Web 2.0 – The Web's Edge

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Mash-ups/ Personalized Pages / Widgets – Class # 9 Chapter 3.2
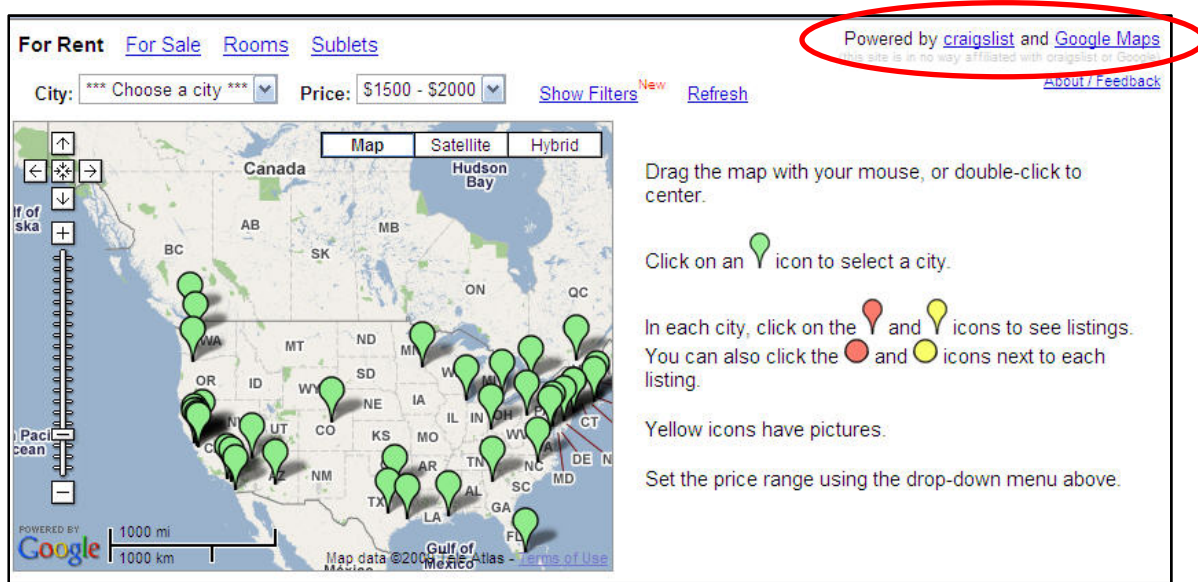
Mash-ups

A mash-up is a webpage that allows you to take content from other sites and display them all on one page. It is a Web application that combines data from one or more sources into a single integrated tool or application. A mash-up accesses open APIs and data sources to produce results that are distinct from the original sources.

Content used in mash-ups is typically obtained from a public interface or API (web services). Other methods of obtaining content for mash-ups include Web feeds (e.g. RSS or Atom), and screen scraping.

This is quite a drastic departure from the static, proprietary pages of Web 1.0!

An example of a mash-up is www.HousingMaps.com which combines Google Maps location information with data from craigslist.com, thereby creating a new and distinct Web application, which was not originally provided by either source.

Companies whose APIs have been extensively used to develop mash-ups:

- Amazon
- eBay
- Flickr
- Google
- Microsoft
- Yahoo
- YouTube

Popular Tool / Editors for Developing Mash-ups

Yahoo Pipes – http://pipes.yahoo.com

It is a free online service that lets you remix popular feed types and create data mash-ups using a visual editor. You can use Pipes to run your own web projects, or publish and share your own web services without ever having to write a line of code. You make a Pipe by dragging pre-configured modules onto a canvas and wiring them together in the Pipes Editor.

- As of August 24th 2009, Popfly is out of operation

Microsoft Popfly – www.popfly.com

Popfly is an easy way to build and share mash-ups, gadgets, games, Web pages, and applications. You can to take photos, RSS feeds, and many other kinds of information and combine them to create your own personalized application.

Google Mash-up Editor – http://editor.googlemash-ups.com

Google Mash-up Editor is an AJAX development framework and a set of tools that enable developers to quickly and easily create simple web applications and mash-ups with Google services like Google Maps and Google Base. Using declarative XML tags, JavaScript, CSS, and HTML, you can build applications in less time and with less work. In a few lines of code and one click of a button you can publish your mash-ups for the world to see. This applications will be migrating to the Google App Engine in the near future.

Personalized Pages

In chapter 1 we discussed "portals" as website that contains links to other sites or areas of information. These portals were defined by the person that developed the page. With the arrival of mash-ups, the options for laying out a portal have dramatically increased.

Instead of preselecting what content will go on a Web page, it in now possible to let the user decide what they want to see on their own start pages or personalized pages. We can now pull content form a variety of sources and display it on one page. These pages can also include widgets.

Pageflakes www.pageflakes.com

Pageflakes allows you to put all your web favorites, including news, email and search engines, onto one personalized page using "flakes", or widgets. They have a large community of users that creates and helps each other discover more new flakes on Pagecasts, which is a new feature that allow users to share their pages with the world, or with private groups. They keep the service completely focused on you and your personalized widgets. And, when you're ready to explore other users' public Pagecasts., Pageflakes has an impressively simple Pagecast directory.

