT is Software Engineering for AJAX

Common Questions

Big Applications

Summary

Q & A

What is Google Web Toolkit (GWT)?



What is GWT?

A set of tools for building AJAX apps in the Java language

What makes GWT interesting?

Write, run, test, and debug in Java

Isn't that called an applet?

Deploy as JavaScript

GWT converts your working Java source into equivalent JavaScript

GWT is a compiler?

GWT has a compiler, but the full story is more interesting

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What I Mean by "AJAX"



Updating the browser UI without switching pages

Traditionally called Dynamic HTML (DHTML)

Relies on JavaScript running to direct the UI updates

Fetching data without switching pages

Using XMLHttpRequest (XHR) to fetch data in the background

Viewing browsers as smart clients

Instead of HTML dumb terminals

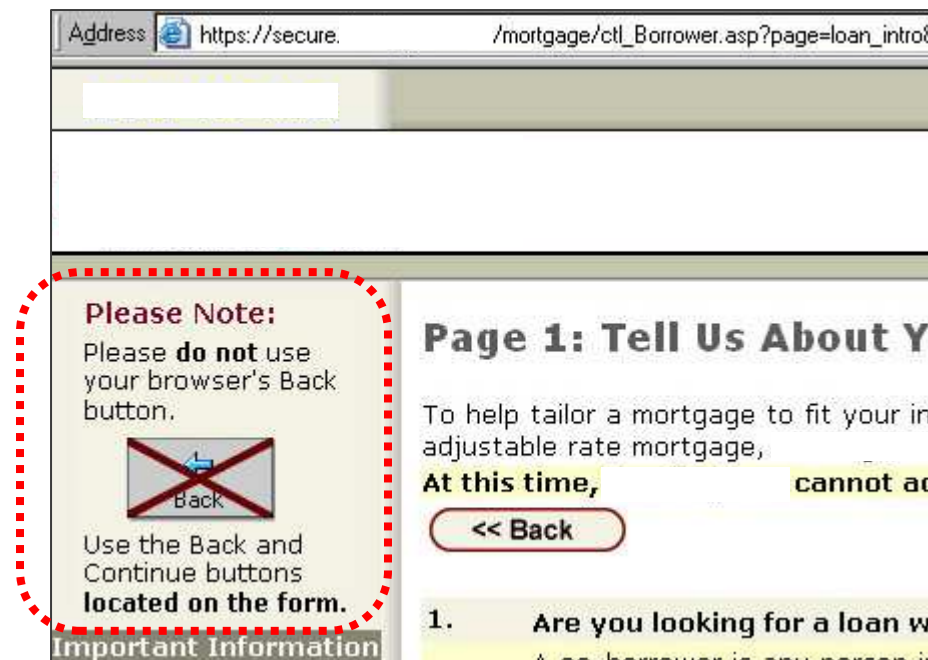
Sharing the computational burden

Better server utilization

Applications that are more responsive than classic HTML

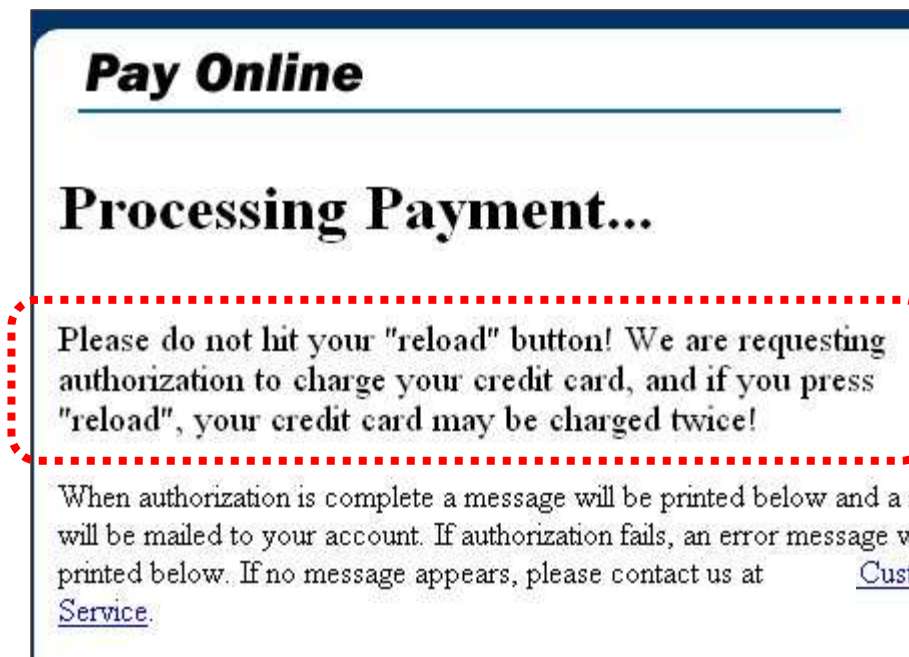
In other words, AJAX is recreating 1990s-style client/server computing without the need to install software locally

"Do not use your browser's Back button"



What if I do click Back? AJAX can (in theory) solve this

"Don't hit reload or we'll charge you twice!"

