Web development using C# MVC and ExtJS

Manish Shakya
St. Cloud State University, shma1201@stcloudstate.edu

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Web Development using C# MVC and ExtJS

by
Manish Shakya
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Starred Paper Committee
Meichsner, Jie
Anda, Andrew A
Kasi, Balasubramanian
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Abstract

Web development refers to a term for the work involved in developing a web application for the Internet (World Wide Web) or an intranet (a private network). The complexity of web application ranges from developing the simplest static single page of plain text to the intricate web-based internet applications such as electronic businesses applications, and social network services. The intent of this paper is to show how MVC with ExtJS have changed the patterns of web development. We discuss their performance enhancements, user interface, syntax, and productive features including pre-built widgets, bundling, database migrations, tools for web APIs, uniform responsive designs, and asynchronous support. Two similar application each built using the different front end will be compared. One we develop using the primitive cshtml and the other one using the ExtJS as the front end tool. We conclude with a comparison of several popular JavaScript frameworks.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Complex legacy solutions evolve to become simplified, more elegant, and easier to use solutions today. The progress of technology is apparent in the world of web-based development where e-business is the driving force behind the rapid advancement of websites, web applications, and web services. Web development has evolved from static html pages to dynamic data driven websites. Credit for this effort can be attributed to user-friendly web development software, such as Adobe Dreamweaver and Microsoft Visual Studios (VS), which allow developers to utilize diverse and powerful tools for web programming in an easy-to-learn environment. This paper describes the two major technologies that have transformed web computing. These technologies are the Model View Controller (MVC) architecture, along with a SQL server as the database system, and the ExtJS which is a JavaScript framework. [1] One can develop a very efficient, secure, and robust application by integrating these two powerful development tools. These are both standalone tools which can be used independently to develop an application. In this paper, we show how both of these technologies can be used in a single application. Our examples use the C# MVC in the backend server side with a SQL server as the database management tool. ExtJS is used on the client side.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An application architecture is important for providing structure and consistency to the application framework. A good architecture yields several benefits: [11]

- Every application works the same way, so you only have to learn it once.
- It’s easy to share code between apps, because they all work the same way.
- It’s harder for developers to create overlapping and conflicting functionality.

One of the most popular architectures which has these three benefits is the Model View Controller (MVC) architecture.

2.1 MVC

MVC (Model-View-Controller) is an architectural software pattern that essentially decouples various components of a web application into model, view, and controller. ASP.NET is a unified Web development model that includes the services necessary for you to build enterprise-class Web applications with a minimum of coding [13]. The ASP.NET MVC framework allows a developer to choose an alternative to the ASP.NET web forms pattern for creating MVC-based web applications. The ASP.NET MVC framework is a lightweight, highly testable presentation framework that is integrated with existing ASP.NET features, such as master pages and membership-based authentication [2]. The MVC framework is defined in the System.Web.Mvc namespace and is a fundamental, supported part of the System.Web namespace.
Figure 1 shows the flow diagram of the *MVC* architecture. Model, view, and controller are the three different components. The user sends a request to the controller. The controller looks for the data in the model which directly communicates with the data repository. The model sends the data to the controller. The controller processes the data as per the user’s request and sends back the view as the response to the user.

![MVC flow diagram](image)

**Figure 1**: MVC flow diagram

### 2.1.1 Model

The model implements the logic for the application’s data domain. The major purpose of the model is to retrieve and store the data to the database. For example, a *book* object might retrieve information from a database, operate on it, and then write the updated information back to a *book* table in the *SQL* server. The objects in the model map to the data in the *SQL* server.
2.1.2 View

Views are those components intended to display what the user requests. Typically, the user interface is created using the model data. An example would be a load, create, edit or delete view of a table that displays text boxes, drop-down lists, check boxes and the action buttons. Generally, the views are HTML pages, but in our case, ExtJS is incorporated in the views to design visually attractive web applications with pre-built and pre-tested components.

