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2008 RIA Trends


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2007 was a really great year for RIA technologies and looking ahead 2008 will be far bigger. As a technical evangelist for Adobe, I spend a majority of my days working with external developers building RIA applications and internal Adobe teams building the next generation of RIA development tools, servers, and services. I thought I would share my perspective and highlight the trends heading into 2008.

2008 RIA (Rich Internet Application) Trends



Distributed Applications

Logic is being moved to the edge of the Internet and executing on your computer. Your computer's CPU, memory, and hard drive are being leveraged to create better applications delivered over the Internet. Be it via the browser, Flash Player, Java, SilverLight, or AIR, the trend of delivering client side logic integrated with servers/services will dominate 2008 as a trend. At some point these applications will run serverless/offline on your machine and talk to services both online and locally. There will be a ton of competition in 2008 for developers writing distributed applications as Sun, Microsoft, Mozilla, Google, Apple, and Adobe push major RIA platforms into the market. If anything it will be a wild ride for RIA in 2008.

Services! Services! Services!

2008 will be the year of services and I expect to see an explosion of services launch that run both on the Internet and your local computer. Distributed applications need services and they will be running everywhere near and far. Be it on your local machine

Where I will be:

February 25

360Flex Atlanta at Omni Hotel

April 22

Web 2.0 Expo at Moscone West

May 7

 WebDU 2008 at Star City Hotel
Sydney

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or on some far off grid/cluster/utility, services will be sending messages all over the place. Armed with API keys, we will be storing data and interacting with the cloud on a level we never saw in 2007. Among the services I am watching are Google Gears, Adobe "Voice", Microsoft's Live, and several in development at Yahoo!.

AIR – Adobe Integrated Runtime

AIR is going big in 2008. I have been very impressed with the AIR team and AIR 1.0 is looking to be a huge breakthrough for Adobe. AIR will make creating deployable cross-platform desktop applications a reality. Today writing cross-platform software is hard as you typically need to write the application 3 times, one for each major platform. AIR changes this and allows you to write one application and install the same file on 3 platforms securely. Deploying a new desktop platform is no easy task regarding security and compatibility but the AIR team went way beyond the call with AIR 1.0. I am looking to release several AIR applications after the 1.0 release.

Grid/Cluster/Utility Computing

In 2008, we will see lots of competition emerge in the grid/cluster/utility computing market. Amazon took a bold lead in 2007 with EC2 but this is really just the tip of the iceberg. Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, Sun and others have major initiatives underway for utility computing and are racing to provide a foundation for service creation. Considering that many of these companies spent 2007 building massive data center capacity in Oregon, we will see the cost of cluster computing spiral downward. These clusters will support the creation of many new services supporting voice, storage, presence, and hosting will never be the same. If there were an ideally situated company it would be RightScale as they have the opportunity to be the service API atop several cluster/grid providers.

JQuery

I believe that JQuery will become the defacto JavaScript library in 2008. I have been very impressed with this JavaScript library and its ability to simplify DOM manipulation cross-browser. Personally I think the work that the JQuery team has done is simply amazing and we will see lots more in the coming year.

The RIA Full Monty – Flash, Flex, "Thermo", "Bordeaux"

At Adobe, we are working on several tools for building Flash Player and AIR based applications. Creating content for Flash Player is becoming a very large market and we are building new development paradigms for creating RIA experiences. I will refrain on going into specifics but 2008 will be filled with many tools for SWF creation. Make sure to be in attendance at Adobe MAX 2008 in San Francisco, we will be delivering the goods.

SilverLight Deux

2008 will start with the beta launch of SilverLight 2.0 (1.1 renamed) at MIX08 and is Microsoft's first real entry into the RIA market. SilverLight 1.0 was a dead looser with its lack of a VM but 2.0 might be a turning point. The litmus test will be if SilverLight can get mass client deployment. I am sure they can auto-force-update 50% leveraging Windows, but getting above 80% support will be a very uphill battle. Regardless of how this shakes out, having Microsoft in the RIA market is a great thing.

Mobile and Devices

We will see some great innovation in the mobile and device space in 2008 and potentially see the first real cross-device application platforms emerge. Google's Android, Apple's iPhone/OSX, Flash Player/AIR are racing for a leadership position for application platforms and there is no clear leader. We are seeing more and more devices that are capable of running Flash Player 9 and 2008 may be the year we cross over from Flash Lite to running the full Flash Player on many devices. The recent release of Tamarin-Tracing is clear progress towards seeing Flash Player and AIR everywhere. Just keep it in mind that the market for mobile and devices is far larger than any existing software market. Everyone will have a device capable of running applications in their pocket.

