Wikis at Work

Some experiences of Wikis, Open-Source projects and documentation

Outline of talk

- The read-only Web
- Wikis – odd name, great idea
  - Origins
  - Current Status
- Perspective
  - My open source Wiki
  - Experiences
- Futures

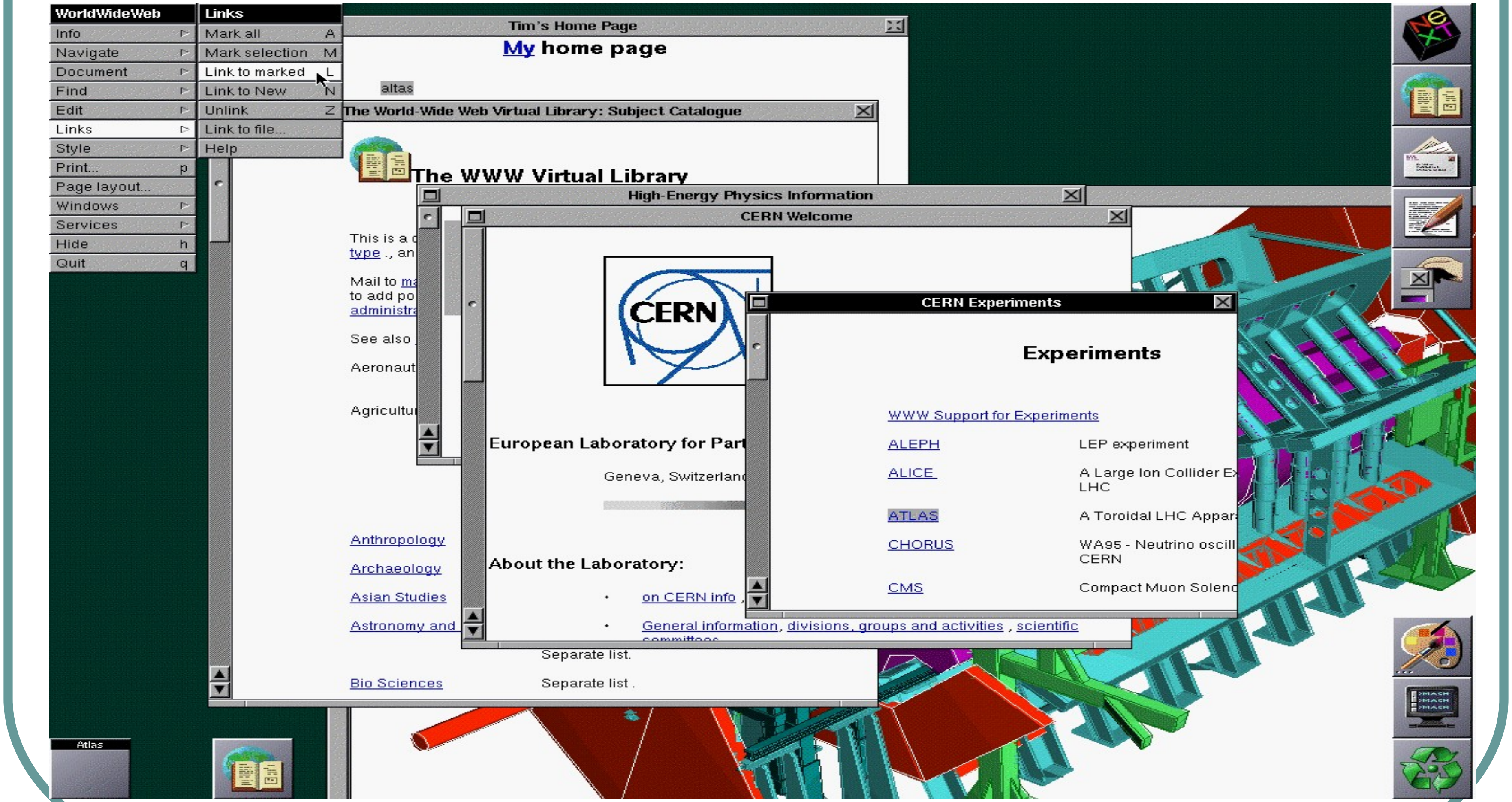
Who is He?

- Working with web technologies since '92
- Java since '95
- Co-Founded Orbital Software
  - Started in '95
  - VC Investment in '97
  - IPO London Stock Exchange '00
  - Acquired by Sopheon '01

Memorable Moments

- Using NCSA Mosaic for first time ('93)
  - Not the first Web browser I used!
- Seeing a Java applet run in a browser ('95)
- Watching someone edit and save a page in a Wiki ('00)

In the beginning…



My home page

altas

The WWW Virtual Library

This is a c
type ., an

Mail to ma
to add po
administra

See also

Aeronaut

Agricultu

Anthropology

Archaeology

Asian Studies

Astronomy and

Separate list.