2.1.3 Controller

Controllers are the components that handle user interaction, work with the model, and select a view to render those displays according to the user request. In an MVC application, the view displays what is requested by the user; the controller handles and responds to user input and interaction. For example, the controller handles query-string values, and passes these values to the model, which in turn queries the database by using the values. [2]

The MVC pattern decouples the different aspects of the application which are the input logic, business logic, and UI logic and provides a loose coupling between these elements. The pattern specifies the location of each kind of elements. The UI logic, input logic, and business logic each belong to the view, the controller and the model respectively. This enables one to focus on one aspect of the implementation at a time, which thus manages the complexity of the application. For example, one can focus on the view without depending on the business logic. [2]
2.2 ExtJS

The view is the component where the desired UI is rendered as per the user’s requirement. There are different technologies which can be used to change the look and feel of the user interface. Here, we are using ExtJS which is a highly robust, scalable and open source JavaScript framework. There are different utilities which make the Document Object Model (DOM) manipulation and DOM traversal very stable and easy. Moreover, cross browser compatibility is reliable. Some commonly used ExtJS components are button, container, grid, charts, tree, dropdown, menu, panel, and form.

http://docs.sencha.com/extjs/4.2.1/ [9] provides a very good online documentation.
3. WHY MVC WITH EXTJS?

There are several factors to choose MVC over the ASP.NET webform which we discuss in section 4.1 and 4.2. Features of ExtJS are highlighted in Section 4.3. ExtJS is one of several rich JavaScript frameworks. Therefore, choosing the front-end technology is dependent on several criteria such as the type of application, size of application, and the features the application provides. Our detailed comparison is presented in Chapter 6.

3.1 Advantages of an MVC-Based Web Application

The MVC framework offers the following advantages:

- The whole application is divided into 3 coupled components: the model, the view, and the controller, hence it is easier to manage the complexity.
- The application is developed using a very good routing infrastructure. MVC uses a front controller pattern that processes web application requests through a single controller. [2]
- Unlike classic ASP.NET, MVC does not use view state or server-based forms. It provides better support for test-driven development. When an application is developed by a large team, each developer and designer need more control over the behavior of the application. In such cases, MVC will be more useful.
3.2 Features of the ASP.NET MVC Framework

The *ASP.NET MVC* framework provides the following features [2]:

- Separation of application tasks (input logic, business logic, and *UI* logic), testability, and test-driven development (*TDD*) by default. All core contracts in the *MVC* framework are interface-based and can be tested by using mock objects, which are simulated objects that imitate the behavior of actual objects in the application. One can unit-test the application without having to run the controllers in an *ASP.NET* process, which makes unit testing fast and flexible. One can use any unit-testing framework that is compatible with the *NET* Framework.

- An extensible and pluggable framework. The components of the *ASP.NET MVC* framework are designed so that they can be easily replaced or customized. One can plug in one’s own view engine, *URL* routing policy, action-method parameter serialization, and other components. The *ASP.NET MVC* framework also supports the use of *Dependency Injection* (*DI*) and *Inversion of Control* (*IOC*) container models. *DI* facilitates injecting objects into a class, instead of relying on the class to create the object itself. *IOC* specifies that if an object requires another object, the first objects should get the second object from an outside source such as a configuration file. This makes testing easier.

- A powerful *URL*-mapping component that facilitates building applications that have comprehensive and searchable *URLs*. *URLs* do not have to include file-name extensions, and are designed to support *URL* naming patterns that work well for search engine optimization (*SEO*) and representational state transfer (*REST*) addressing.
Support for using the markup in existing ASP.NET page (.aspx files, user control (.ascx files), and master page (.master files) markup files as view templates. You can use existing ASP.NET features with the ASP.NET MVC framework, such as nested master pages, in-line expressions, declarative server controls, templates, data-binding, localization, and so on.

Support for existing ASP.NET features. ASP.NET MVC lets you use features such as forms authentication and Windows authentication, URL authorization, membership and roles, output and data caching, session and profile state management, health monitoring, the configuration system, and the provider architecture.

3.3 Features of ExtJS

Over the past few years the ExtJS library has grown significantly and gained developer endorsements because of the following features it provides [8]:

- **Rapid Prototyping** – This tool allows one to design better and faster. Quickly prototyping the future state of the website or application and then validating it with a broader team of users, stakeholders, developers and designers is extremely valuable.

- **Browser compatibility** – When you write Document Object Model (DOM) manipulation functions, developers can encounter browser compatibility issues. ExtJS is shielded from this.

