

Kasper Skårhøj

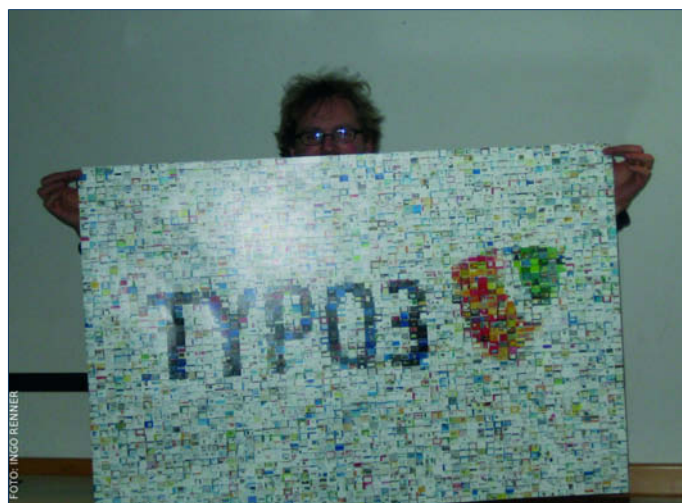
4.5 worth of usability, please

Crammed in between a representative of disillusioned french youth and a too-much-wine-drinking swedish archetype I'm set for 90 minutes hibernation before touchdown in Charles de Gaulle.

30.000 feet above the ground in this setting is normally far away from home. But today is different. Today my laptop screen fits in between me and the seat in front. It's wider and less tall than usual. It's glowing white in the cabin. It's the forbidden fruit someone took a byte of; yes, I'm a heretic. I don't know if I'm actually flying with my Powerbook or SAS! But this I know; my Mac feels good! It spoils me, works for me, almost thinks for me. Ahh, pleasant freedom, less thinking, less debugging, less compiling. I'm sorry I gave in, I need comfort now, I'm past 30.

Today we are at a historical point in time. I never thought I would say it. Yet, with only mild moderation, the truth is that TYPO3 is feature complete. I just can't think of anything more to put into the core. Yes, there will always be demand for new features as the web evolves and customers mature. But the far majority can be implemented as extensions – and this is exactly how the community has responded in the last three years, resulting in the completely unmanageable success of the Extensions Repository; A problem but a positive one. And then of course we have seen various borderland applications of TYPO3 pointing to future challenges calling for a modernized architecture; object oriented design, improved APIs, universal patterns applied, new permission management, better bridging of frontend and backend etc. The amazing thing is that this leaves us exactly where our roadmap from 2005 placed us on the map: With a plan for version 4.5 and 5.0 which fits reality. I couldn't be more happy.

But what's up with the ease-of-use improvements in version 4.5? We always followed an ideal when developing TYPO3. The ideal was the perfect code. The sacrifice was the user experience. The logic was to lay foundations of the house before applying wallpaper and furniture. The point was to do what was right and not sell out to market pressure. But should we really deny our users a great interface experience in TYPO3? An experience that feels good without compromising our great and long tradition for power. It's time to spoil them!



Kasper Skårhøj at the T3BOARD06 Powerbar with the TYPO3 Poster.



Kasper Skårhøj during T3BOARD06 at Fiescheralp/Swiss.

It's important that the whole community gets involved in this process. The point of version 4.5 is not to change for the sake of change but to make TYPO3 a better tool for everyone using it daily. I assume lots of people will fear changes that makes complex jobs harder to do – or which require them to introduce new habits. I'm pretty sure we can't avoid that completely, but it will make a huge difference whether we collaborate broadly or not in the development of the next release. The first question we must ask ourselves is; What is our (interface) identity? Maybe you can help to mould the answer if you reflect on why you like TYPO3. What are our core attributes that you love and we therefore can't miss out on?

My Mac-purchase and version 4.5 is not such a coincidence. As a personal primer the Mac is an educational experience that teaches me two things; firstly how it feels being a beginner and secondly how well beginners can be guided into a system with higher levels of complexity under the surface. At the time of this writing it is still quite unsure exactly how the usability improvements will look like and, unlike any previous development of TYPO3, I expect this challenge to include mostly non-technical resources from the TYPO3 community.

An effective improvement of usability requires more than wild guesses from developers but analysis and testing far before a single line of code is written. But what does Mr. TYPO3 actually know about usability? After all I created a system that was perfectly usable for myself. Luckily, today there are hundreds of stars shining in the TYPO3 galaxy and our combined resources will make it possible.

Jointly, we will enable people to communicate!

Sincerely,
Kasper Skårhøj