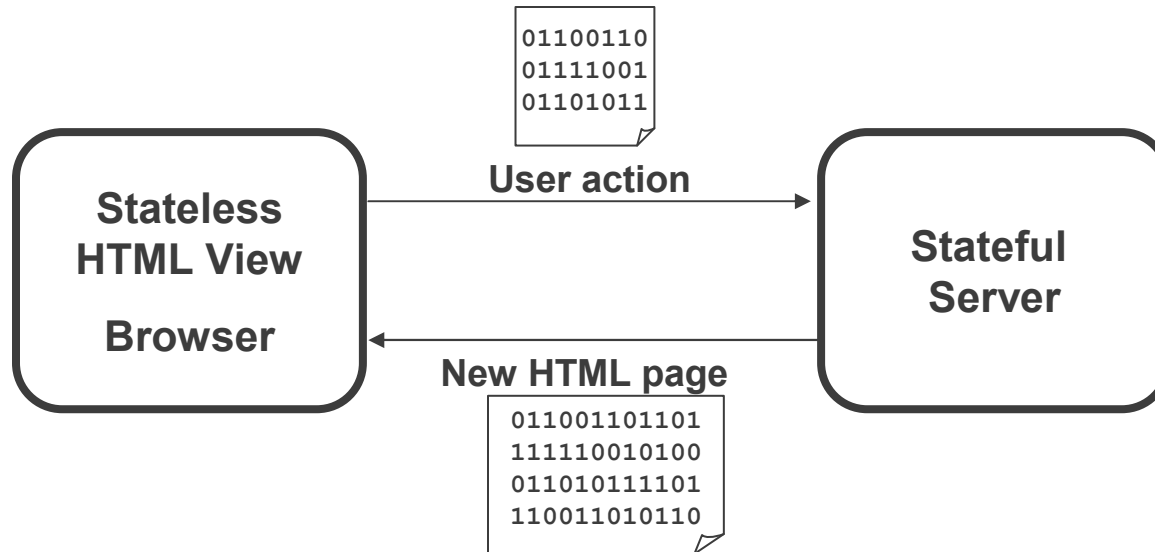


What if the network hangs? What should I do?
AJAX can (in theory) solve this

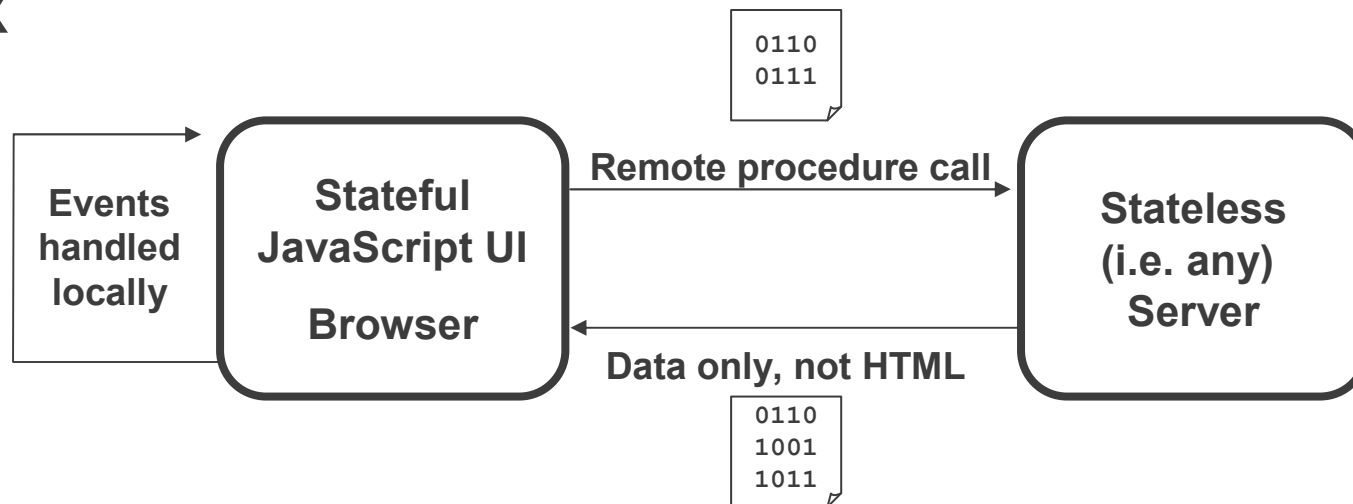
Why AJAX? Scalability



Traditional HTML



AJAX



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Product Risks of Handwritten Script



Poor Usability

- No history

- No bookmarks

- Frozen browser chrome and pegged user CPUs

- Worst: Easy development and good usability are conflicting goals

Poor Browser Portability

- Hard to test: every line of code is a potential portability bug

- Either wrap every single browser-related call (heavy)...

- Or be paranoid about every line of code (risky)

Poor Speed

- Startup time is an extremely huge sacrifice...probably not worth it

- Large scripts run more slowly

- Worst: Maintainability and efficiency are conflicting scripting goals

Poor Tool Support

- Limited IDE support

- Debugging too often boils down to `window.alert()`

- Profilers? Code coverage? Findbugs? ...

Quality Risks

- New categories of runtime-only bugs (e.g. spelling bugs)

- Poor JS reuse model encourages "from scratch" or copy/paste

- Browsers are a moving target

Long-Term Risks

- Hard to schedule (e.g. unexpected browser quirks)

- Spaghetti risk

- Poor documentation

- Hard for large teams to work on the same code base

- Hard enough to find one AJAX guru

typos + expandos = bug-o-s

Imagine this gem on line 5912 of your script

```
x.compnent = document.getElementById("x") ;  
// a spelling(!) bug that will bite much later
```

There's a reason static type checking was invented

Reuse is a good way to not write bugs

Don't forget code completion

This starts to matter a lot for big projects

**It is very easy to slip into making a
poorly planned AJAX investment**

**...but you'll live
with the consequences
for a long, long time**

GWT Requirements Laundry List



Make great AJAX apps that are still very webby

Familiar UI, History, Bookmarks, a working Back button...

Leverage the Java language, developers, and technologies

IDEs, debugging, unit testing, profiling, and coverage

Portable across browsers with low or no overhead

Reuse at the Java language level via jars

Fast, simple RPC based on Java classes

Extreme scalability

More or less, the impossible...

Unless you translate Java into JavaScript :-)

Code Sample – Hello, AJAX



Demo time...

```
public class Hello implements EntryPoint {  
  
    public void onModuleLoad() {  
        Button b = new Button("Click me", new ClickListener() {  
            public void onClick(Widget sender) {  
                Window.alert("Hello, AJAX");  
            }  
        });  
  
        RootPanel.get().add(b);  
    }  
}
```

Demo

Hello, AJAX



Redefining the problem has been fruitful

No server-side session state required

No round trips for UI updates and event handling

Deployment? No fancy server, just compiled JS

Leverage for the biggest AJAX headaches

Our Mantra: Solve the problem once & wrap it in a class

History? Create a History class

Cross-browser? Create an abstract DOM class

RPC? Create an all-Java RPC mechanism

Build (or reuse!) widgets

Written in straight Java

Code without worrying about browser portability

Separate UI style from logic

Widgets are styled with CSS

Automatically load the right CSS for your widgets

Demo

"Mail" is a desktop-style application

Demo: User Admin Dialog Box

GWT saves you round trips

Very fast startup time

Separation of concerns in the code

Keyboard support

On-the-fly font resizing

Reduce server load and improve usability

History is the first thing to go in most AJAX apps

With GWT, it's easy and works well with MVC

```
History.addHistoryListener(myController);
```

History support leads to bookmark support

http://google.com/gulp.html#beta_carroty

Demo

"KitchenSink" shows history, bookmarking, and widgets

Many solutions out there (JSON, XML-RPC, ...)