- **Multi-platform / No plugins** – ExtJS has a big benefit over Java applets, Adobe Flex, Microsoft Silverlight, in the way that no browser plugins need to be installed. This means that you can have one dynamic website/application that will “just work” on iPhone and Android devices. One can take this one step further and use the Sencha mobile.

- **Support** – The online support turnaround is very quick.
• Object oriented - the library is Object oriented, enabling reuse, extensibility, and all the benefits of OOP.

• Data stores / Services / Rest – Out of the box one gets excellent remoting support, whether XHR, direct, or script tag proxies. Most components can share the same underlying data source, meaning an update event propagates to multiple views. Additionally, one can enable the RESTful support to quickly gain CRUD operations.

The detailed comparison of ExtJS with various front-end tools is covered in Chapter 6.
4. SETTING UP THE ENVIRONMENT.

Our intention is to demonstrate how MVC and ExtJS can be integrated together to develop an efficient application. The application demonstrated won’t be a really sophisticated application, but it will cover lots of features including how the data in the SQL server are mapped to models of the MVC, how the controller manipulates all the actions as per the user requests, and how those data are bound to the ExtJS grid, dropdowns and so on which are in the view.

4.1 Set up ExtJS

1. ExtJS can be downloaded from, “http://www.sencha.com/”. They provide a first 30 days trial version for free. If you wish to continue developing then you need to purchase a license. But there is a free developer version which is 4.2.1. You can use it to develop, but if you choose to release the application for commercial purpose, then you need to purchase to follow their policies.

2. After downloading, unzip the content in your IDE which is a Visual Studio in our case.

3. The unzipped folder contains several folders and files, out of which from the development perspective, ext-debug.js, ext.js, ext-all-debug.js, ext-all.js are the important files. Ext-debug.js is used only during development. It provides the minimum number of core ExtJS classes needed to build the application. Ext.js is similar to ext-debug.js but minified for use in production. Ext-all-debug.js contains the entire ExtJS library. Since in most cases all the classes have not been used in a single application, ext-debug.js is preferred over ext-all.js. Ext-all.js is a minified version of ext-all-
debug.js that can be used in production environments, however, it is not recommended since most applications will not make use of all the classes that it contains.
5. IMPLEMENTATION

We now compare two similar applications. One application is built using ASP.Net MVC which utilizes HTML in the front end, C# in the backend and a SQL server as the database system. The other application is built with MVC and ExtJS which has SQL on the backend. Both systems are connected to the same database Books in our test environment.

The application is a bookstore application which stores the books in a database. The database used is a SQL database named Books. It just has one table Books. The attributes of the table are id, name, author, publish date, type, and price. The content of the table is shown in Table 1. The query to see all the books in the table is:

SELECT * from Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Id</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publish Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advanced Operating System</td>
<td>Joseph D</td>
<td>2014-08-02 13:01:00</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>450.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Entity Framework</td>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>2014-08-21 00:00:00</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Himalayan Times</td>
<td>Nopali</td>
<td>2014-02-28 00:00:00</td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Harry Potter</td>
<td>abc</td>
<td>2002-11-02 00:00:00</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>test1</td>
<td>test1</td>
<td>1988-05-05 00:00:00</td>
<td>test</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of this application is to show the content of the database in a grid in the user interface. There are controls to add new books, edit existing books, and delete books.

The ExtJS provides a well-built user interface with additional features compared to the one built using cshtml, in which we can use C# code in HTML. Though we can build a similar view using the cshtml, it will require a significant effort.
The *ExtJS* source is very readable and expandable. It is important to maintain the folder tree structure to make the application flexible. In this project, all the *JavaScript* files should be kept inside a folder and each *JavaScript* file has their own importance. So to make it distinguishable, the folder is sub-categorized as *model, view, controller, and store*. It is not necessary to create a different store as it can be included in the model. The folder structure used in our application to keep the *JavaScript* files is shown in Figure 2. There is a folder named `app` which has a sub folder to keep the model, view, controller and store of the bookstore application.