Apple's RIA Platform

I think 2008 will be the year Apple enters the RIA market. I have been quietly watching the changes within iTunes/Quicktime with a watchful eye. Looking at iTunes, the web

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Ribbit leveraging Flash Player... duhhh

Buzzword is #1 of 13 online word processors... duh...

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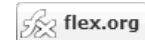
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presentation layer has made some amazing changes and added very rich controls in the last 6 months. The advanced UI controls, sliders, coverflow, menuing, image/data loading are really impressive and are all mark-up driven. Seeing as this platform is cross-platform, widely deployed, and based on WebKit/Quicktime, I think Apple has an entry into the RIA market in store for 2008. How, when, or if this will occur is wide open but something is cooking here.

Erlang Baby

Call me crazy but I think Erlang is going to explode in 2008 as a service development language. Today all programming languages really ignore concurrency and make development of scalable distributed services very hard. Erlang makes this easy and leverages the N-core machines arriving in the market. Recently Jabber.org switched over to a Erlang based XMPP architecture and Amazon launched SimpleDB built atop Erlang. Honestly, Erlang is powerful dark magic and can peel the paint off your house in parallel.

It looks like a great year for software developers all around. Just remember, programming is not a spectators sport!

Cheers,

Ted :)

10 Responses to "2008 RIA Trends"

 **Darth Vader**

December 31, 2007 7:27 PM

Interesting Mr Patrick.... very interesting. The Empire is most pleased with the San Francisco location - we will be sending a few Sith Lords to MAX08.

As for jQuery - no shout outs for Spry? Having used both, I have to say Spry is crazy easy to learn, the documentation is far more consistent and written in a way that makes it easy to answer the questions you're looking for. Plus if you're a Flex developer used to binding, you'll love Spry's ability to bind.

 **Anonymous**

January 2, 2008 9:41 AM

I share your point about iTunes/Quicktime. I cannot believe Apple can let the cross-platform development to Adobe/Microsoft.

About Erlang, I am not sure. It is a very strange beast. I put my bet on Scala, running on the JVM, compatible with Java and providing nice concurrency classes.

 **Anonymous**

January 2, 2008 12:54 PM

I have to say that Erlang is the one to put money on for backend services in the next year(s). I've been a python user for some time, and have recently learned and starting using Erlang, and have to say that for distributed and concurrent systems there is nothing that can touch it.

Jos

 **Anonymous**

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[December 2004](#)
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[March 2005](#)
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[February 2007](#)
[March 2007](#)
[April 2007](#)
[May 2007](#)
[June 2007](#)
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[August 2007](#)
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January 2, 2008 2:38 PM

Just what young developers need. Another architecture and language to learn. Is there a place where people can see the most common development languages in use on the web? For someone starting out and seeing ASP, XSLT, XAML, ADO, OpenGL and all this other nonsense, another platform is getting ridiculous.

 **Anonymous**

January 4, 2008 3:02 PM

Flash on the iPhone....will this be a software update or will it be a new version of the iPhone....I want flash now and if it's a new version on the phone a LOT of people are gonig to be ticked!!

Ted you happen to know if it's a software update?

 **Cato Paus**

January 9, 2008 11:59 AM

Hi All! If We Want New Features in Flaahs Player we will all need to VOTE!

I have submitted it as a Feature
FileReference – A petition for Astro WE NEED YOUR VOTE !

Request. Follow the link and create a acct and vote for it!
<http://bugs.adobe.com/jira/browse/SDK-14245>

By the way we all need to get familiar with this "Adobe Bug System" :)

 **Anonymous**

January 10, 2008 12:50 PM

Hmmm lets see now.

Flash is a processor/power hog on mobiles, Apple maybe rolling out their QT-based RIA play in 2008 and oh yea, they also make the iPhone. . . so chances of flash appearing on the iPhone are . . .

 **Anonymous**

January 11, 2008 6:31 AM

the real trend is degrafa...get with it, flex 4 better ship with this!

 **Joseph**

January 16, 2008 5:14 PM

I would certainly hope there is Flash on the iPhone.

The idea is, does Apple want to make its own game?

 **Nathan**

January 29, 2008 11:22 PM

I agree that jQuery looks pretty awesome... still working on learning it and plenty else.

Though it probably deserves a mention on:

http://labs.adobe.com/technologies/air/develop_ajax.html

And just fyi, not surprisingly, someone has begun an effort to build an as3Query.

http://tech.nitoyon.com/blog/2008/01/as3query_alpha.html

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