But a pure Java RPC interface sure is nice!

```
interface SpellingService extends RemoteService {  
    /**  
     * Checks spelling and suggests alternatives.  
     * @param the word to check  
     * @return the list of alternatives, if any  
     */  
    String[] suggest(String word)  
}
```

Client and server can speak the same language

Demo

"DynaTable" loads records dynamically

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10. The GWT mission statement puts technology second

To radically improve the web experience for users by enabling developers to use existing Java tools to build no-compromise AJAX for any modern browser

See "Making GWT Better" for the full story

9. It isn't GWT vs. Everybody Else

Not sure why so many people want to couch it this way

We're not into "smackdowns" because using GWT doesn't mean foregoing another technology; mix and match is ideal

We've gone to a lot of trouble to make integration easy (JSNI)

8. It isn't Java vs. JavaScript – it's about leverage

No language wars! The goal of GWT isn't to hide JavaScript

We view GWT as a way to add leverage to JavaScript and DHTML

Leverage: Wicked Cool Optimizations



Tough decision not to support reflection and class loading

Worth it! Three words: Whole program optimization

For example, type tightening to eliminate polymorphism

```
Shape s = new Circle(2); // radius of 2
double a = s.getArea();
```

can become

```
Circle s = new Circle(2); // radius of 2
double a = (s.radius * s.radius * Math.PI);
```

which, if Circle has no side effects, can become

```
double a = 12.5663706143591;
```

Imagine those sorts of optimizations across your entire app

In JavaScript, reducing size and increasing speed are complementary goals, which makes optimizations *really* fun

7. We know that abstractions leak

There are only two kinds of abstractions:

- those that leak a lot

- those that leak a little

Embracing abstraction leaks makes better-educated users

UI leaks a lot, so we don't attempt to hide it

Widget → Element → DOM → JSNI forms a useful continuum

RPC only leaks a little, mainly in that calls must be async

6. JavaScript Native Interface (JSNI)

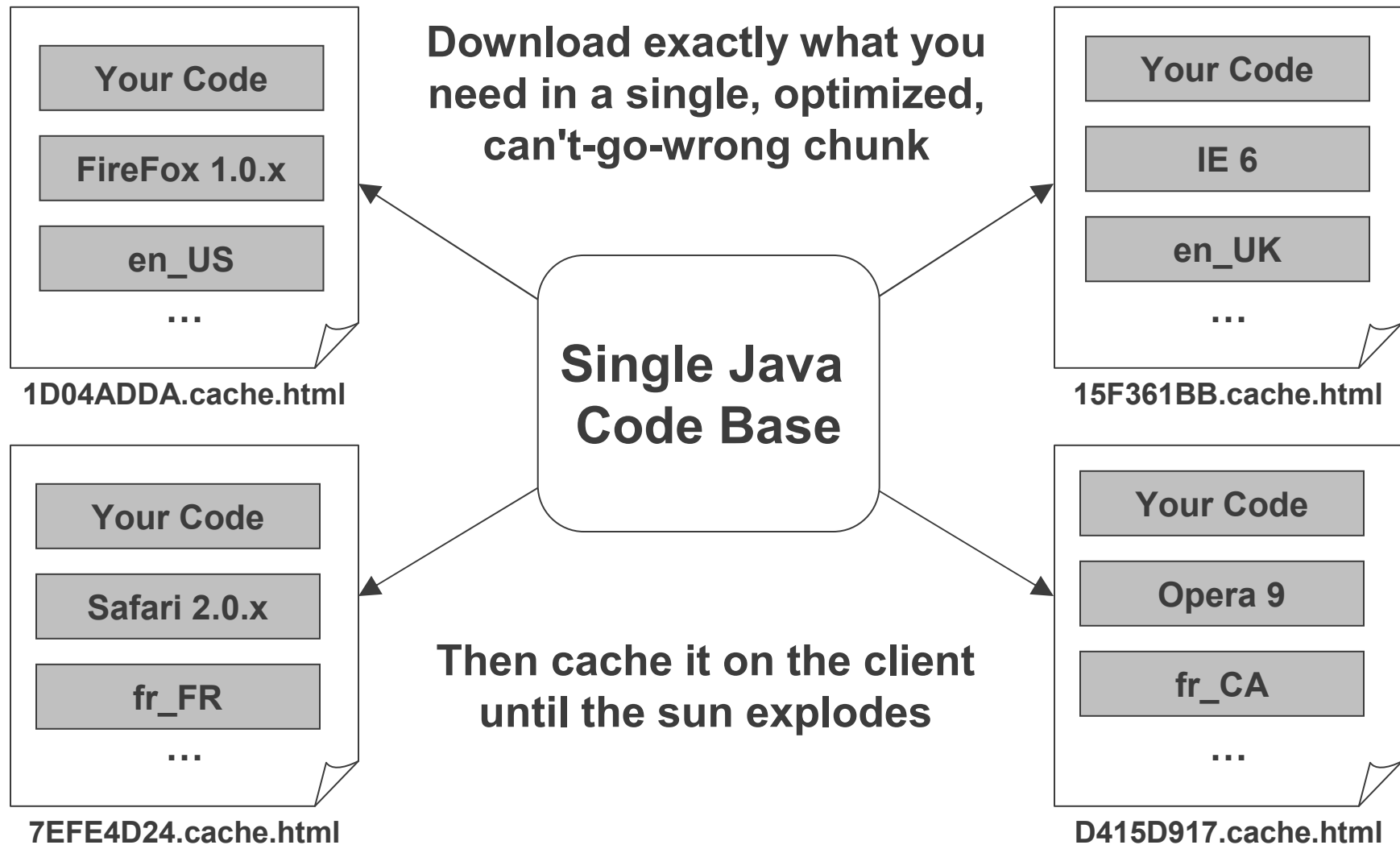
Implement `native` methods with JavaScript

