

Scotch On the Rocks – day one review

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Monday was the first day of the 'Scotch on the Rocks' 2010 Adobe conference (sponsored by Fuzzy Orange). I went along for a couple of reasons. To see what has been happening in the community, what development ideas people were throwing around as it is a bit of a two day think tank, and to put some faces to the Twitter accounts I've been following.

This article is a breakdown of the first days seminars I attended, and some thoughts and considerations about the content on show.

Keynote with Terry Ryan:

The day kicked off with Terry Ryan demonstrating the Flash Catalyst work flow. Starting off in Catalyst as a designer, and basically cutting up your graphical template into actual functional components. He then proceeded to run through the new CF 9 functionality, which was a good refresher for those of us that had seen it before, and a nice way to bring everyone up to speed. I like the 'Model' of Catalyst. I'm not a designer so the design aspect is lost on me, but I love the way you can take a graphic and translate it into an application. Balsamiq mock ups has a similar approach, in the way that you can wireframe an application then export it as XML. This has inspired me to write a Coldfusion parser for the XML it produces, so watch this space.

Application.cfc with Ben Nadel

Ben's presentation was a good discussion on the uses of the Application.cfc file, and how it is basically the primary Coldfusion framework. He examined interesting points such as different routines to start session management, and different ways to dynamically name your application name spaces. He also raised an interesting point about Search engines hitting your site and the impact that that has on your scopes. IE when Google hits your application layer does it create a new session, and if so, is that the same as a user session? The code example showed a nice

way of detecting if the request was from a search engine, and creating a very small, 2 second, session scope so that it expired immediately, rather than ballooning your memory space.

HTML5 and CSS3 with Christ Mills (Opera)

I have previous had almost no experience with HTML5, so I was quite excited to see what form the new standards are taking. I was a little disappointed to see that a lot of the 'standards' that have been developed aren't really standards at all. The current state of the code base is such that there are browser specific tags all through it. Also a lot of the in built functionality, such as the form validation rules and the form elements display options are closed away. You cannot access them at all, so if you want to edit them, it is simply not possible. Quite a few of the block level div elements have been replaced with more semantic naming now as well, like this:

```
<header></header>
<footer></footer>
<navigation></navigation>
<article></article>
```

I'm not sure at all how these elements will degrade in older browsers or screen readers, or how they will perform for Accessibility. I'm guessing that you would probably have to attach a style to them to make them behave like traditional div elements. CSS3 looks very interesting. It also degrades nicely, so if its not compatible with your current browser there are no big issues. Just don't be too surprised if your styling doesn't come out exactly the same on all browsers for a while.

N Tier Caching with Mike Brunt

I've worked with Mike Brunt in the past, when a company I was at hired him to examine so of the issues they were having with Coldfusion server thread performance. The presentation was a good talk that featured discussion points on the JVM setup and server memory restrictions. He went over topics such as upgrading to the 64 bit version of Coldfusion server so that you can address more memory in your JVM, and installing as a clustered install, whether you are using it or not, as the flexibility is greater, and the JVM is less tied to the server Operating System. He also covered monitoring the JVM heap for usage and Garbage collection, and

that they default Coldfusion server installation settings are rubbish. You need to increase the JVM RAM values, and the Thread count as this is still set at the level for Coldfusion server 5, back in the C++ days. I was amazed to hear that he has Thread settings as high as 150+ in some cases!

Emotional Design with Aral Balkan

This presentation had a different angle from the others. It was not a technical preso at all, but far more an examination into usability. The main focus for his talk was trying to do the basics well, then adding a layer of 'Magic' to the application. Often as developers we can lose focus on the fact that we are producing applications for non technical people to actually use. This really hit home the idea that we are creating experiences for people, and that they should be fun to use.

Coldfusion Builder extensions with Ray Camden

I have never really tried CFBuilder. This was an interesting examination for me of what the IDE was, and how to delve into it. Ray didn't cover the basics as this was more focussed on the Extensions part of the IDE, which is very cool. The fact that you can use Coldfusion code to write IDE functions is a big plus point over all the other IDE's. To me much of the rest of the IDE looked and worked like Eclipse, but this was enough of a taster to get me to go and download the trial version from the adobe site. Here: <http://www.adobe.com/products/coldfusion/cfbuilder/features/>

Day one conclusion

Day one was a fantastic day, with a good mix of technical and industry related presentations. It finished with an unsuccessful trip to a Haggis bar with Terry Ryan, that moved to Wagamama's then the Waldorf, so I really have to say thanks to Terry and Adobe at this point, as I had a cracking evening