

KDE Plasma Netbook



Marco Martin



Netbooks?

- New concept on not really new hardware
- Similar stuff existed but was quite unpopuclar
- Took off with XO and EeePC, why?
 - Price
 - Target
- Today they're pretty different from those two first systems
 - How? And.. Why?

What we have seen / we will see

- First attempts, in-house variants of linux with custom software: Eee Xandros, Linpus, XO sugar
 - Dissatisfaction from both Windows -and- Linux users
- If you can't play by the new rules revert them back: windows XP mini laptops, with hard drives and bigger screens: the bogstandard familiar experience.

New (more interesting) players

- Ubuntu netbook edition: minimal (workspace) change from a standard GNOME desktop
- Moblin: blend of traditional GNOME applications with an hardware accelerated canvas
 - Similar to our approach
 - We could have some advantages due to an higher reuse of components
- ChromeOS: 90% of the use is on a browser anyways, right?
 - Sometimes the other 10% is vital
 - Too early for real network ubiquity
 - Despite efforts, the browser is not a good rich platform

What we can learn?

- The “transition to web apps” is just a symptom on how computing is changing
- In 80's and 90's computers were pretty much just workhorses, used to produce job-related content (with the notable exception of gaming)
- This is surely not going away, but something else has surfaced: most of the activity with a computer (at least in “free time”) is now mostly about content consumption, and the largest pool of content is the Internet for sure

What we can learn?

- A full sized computer, desktop or even laptop, while will always be more comfortable for any conceivable use when mobility isn't an issue, isn't necessary anymore.
- A device that is small enough to be comfortably used on the go wins in many situations and is perfectly enough to view content or produce really simple one, like micro (and fullsized) blogging or any not too elaborate text document

What we can learn?

- However the current state is not optimal: a web browser is and always will be (despite efforts) optimal to visualize things that looks like a “document”, not to host rich client applications (yes, it -still- looks a bit awkward to view videos in a web browser)
- One of the reasons of the iPhone success is indeed an huge list of applications that use a service API rather than provide a browser and be done with it.

What do we need?

- A way to efficiently pull the content we need and visualize it in the best way possible
- A way to get the interface to do the task we want with the less thinking possible
- A way to reduce the amount of UI (but not functionality!) as much as possible, not only for screen size space but also to benefit the intuitiveness on any form factor

Plasma Netbook Shell

- That's what we had in mind on every step in the creation of the Plasma Netbook Shell, but not only that
- Plasma has been initially seen as a Desktop Shell, just because it was what was needed more
- We never did any sort of assumptions (or at least, tried) how a Plasma application would have behaved or even on what kind of device it would have ran

Plasma Netbook Shell

- As soon devices like the EeePC surfaced, it was obvious that they are one of the best opportunities for the spread of the Linux and KDE platforms
- It's the first step for future colonization of even more interesting (and more “alien”) devices, like cell phones or internet tablets (like the N900, arm based smartbooks and devices like that)
- Plasma Netbook Shell has been designed with the following targets in mind:
 - As much code reuse as possible
 - ...while giving an ui not tied to the last 20-30 years of Desktop computing

Components: Search and Launch

- The menu gives you a list of all possible tasks you can do with your computer, that loosely maps to what apps are installed
- Over the years the list got
 - Richer
 - Bigger
 - Useless
- So we did what ought to be done
- The menu is dead!

Components: Search and Launch

- We have Krunner in Plasma Desktop, but it's somewhat too hidden, so with its technology...
- The first fullscreen page you see when you turn on the device is a big search field
- You don't go through endless menus, you just ask what you want, and the computer is more efficient than you in searching
- The results aren't limited anymore to applications, they can also be documents, Wikipedia entries or whatever (web service based runners will be vital in the future)

Components: the newspaper

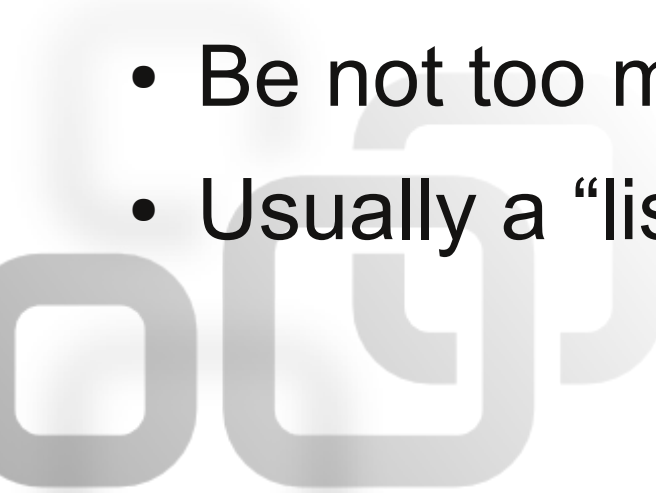
- What content we would like to see on a computer?
Basically 3 categories:
 - Ephemeral attention: information that is useful but is enough to quickly look at it. Eg. Time, weather, microblogs.
 - Maybe important: information that i need to halways have handy to quickly look at it usually enough but there could be an important item that will require attention: news feeds, email, appointments.
 - Always important: content that always need my full atetion to be useful: watching videos, performing a search on the internet, writing a document

Components: the newspaper

- The newspaper activity type is designed to accommodate the first two types of content: it will be enough to have a weather or a microblog widget there without ever needing a web browser or a specialized app.
- I can have the last news headers or last unread emails there. If it seems there is something important, I will ask for Kmail, Akregator, a web browser or whatever

Developing a newspaper widget




- We can see there are some common characteristics for a widget to be useful there
 - It must tell useful informations that are not always the same (telling the processor type isn't really useful there)
 - Probably online content
 - Be not too much, easily readable
 - Usually a “list” of items
- 

Developing a newspaper widget

- Common Plasma facilities: PopupApplet and ScrollView
- In the Newspaper containment they will try to expand to full height to avoid nested scrollbars
- As much space as possible should be occupied from the content, as less chrome as possible
- Always try them on every possible form factor, desktop, netbook, panels (in the near future mediacenters and cellphone-like devices will come as targets too)

Future



- In KDE SC 4.4 we are still at early stages
 - The look and behaviour of the containments can still change
 - We need many many widgets to complete the puzzle: email is in the works, still needed appointments and as many web services as possible
 - Natural evolution: tiny mobile devices: the widgets with the most useful content and that use in the best way possible the real estate are perfect full screen apps
- 



Questions?