5. Deferred binding with code generation

Manages permutations automatically

Totally extensible, including compile-time code generators

Optimized Permutations



4. GWT doesn't try to blow you away with the first impression

Our focus is on making a sensible, efficient set of tools that scales

Supporting solid software engineering trumps snazzy widgets

Team slogan: the bling is on the inside

3. Hosted mode is at least as cool as the GWT compiler

Feels like normal browser development

Refresh actually does recompile source to bytecode

2. GWT eats its own dogfood

Everything built with core facilities you can use yourself

Browser portability, localization, RPC client proxies, ...

Upcoming ImageBundleGenerator



Ten Things to Know About GWT



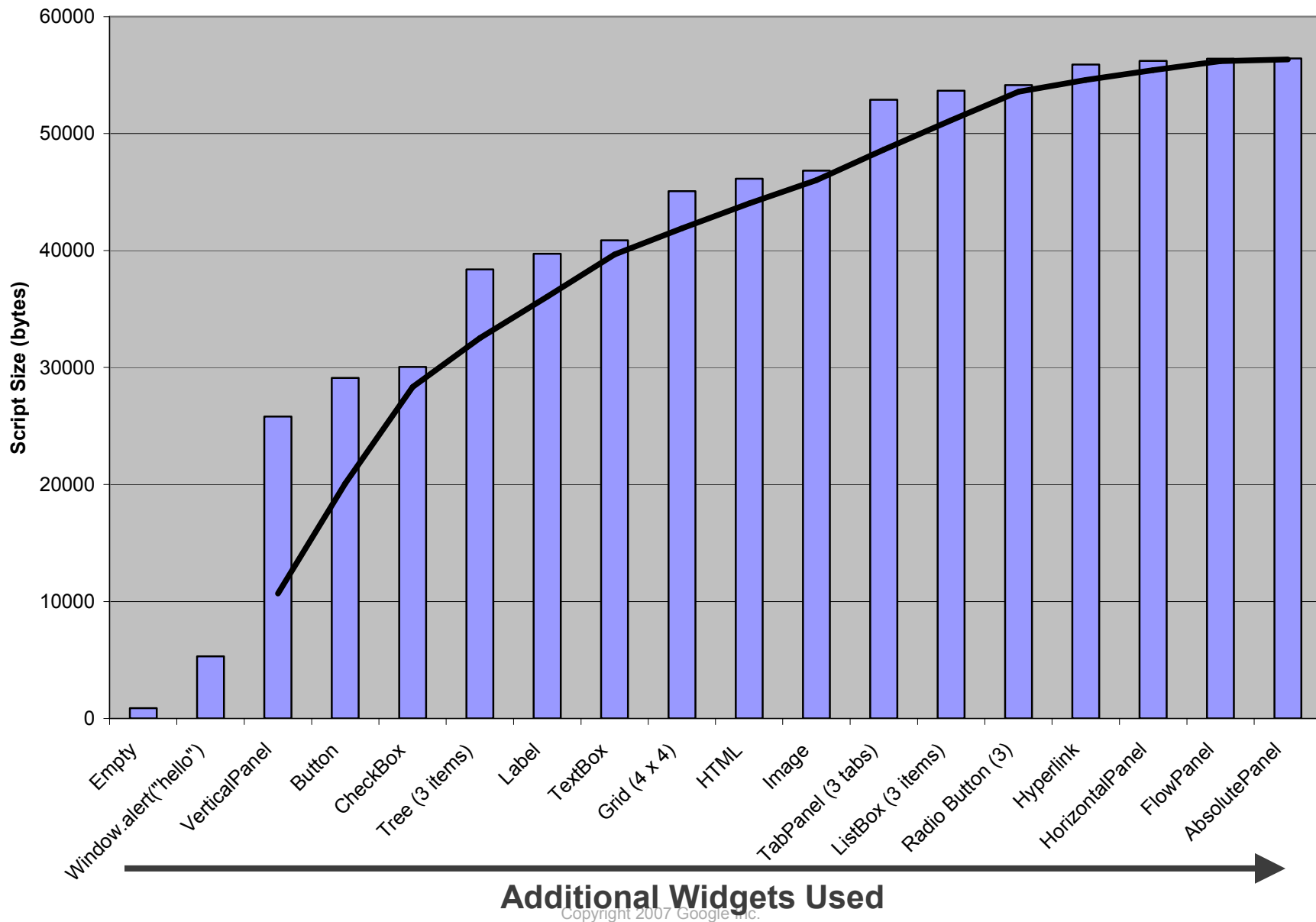
1. GWT isn't all-or-nothing

Only use what you want

Don't pay for what you don't use

Integrate with other technology as needed

Only Pay for What You Use



Which browsers are supported?

Firefox 1.0, 1.5, 2.0

Internet Explorer 6, 7

Safari 2.0

Opera 8.5, 9.0

**What happens when a new browser comes out?
Do I have to wait for the GWT compiler to be updated?**

Definitely no!

All browser-specific code is in user-level libraries

The JavaScript language itself has very consistent support across browsers

The DOM API is the real culprit

For backwards-compatible browsers, it's a no-brainer

For other situations, it's straightforward to change the user-level libraries

Implement a version of DOMImpl for the desired browser

Main point: GWT was designed to never be a roadblock

Do I have to run Java on my server?

No, the GWT compiler produces standalone JS

Only GWT RPC needs a servlet

You can use any backend

GWT includes JSON and XML libraries to make it easier

Isn't it really hard to debug the JavaScript that the GWT compiler produces?

If you need to (or just want to) debug the compiled output, the GWT compiler gives you multiple output options:

- style OBFUSCATED (small, efficient, and fast)
- style DETAILED (nothing is left to the imagination)
- style PRETTY (perfect if you want to actually follow the code)

The output is normal JS, so you can always use any JavaScript debugger as you would with handwritten code.

