Panels: Today, and the Future

- *Sam Boyer (sdboyer)*

-

- or...PSFEM (*Poor Substitute for Earl Miles*)

-

So what *is* Panels, anyway?

- *A way to make nodes look nicer.*
  - Sure! Obviously not the whole picture, though.

- *A GUI for laying out content.*
  - Yep. But that's still just one piece.

- *An expansion/improvement of Drupal core's Block system.*
  - Closer, but still really just scratching the surface.

When I think about Panels, I (largely) think:
Content 'Marshalling' System

Content 'Marshalling'

- Content marshalling means…what?

- So now content doesn't just need managing – it needs *marshalling*, too?

  - Consider raw node output – it often isn't sufficient to just output all node fields in order.

  - Or, even better: think about a typical website front page.

    - *Content pulled from many sources*

    - *Numerous conceptually different elements*

  - Synthesis of elements is a major factor in UX

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Your neighborhood website

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While we offer general information about the Coulee Region like other local sites, our focus is the people of the community. With forums, blogs, chats, and other interactive features, our goal is to move beyond just giving information and provide a gathering place where people can interact with their neighbors whether they be next door or across the Coulee Region.

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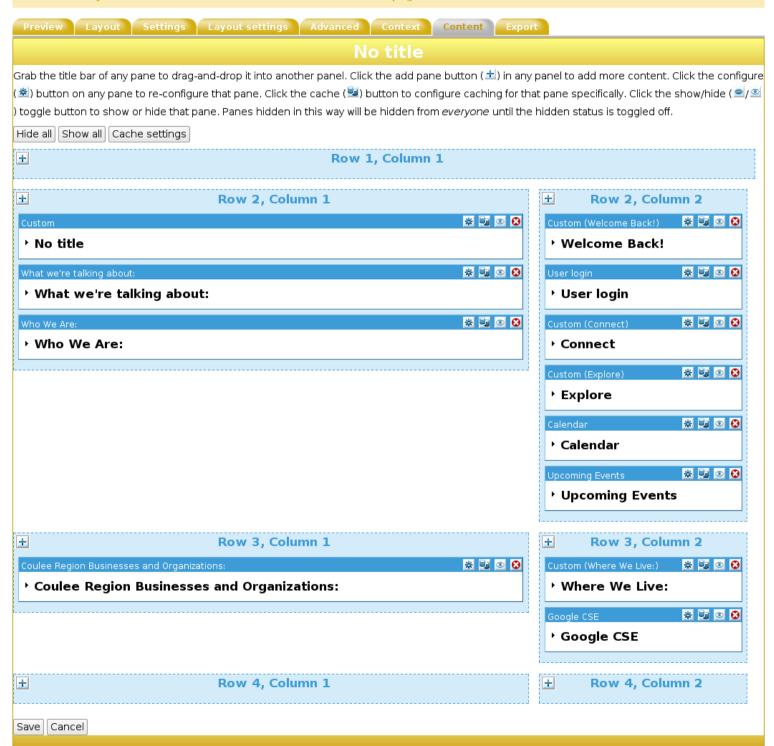
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Preview   **Layout**   **Settings**   **Layout settings**   **Advanced**   **Context**   **Content**   **Export**

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[Hide all] [Show all] [Cache settings]

⊞ Row 1, Column 1

⊞ Row 2, Column 1

Custom	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **No title**	

What we're talking about:	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **What we're talking about:**	

Who We Are:	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **Who We Are:**	

⊞ Row 2, Column 2

Custom (Welcome Back!)	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **Welcome Back!**	

User login	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **User login**	

Custom (Connect)	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **Connect**	

Custom (Explore)	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **Explore**	

Calendar	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **Calendar**	

Upcoming Events	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **Upcoming Events**	

⊞ Row 3, Column 1

Coulee Region Businesses and Organizations:	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **Coulee Region Businesses and Organizations:**	

⊞ Row 3, Column 2

Custom (Where We Live:)	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
‣ **Where We Live:**	

Google CSE	✳ ▦ ◉ ✖
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Getting & Organizing Content – 'Context'

- Defining 'Context.'
  - I dare not write down many details, but…
  - Page requests as 'building a house'
  - Context as the 'shared supply closet'

- Panels has a pre-defined mechanisms for creating contexts
  - Arguments (a Panels plugin type)
  - Relationships (another Panels plugin type)
- ALL of them, however, are just wrappers around panels_context_create().

- It's a basic notion, but very powerful and extensible.

http://groups.drupal.org/node/2191

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DrupalCampLA 2008 - September 13-14

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Start: 2008-09-13 10:00 America/Los_Angeles - 2008-09-14 16:00 America/Los_Angeles
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Crystal Williams
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groups: **Bay Area** · Community · Designers and Information Architects ·
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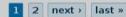
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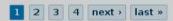## HOWTO Posts

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Drupalcon Szeged 2008

AUGUST 27-30

Wrapping up the Today bit

- Everything covered thus far is old news. Even so, it's useful to keep in mind. *For some people, anyway.*

- ***A quick review:***
  - The Panels engine will fetch and organize the disparate data needed for any given page request.
  - It frees you – arguably even encourages you – to think about that overall synthesis instead.

And on to the Future!

- In two parts:

  - **Panels2:** new/improved implementations of the current Panels API

  - **Panels3:** or, Panels2 coked up and rollin' on meth.

    - Further divvied up by the changes first from the perspective of the interface, then from the perspective of the API.

Panels 2: New Implementations

- Node add/edit forms, via CCK integration (tentative)

- Panels Profiles. Next-gen of Advanced Profile Kit, integration with MySite, and *could* act as a unified backend for profile/acct management (D6)

- Genericization of OG Blueprints (D5/D6)

- Panels admin interface...done in Panels(tentative)

- Panelize project* suite (tentative, D6)

- Panelize API module (*very* tentative, D6) – see http://drupal.org/node/256963

Panels3: From the Interface

- Interactive, informative feedback throughout editing operations
  - 'Peek' into the underlying data structure
  - Show which plugins are being used
  - Advanced Help, everywhere!
- Much less clutter!
  - No more modals! Probably...
  - Hierarchical Select used for pane selection (and potentially other things)
  - Views2-style AJAX-based interface

Panels3: From the Interface (cont)

- Obsoleting the 'admin backend' of Panels
    - Drag-'n'-Drop while viewing; no going to 'edit'
    - In-place AJAX-driven editing of fields
- Panels terminology will be 53.4% less crazy!
- **In Sum:** Our goal with Panels3 is to allow razor-fine control over the entire UX with Panels.
    - In other words, users will see exactly what they should and need to see – no more, no less.

Panels3: From the API

- Data structure stays pretty much the same. That's not where the problem is.

- Again, the theme: *very* fine-grained control.

  – The widgets your Panels-related forms use

  – The strings/helptext in Panels-related interfaces

  – The options your users will see on Panels configuration forms

- **In Sum:** you'll be able to leverage the full power of Panels without ever having to expose your users to unneeded, potentially confusing options.

Questions?

- I CAN HAS PANLS D6? Plz
  - Yes. Soon.
- Other questions?

Remember – 13:30-14:30 on Aug 30th in the Acquia Room if you want to learn more about using the Panels API!