MY YAHOO   http://my.yahoo.com

My Yahoo is a personalized home page, allowing Yahoo users to customize it with RSS feeds, Yahoo services, and news.

example of MY YAHOO page
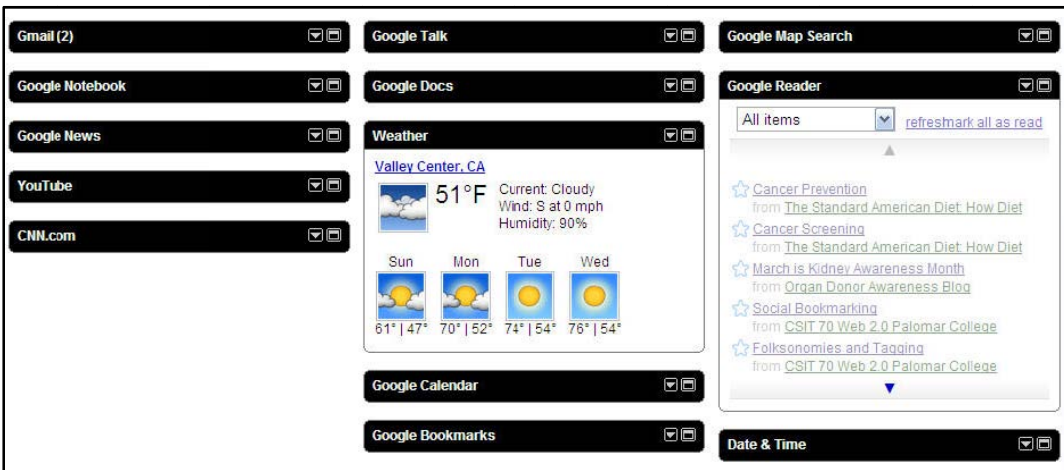

iGoogle http://google.com/ig

iGoogle is a Google personalized homepage available to anyone who creates a Google account. Users can add to their iGoogle page any number of "gadgets" (i.e. widgets) or RSS feeds that contain data from other sources and arrange these by dragging them from one location on their page and dropping them onto another location. iGoogle pages usually contain 3 columns and multiple pages can be created. As well, themes can be applied to each page, that can be selected from a theme directory or created with the Themes API. Each gadget has its own settings which can control how much data gets displayed and the source of that data. Users can share any gadget on their page with others. Users can also create their own gadgets although at this point in time there seems to be only half a dozen or so simple gadget. Unlike others, iGoogle users cannot share whole pages they create in iGoogle.
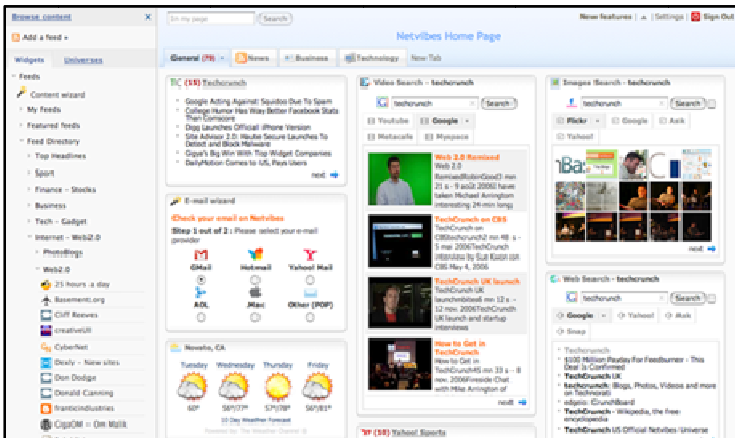

example of iGoogle page

Netvibes www. netvibes.com

Netvibes is one of the early AJAX based personal content aggregators. Netvibes allows users to create their own site within the Netvibe domain and customize both its content and appearance. A typical Netvibe page consists of 3 columns each with any number of "widgets" that users can select from the Netvibes user interface. Each widget has its own settings that can control its appearance, how much data it displays and where that data comes from. Widgets are available for most news sites and social networking sites.

 example of Netvibes page

Widgets and Gadgets

A web widget is a portable chunk of code that can be installed and executed within any separate HTML-based web page by an end user without requiring additional compilation. They are derived from the idea of code reuse. Other terms used to describe web widgets include: gadget, badge, module, webjit, capsule, snippet, mini and flake. Web widgets usually but not always use DHTML, JavaScript, or Adobe Flash.

Widgets are now commonplace and are used by bloggers, social network users, auction sites and owners of personal web sites. They exist on home page sites such as iGoogle, Netvibes, or Pageflakes. Many services supply the widget and write the code for you. All you need to do is copy and paste the code, for the widget to work.

Widget - A widget is a piece of reusable code that you can plug into virtually any website.

Gadget - A gadget acts just like a widget, often fulfilling the same purpose, but it is proprietary. It only works on a certain website or a specific set of websites.

   Google **Gadgets** can look and act like widgets. But they only work on Google pages.

   A **widget,** on the other hand, works on any page that lets you add an HTML block. You can put them on your blog, or your personalized start page, or your personal website.