By the way, you will likely never have to do any of this. You'll be doing your debugging in Java.

What functionality is included with GWT?

User Interface

Client/Server Communication

Application Infrastructure

Unit Testing

Internationalization

...

GWT Library Overview



AbsolutePanel, Button, ButtonBase, CellPanel, ChangeListenerCollection, CheckBox, ClickListenerCollection, ComplexPanel, Composite, DeckPanel, DialogBox, DockPanel, FileUpload, FlexTable, FlowPanel, FocusListenerAdapter, FocusListenerCollection, FocusPanel, FocusWidget, FormHandlerCollection, FormPanel, FormSubmitCompleteEvent, FormSubmitEvent, Frame, Grid, HorizontalPanel, HTML, HTMLPanel, HTMLTable, Hyperlink, Image, KeyboardListenerAdapter, KeyboardListenerCollection, Label, ListBox, LoadListenerCollection, MenuBar, MenuItem, MouseListenerAdapter, MouseListenerCollection, NamedFrame, Panel, PasswordTextBox, PopupListenerCollection, PopupPanel, RadioButton, RootPanel, ScrollListenerCollection, ScrollPanel, SimplePanel, StackPanel, TabBar, TableListenerCollection, TabListenerCollection, TabPanel, TextArea, TextBox, TextBoxBase, Tree, TreeItem, TreeListenerCollection, UIObject, VerticalPanel, Widget, WidgetCollection

User Interface

History, DeferredCommand, Localizable, Constants, Dictionary, ConstantsWithLookup, Messages

Usability and I18N

DOMException, XMLParser, Attr, CDATASection, CharacterData, Comment, Document, DocumentFragment, Element, EntityReference, NamedNodeMap, Node, NodeList, ProcessingInstruction, Text

XML

AsyncCallback, IsSerializable, RemoteService, RemoteServiceServlet

RPC

JSONArray, JSONBoolean, JSONException, JSONNull, JSONNumber, JSONObject, JSONParser, JSONString, JSONValue

JSON

Header, Request, RequestBuilder, RequestCallback, RequestException, Response, URL

HTTP

How big are GWT apps? Doesn't the compiler produce bloated script?

For tiny bits of functionality (say, < 100 lines) of handwritten JS, you might be better off writing it by hand. Beyond that, compiler size and speed optimizations will ultimately win.

Compiler optimizations that require static typing

- Dead code removal

- Type tightening

- Polymorphism removal

- Inlining (if you want it to be correct)

- Very aggressive (and safe!) compression on generated JS

We think of new optimizations all the time

- KitchenSink is 20% smaller (95K) using upcoming 1.4 optimizations

- GZipped (i.e. over the wire, once) it's 29K

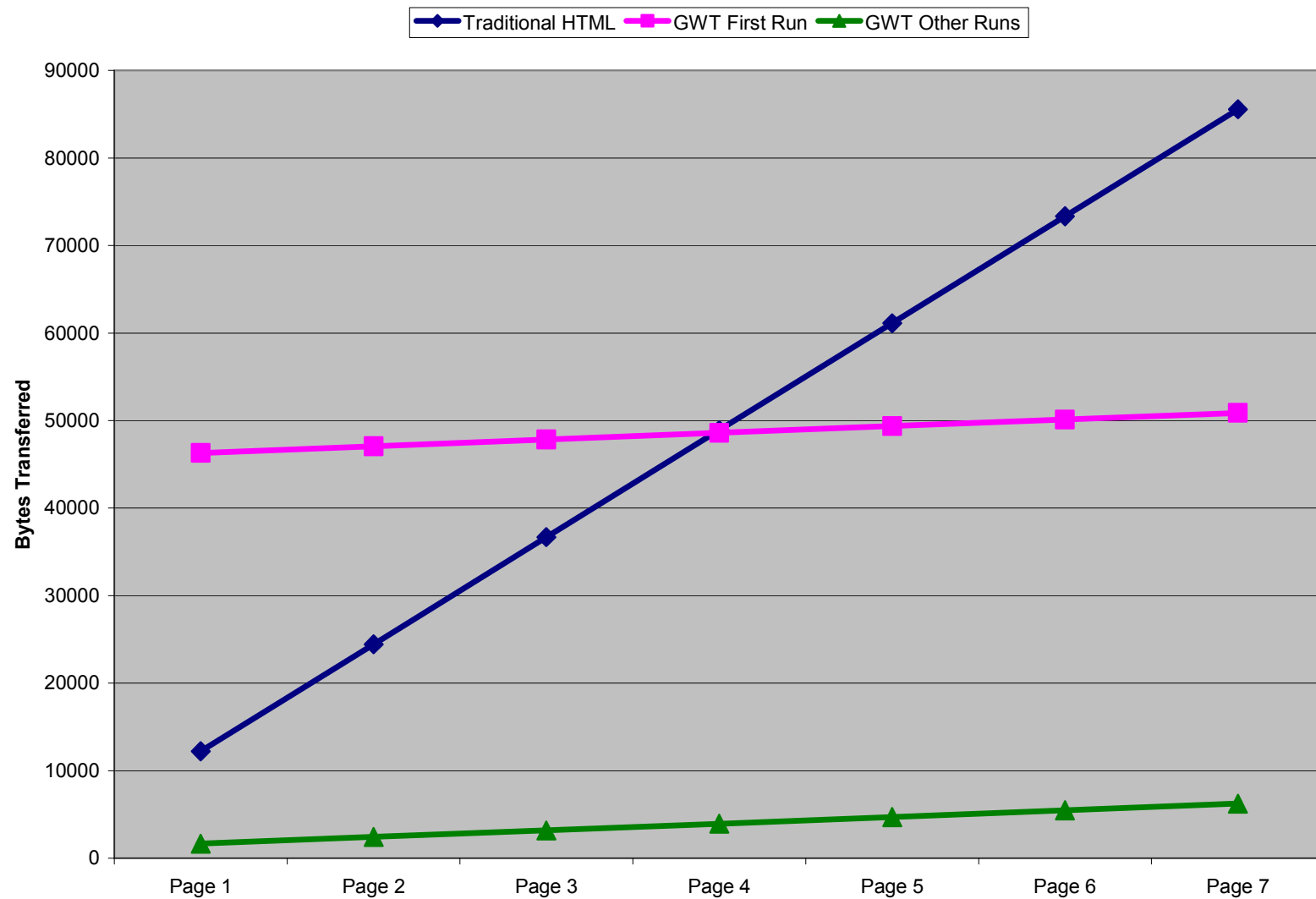
**How fast are GWT apps?
Surely I could write faster apps by hand!**

