



Ruadhan O'Donoghue

A quick glimpse into the future of mobile

Who are you and what do you do?

Ruadhan O'Donoghue - I work for dotMobi, where I wear a few hats. I'm the editor of our mobile development community site, mobiForge.com, and I'm also team leader for the development team on our goMobi project.

The aim of mobiForge is to help drive mobile Web development by putting the tools and knowledge about mobile Web technologies into the hands of mobile developers and designers. GoMobi is dotMobi's latest product – a content mobilisation platform (more on this later).

How would you describe the Irish developer scene at the moment, ahead of the curve or needs to catch up?

There have been, for a good few years, several companies that have been way ahead of the curve, solving interesting problems in mobile, and coming up with excellent solutions. Changing Worlds and Volantis and a handful more come to mind. However, I think that, with exceptions of course, your average Irish dev studio has been slow enough to adapt to the mobile Web and realise its potential.

Except for geeks, nobody knew about the mobile Web until the iPhone came along, and mobile was still very niche. Mobile Monday, a monthly mobile meet-up with chapters across the world, has not taken off in Dublin like it has in so many other cities around the world. And it's probably still difficult enough to fill a mobile dev role with a good experienced mobile developer in Ireland right now, despite the recession!

Mobile content – take a while to imagine the future. Not 10 years from now, but perhaps two years from now?

Mobile content is going to be a much richer experience. We're already seeing this now, with HTML5 and Flash being supported on mobile devices.

In two years, will your mobile device be able to do everything your laptop can do now? Maybe not 'everything', but it won't be far behind. Current phone processors have passed the 1.5GHz benchmark, they have 3D graphics accelerators, and some even have micro-projectors built in. Mobile media will be consumed everywhere. We'll be able to stream audio and video (and live TV) from your home library to your phone.

Location is going to be huge, we're seeing this already. For example, any mobile Twitter app worth its salt has location built in, with a 'show tweets nearby' button. We'll probably see a lot more location-aware apps, so that you'll always get the most relevant information you need.

Right now, there is also an emphasis on (some would say an obsession with) native apps over Web apps. I think we'll see a move away from this.

Native apps traditionally have had an advantage over Web apps on mobile devices, having access to device sensors and other low-level data that the browser didn't have access to. But this is changing too, and the browser has just about caught up now. So mobile Web apps will end up being every bit as rich as native apps, with the added bonus that the same app can potentially run on all devices across all platforms that have a browser, instead of having to write a different version for iPhone/iOS, Android, Blackberry, Palm/WebOS and so on. In fact many apps you see right now, particularly cross-platform apps, are simply browser-based apps wrapped up as native app anyway.

What are you working on at the moment?

Right now I'm working toward version two of our recently launched goMobi project – it's a service that enables you to build a mobile website that will work on all devices in minutes.

Getting a site to work well across the thousands of devices out there can be pretty difficult without the right know-how – think about the different screen sizes, input devices, and memory limits, and varying degrees of support for different technologies such as Javascript, video formats, image formats, and you start to get an idea of the problem.

goMobi uses advanced device detection to adapt the mobile site to work on all mobile devices, and includes nice features like being able to convert your desktop site to be mobile-friendly too. It's all wrapped up in an easy-to-use control panel that allows you to configure how the mobile site will look. (Shameless plug: try it out for free at <http://gomobi.info>).

What are your favourite apps?

Virtual Vuvuzela – nah, not really, though I did go through all the Vuvuzela apps looking for the most annoying one.

Stanza (iPhone) & Aldiko (Android) – both are eBook readers with similar functionality. If you can get past reading an entire book on a small screen, then you'll like these. Having a whole library in your pocket really appeals to me.

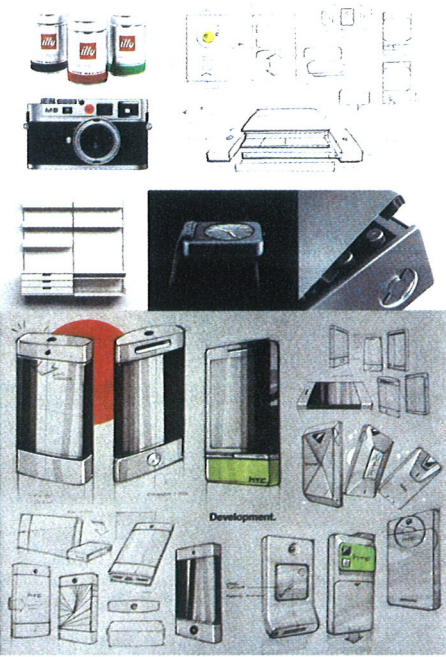
Starmap Pro (iPhone) & Google Sky Map (Android) – both make great Stargazer's companions. Starmap is definitely better.

Last.fm – great for finding new music.

Remote (iPhone) & Gmote (Android) – both basically allow you to control your music library via the phone.

Veency (iPhone) – VNC client (to access my desktop computer).

Inspiration and Ideation.



Less is more.