Bio Sciences Separate list .

European Laboratory for Part

Geneva, Switzerlan

About the Laboratory:

- on CERN info ,
- General information, divisions, groups and activities , scientific committees

Experiments

WWW Support for Experiments

ALEPH	LEP experiment
ALICE	A Large Ion Collider Ex LHC
ATLAS	A Toroidal LHC Appar
CHORUS	WA95 - Neutrino oscill CERN
CMS	Compact Muon Solen

Quote

- “there were all the software parts to make a **wysiwyg** (what you see is what you get - in other words direct manipulation of text on screen as on the printed - or browsed page) word processor. I just had to add hypertext”

Tim Berners-Lee

http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/WorldWideWeb.html

Observations

- The Web started as WYSIWYG read/write collaboration environment in early 90’s
- Later progress made this a asymmetric read-only publishing environment

Wikis

- “Wiki wiki” == “fast”
- Concept created by Ward Cunningham
  - www.c2.com Is the original Wiki

  “The simplest online database that could possibly work.”
- Originally invented in '95

Basic Concepts

- Users can edit content “in place”
- Linking is easy
- Links can be created to pages that don't exist (yet)
- Relatively simple text formatting
- Version History
  - Makes changes less risky

Wiki Engines

- Applications that support Wiki sites
  - Usually Web-based
- Notable Wiki Engines
  - MediaWiki – used by Wikipedia
  - Twiki
  - FlexWiki
  - MoinMoin
  - Socialtext, Atlassian, JotSpot etc.

Perspective

- Motivations
  - User friendly – WYSIWYG editing
  - “Enterprise friendly”
    - Windows & .Net
    - Searching MS Office documents
    - Active Directory integration

Perspective

- Almost 4 years old
- Available for 2.5 years
  - ~30,000 downloads
  - ~2,000 (at least) working instances
- Open-source – GPL
- Relatively active user community
- No advertising or marketing!

Perspective - Technology

- ASP.Net 1.1web application ✓
- XML used for storage ✓
- MVC ✓
  - Request -> XML -> XHTML
- XSLT for presentation ✓
- MS Indexing Service ✓
  - Searching ✓
  - Querying ✗

.Net

- Overall opinion: Really Nice
- C# is a lovely language
- XML/XSLT support good
- Performance excellent
  - Nothing in Perspective has been optimised
- Significant number of irritating bugs

Difficult Things

- Developing AD integration by proxy
- HTML Normalization
  - Multi-browser support
- Limiting architecture
  - Not really object oriented

Open source – My Experiences

- Users are generally (99%) are really pleasant and helpful
- Working on Perspective has made me enjoy listening to users
  - Almost all development for last two years has been based on requests/suggestions from users
- Contributed code less useful than you might expect

IP

- Not a big concern of mine
- GPL still means I have copyright
- Very **restrictive** license
- I mainly picked the GPL because I wanted to have some license
  - Liability etc.

Usage

- Documentation
  - Complex Systems
  - Systems that Change
  - (So just about everything then)
- Very popular with Project Managers
- Augment existing documentation
- General Purpose Intranet tool

Who is using it

- P&G
- Philips
- Ford
- Boeing
- British Library
- USMC
- EA
- ....

Hosted Services?

- Some Wiki services are provided on a hosting model
  - Run from a remote data center
  - Google's JotSpot
- Not that popular!
  - Wrong side of firewall
  - Confidentiality
  - Can't integrate (e.g. AD)

Future Directions

- Is it time up for the concept of the “document”?
  - Relatively few documents get printed
- Move from documentation to modelling
  - Supported by object-orientation in implementation
  - Graphical as well as textual content
- Linking to objects outside the Wiki
  - Do this in an extensible fashion

Object-oriented

- Alan Kay has commented that Web pages should be objects
- Perspective v2 elements
  - Each addressable Item has a type that determines its structure, behaviour and appearance
  - Links within Items are themselves objects that have their own structure, behaviour and appearance

Holtz's Law

- “Whatever succeeds on the Internet will find its way onto intranets.”
- Web 2.0 themes
  - Blogs
  - Tagging (rather than categories)
  - Mash-ups
  - Track-backs
  - RSS and syndication
  - Commenting on everything

Summary

- The Web is becoming become read/write
  - Eventually
- Wikis hint at a post-document world
- The Enterprise is like the Internet
  - But has its own unique challenges
- Bottom up works!
  - Web 2.0 vs Web 1.0