Likely to be true for very small apps

**Unlikely to be true for bigger apps due to compiler and
class library optimizations**

(See next slide for experimental data)

Bandwidth and Startup Time



**Does GWT have to control the entire page?
I can't rewrite my app from scratch!**

**GWT does not force you to start over!
Attach code to existing pages with a <meta> tag**

```
<html>
...<meta name="gwt:module" content="..." />
...<h1>Welcome to GWTravel Services</h1>
...<div id="reservationWizard">
...</html>
```

Your Java source is as loosely-coupled as you need it to be

```
Panel p = RootPanel.get("reservationWizard");
Wizard wiz = new ReservationWizard();
p.add(wiz);
```

Works with any HTML-generating server approach

How accessible are GWT applications?

GWT apps are as accessible as any AJAX app...and far from perfect

GWT does far more with keyboard support than typical AJAX

GWT is well-positioned to add comprehensive support when AJAX accessibility features are widely available in browsers

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Q & A

The obvious question that rarely gets asked

What exactly are we trying to optimize for?

Download speed?

Are we supporting dial-up users?

Startup time?

First run? Subsequent runs? How fast, exactly?

Some particular size cutoff?

Size-on-wire? Size-in-cache?

Is the cutoff arbitrary or based on measured effects?

Funny: compare script size to the size of your images

Absolutely crucial

Should be measured in milliseconds

If startup time isn't acceptable, nothing else matters

Very hard to do well

Loading code with synchronous XHR is out of the question

<script> tags serialize HTTP requests

GZip your script ahead of time? Good idea, but...

Some versions of IE6 fail on gzipped .js files

Script versioning vs. cacheability

GWT gives you leverage

Compiled output includes only what a particular user needs

Output is JS wrapped in HTML, which is safely gzip'able

Loads code in an <iframe> in parallel with the page

Scripts are named uniquely and are perfectly cacheable

Ahead-of-time script compression

`C6BD1564339FC70220.cache.html` (95K)

`C6BD1564339FC70220.cache.html.gz` (29K)

Our "big" app instantly became 3 times smaller

You last build step should be to gzip GWT output

Classic HTML can't use compression so well

Data changes frequently

HTML changes rarely

Mixing them forces compression into the critical path

GWT supports aggressive script caching

Combine a small "selection script"...

→ `KitchenSink.nocache.html`

Expires: <pretty soon>

With a larger compiled script...

→ `md5.cache.html`

Expires: <when the sun explodes>

Viola! Perfect caching!

Never re-fetch the big script *unless* it has changed

Never *fail* to re-fetch the big script when it *has* changed

If you're confident that it's going to be a big app...

The default choice should be client-side MVC

Only tricky part is making your model async

Then again, not so bad...

```
myModel.requestNthItem(14) ;  
...  
class MyView implements MyModelListener {  
    void onNthItemReceived(int n, Item item) {  
...  
}
```

MVC also fits perfectly with GWT history

- 1. Start by assuming you have a single page and you're building a traditional client-side MVC app (remember client/server? :-)**
- 2. Add code as if you'll never hit a brick wall**
- 3. Make sure your app implements history well**
- 4. Evaluate the size and speed of your app**
 - A. If you're happy, goto 2
 - B. If you're unhappy, do all the stuff on the previous slides
 - C. If you're still unhappy, see the next slide

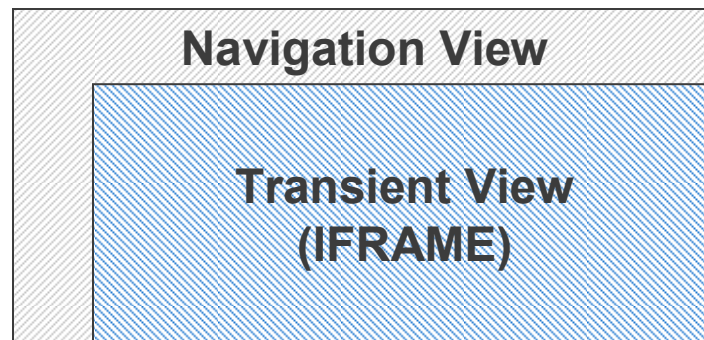
Not hard to split your GWT app across pages

History smoothes over page transitions

Fast GWT startup makes page switching affordable

Wrangled by GWT, IFRAMEs aren't so evil

Divide big chunks into IFRAMEs that your controller shows/hides them as necessary



Consolidate multiple small RPCs

Build composite structures and large-grained APIs

Good rule of thumb: minimize HTTP round-trips

Server replies with more data than was requested

Modularize your UI and create parts on demand

Fits naturally with history and MVC

Spread the cost of widget creation across user time

See KitchenSink for an example

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Actual Q & A

Not Enough Time to Show Everything



Internationalization support

- Highly optimized

- Externalized string ids are checked during compilation

Automatic, dynamic dependency inclusion

- Slurp in external CSS

- Slurp in external JS

Everything is cross-browser

- IE6+, FF 1.0.x, FF 1.5.x, Safari 2.0.x, Opera 9.x

Your choice of development platforms

- Mac OS X, Linux, Windows

Your choice of IDEs

- IntelliJ IDEA, Eclipse, NetBeans, JCreator, JBuilder

GWT is Open Source



Licensed under Apache 2.0

Source is available via svn on Google Code project hosting

Our charter document is "Making GWT Better"

Mission statement

Design axioms

Community forums

How to build GWT from source

Code style

Submitting patches

Transparent development (published minutes, roadmap)

Great participation

100,000+ downloads of the release candidates for GWT 1.3

Great discussion on G-W-T and G-W-T-C lists

200+ developers on the contributors list

Patches are rolling in!

