Mozilla: Opening Up

glyn moody

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- Mozilla is the future

But

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- the Open Web is not optional for Mozilla, it's a necessity

Mozilla Yesterday

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- how we got here

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- how Mozilla was working towards the Open Web even in its early days
- what its trajectory tells us

Pre-history: Mosaic

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- unusually, source code was available, for "research and education purposes on a request basis"

Mosaic's Innovations

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  - made Web more "user friendly"
- released for Unix first, but then Windows and Mac
  - suitable for non-technical users in academia

Mosaic and the Open Web

- Mosaic was the first step towards *opening* the Web to all

The Forking of Mosaic

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- Mosaic forked: into closed and (eventually) open branches

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  - not only hired away four NCSA students, but also "borrowed" name of NCSA's browser

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- company was forced by NCSA to rename to Netscape Communications

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  - "the company builds on the tradition of software products for the Internet being offered free of charge"

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- shows hacker/Net culture seeping into software companies

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   "The initial version of Netscape available today on the net is a public beta version, enabling users to provide feedback on the software's features and functionality across a wide range of computing platforms."

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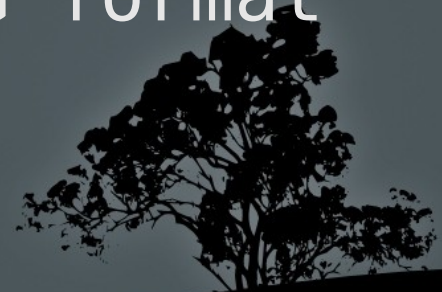
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    - native support for JPEG format

Netscape's Innovations (5)

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- "It is optimized to run smoothly over 14.4 kilobit/second modems as well as higher bandwidth lines, delivering performance at least ten times that of other network browsers."

Netscape and the Open Web

- where Mosaic opened up the Web for general academic users, Netscape opened it for *business* and *home* users — huge impact

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- at its peak, Netscape completely dominated the Web browser sector

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- since it was no different from Microsoft in this respect, and Internet Explorer was by now better code, people switched

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  - Jamie Zawinski (engineering)

  - Frank Hecker (sales)

  - Eric Hahn (management)

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- "[Open source] became uncontroversial because it was way better than what we were doing prior to that."

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- made general business computer user aware of open source

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- central to Mozilla's appeal and power

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- delayed first release of Mozilla

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- Jamie Zawinski's "resignation and postmortem" (31 March 1999):

    - "If there's a cautionary tale here, it is that you can't take a dying project, sprinkle it with the magic pixie dust of "open source," and have everything magically work out. Software is hard. The issues aren't that simple."

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- Firefox became main branch in April 2003

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- would provide major boost for Open Web

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- little community input

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- today playing pivotal role in driving Open Web

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- Mozilla beginning to look beyond the browser at the larger Web ecosystem, at openness, sharing and collaboration in general

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- great code produced by the Mozilla project today is not the end in itself, but a means to a greater end tomorrow

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