Documentation Included




Getting Started Guide

Building a Sample Application

All the sample applications are in the `samples/` directory in your GWT package. Each sample has a script you can run to start it in `hosted mode` and a script you can use to compile it into JavaScript and HTML to run it `web mode`.

Running in Hosted Mode

To run the `Kitchen Sink` example in `hosted mode`, navigate to the `samples/KitchenSink/` directory and run the `KitchenSink-shell` script. This will open the GWT browser with the Kitchen Sink application running inside.

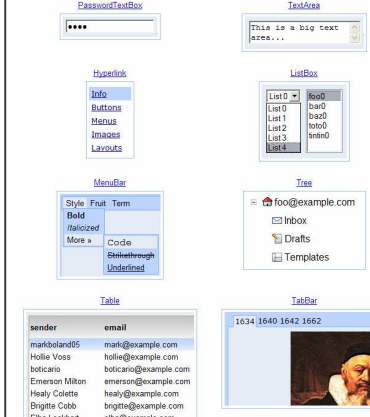


Since you're running in `hosted mode`, the application is running in the Java Virtual Machine (JVM). This is typically the mode you'll use to debug your applications.

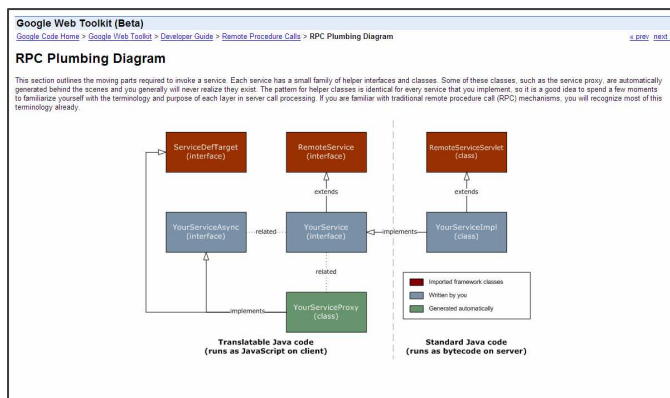
Running in Web Mode

To run the application in `web mode`, compile the application by running the `KitchenSink-compile` script. The GWT compiler will generate a number of JavaScript and HTML files from the Kitchen Sink Java source code in the `www/` subdirectory. To see the application, open the file `www/com.google.gwt.sample.kitchensink.KitchenSink.html` in your favorite web browser.

Widget Gallery



Developer Guide



Class Reference

Google Web Toolkit (Beta)
Google Code Home > Google Web Toolkit > Developer Guide > Remote Procedure Calls > RPC Plumbing Diagram [_prev](#) [next_](#)

Class Hyperlink

A widget that serves as an "internal" hyperlink. That is, it is a link to another state of the running application. When clicked, it will create a new history frame using `History.newFrame()`, but without reloading the page.

Being a true hyperlink, it is also possible for the user to "right-click, open link in new window", which will cause the application to be loaded in a new window at the state specified by the hyperlink.

Example

```
public class HistoryExample implements EntryPoint, HistoryListener {
    private Label lbl = new Label();

    public void onModuleLoad() {
        // Create three Hyperlinks that change the application's history.
        Hyperlink link0 = new Hyperlink("link to foo", "foo");
        Hyperlink link1 = new Hyperlink("link to bar", "bar");
        Hyperlink link2 = new Hyperlink("link to baz", "baz");

        // If the application starts with no history token, start it off in the
        // "bar" state.
        String initToken = History.getToken();
    }
}
```

Community and Support

- 7200+ members on the developer forum

- Books and articles

- Meta-sites (gwtsite.com, gwtPowered.org)

Libraries and Applications

- 86 GWT-related projects on Google Code project hosting

- Diverse products built with GWT

 - Google Base (base.google.com)

 - Google Image Labeler (images.google.com/imagelabeler)

 - Whirled (<http://www.threerings.net/whirled>)

 - Web-based conferencing (dimdim.com)

 - Texas Hold 'em with live chat (gpokr.com)

Tools, Tools, Tools

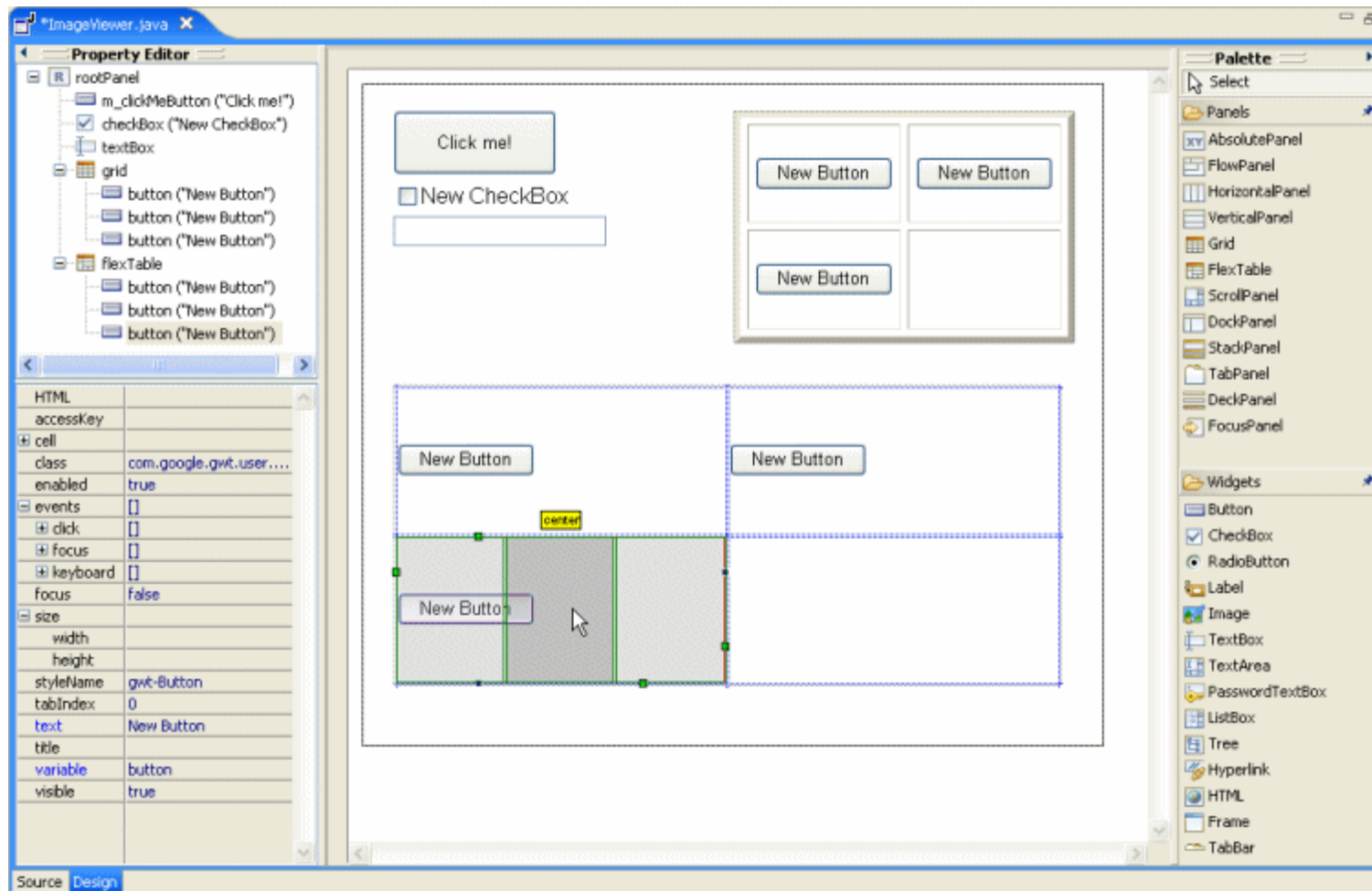
- IntelliJ IDEA, WindowBuilderPro GUI designer for GWT

- VistaFei for GWT, Googlipse, and others

Did I Mention Tools?



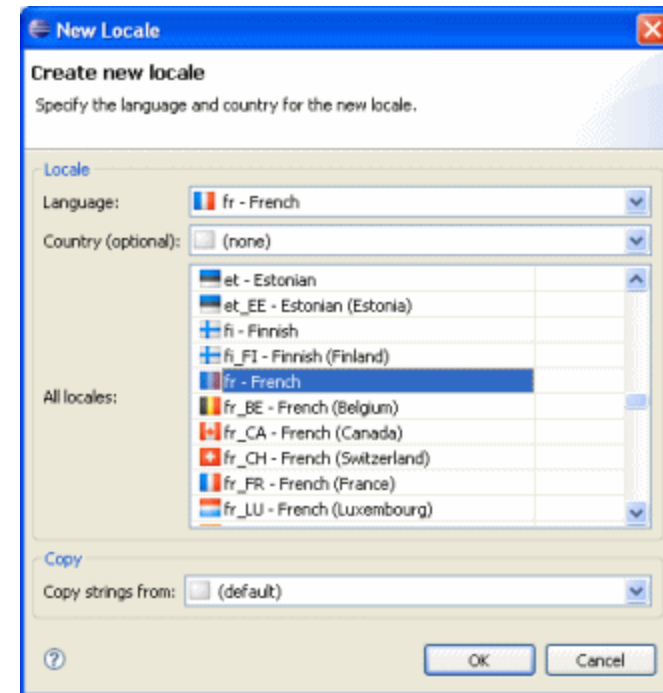
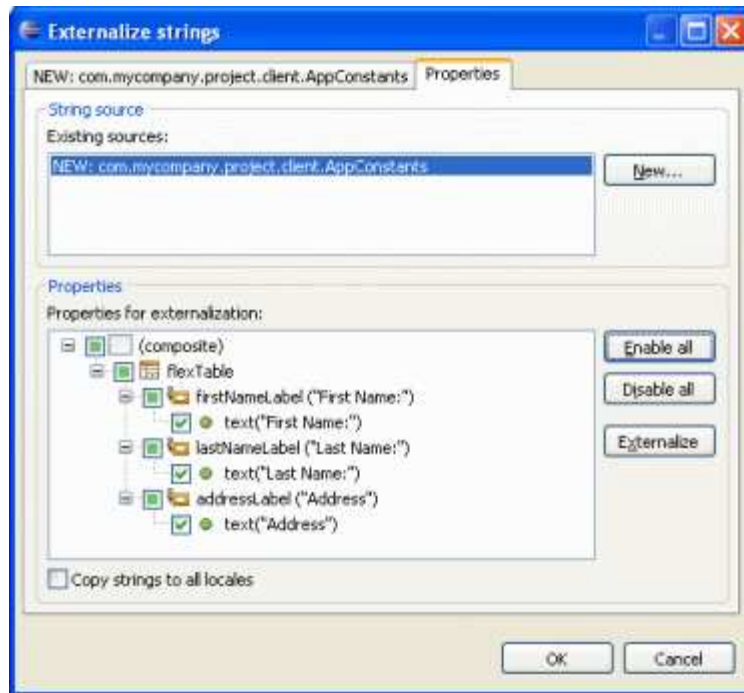
Instantiations GWT Designer WYSIWYG Layout



Did I Mention Tools?



Instantiations GWT Designer Internationalization



New widgets

RichText, SpellCheck, SuggestBox, SplitterPanel, ...

Simplifications and optimizations

Include GWT modules using only `<script>` tag

After first run, re-download is ~4K (80% less than 1.3)

Compiled script now can be fetched cross-domain

Compiler optimizations; typical reduction of 10-20%

New compiler output supports a better gzip ratio :-)

Utilities

ImageBundleGenerator, IncrementalCommand,

Benchmarking subsystem

Major speed improvements in collection classes

Date and number formatting and parsing

Leverage is needed to use AJAX well with low risk

PhD in browser quirks is no longer a hiring prereq

Turn AJAX development into software engineering

GWT rewards using good engineering practices

We will share our best work and ideas with you, and we hope you will return the favor

Much more to come...see you online!

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