![Figure 2: ExtJS folder tree for the bookstore application](image)

The backend source is kept in the *Controllers* and *Models* section as shown in Figure 3. They are used to get, store, and update the data in the database table.
The source for model book.js is shown in Figure 4. The fields are the attributes of the book. The attributes have to be similar to the one in our database and one defined in the model Book.cs which is shown in Figure 5.
The store *Books.js* is the *ExtJS* file which stores the data to be rendered in the view. The *extend* is the inheritance property of the object oriented programming and the defined ext object is the object of the component defined in the extend. The store has the *API* which is used to get data from the database. In Figure 6, the proxy shows that the read is done using the method *GetData* of the class *Books* which is actually the *BooksController* that is shown in Figure 7.
There are two JavaScript files inside the view folder. BooksList.js is the JavaScript code to display the grid and it inherits the property of the component grid, which is used to show the
data in the tabular form on the client side. *BooksForm.js* is the *JavaScript* code to display the form to add and delete the books. *Booksform* inherits the property of the ext component window which is a panel used as an application window. So, the *GetData()* in the *BooksController.cs* communicates with the *SQL* Server using the method *GetBooks()*.

The *GetData()* will return a JSON data which is then passed into the store where the reference to the *Books/GetData* is included. The controller gets the data from the store and renders them in the view. The controller also has a set of functions to manipulate the data.

The main application that is defined in the project is a separate *JavaScript books.js* as shown in Figure 8.

![Figure 8: Location of the main application.](image)

The source of *books.js* is shown in figure 9.

![Figure 9: Source code of JavaScript of the main application.](image)
As shown in Figure 9, the main application has the namespace, the name of the controllers used, and a launch function which has the name of the main view and the ID of the HTML page where the view should be rendered which is output in default.html.

When the program is executed, the books information stored in the database Books is shown in a well-organized table as shown in Figure 10. The features in the grid in our application are default, but can be easily changed.

Figure 10: The ExtJS data grid

The table built using the basic HTML tags will be as shown in Figure 11. In order to make the table similar to the ExtJS grid, we will require much CSS.

Figure 11: The cshtml data grid
Users can add new books and edit the existing books. The interface for adding and editing books is shown in Figure 12 and Figure 13.

Figure 12: The form for Add Book

Figure 13: The form for Edit Book

A similar module in the cshtml project is shown in Figure14 and Figure15.
These are the default styles in both. So ExtJS offers very pleasant styles.

The other advantage of ExtJS is widgets. There are lots of widgets which can be used easily.

Some examples are as follows:
**Date picker**

Simply adding one line of code mentioning the `xtype` as shown in Figure 16 will bring up the calendar widget as shown in Figure 17.

```
...,
    xtype: 'datefield',
    name: 'PublishDate',
    allowBlank: false,
    fieldLabel: 'Publish Date'
},
```

**Figure 16**: The source code for calendar widget

![Calendar widget](image)

**Figure 17**: The calendar widget in the datefield

**Sorting**

The grid is created by using the library `grid.Panel`. The code snippet to use `extend` is shown in Figure 18. By default, the grid has the sorting feature and we can easily sort by clicking the ‘Sort Ascending’ and ‘Sort Descending’ shown in Figure 19. In the HTML version, that feature is not available and to bring this feature we need to add approximately 50 lines of code.

```
Ext.define('ExtJSBookStore.view.BooksList', {
    extend: 'Ext.grid.Panel',

    Figure 18**: The source code to define an object as a grid panel

![Grid panel](image)
Figure 19: The sorting feature of Ext grid

**Hide unwanted columns**

The grid panel has the default feature to select the columns. The unwanted columns can be hidden by unchecking as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Hide unwanted columns from the grid.

There are many other widgets in the *ExtJS* library which can be added to the application simply.
6. COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT JAVASCRIPT FRAMEWORKS

Much time and effort has been invested towards improving the development process and building abilities centered on traditional Java application servers. Surprisingly, these ventures have now become out of date. Mobile computing requires another construction model.

The considerable influx of desktop web applications assembled in the first decade of the 2000s shared a common thin-client architecture. In this architecture, the heavyweight application servers such as Oracle WebLogic served up complete pages to the browser which led to the page requests and response going in and out of the server. During this handshaking, the whole application workload, such as data management, integration, business logic and HTML and CSS generation was performed on the server-side. Very few functionality of the application utilized JavaScript. This was for three primary reasons. Firstly, browsers were primitive page viewers with modest JavaScript engines. Secondly, desktop browsers rarely went offline. And thirdly, it was easier to consider security when everything happened on the server. However, the progress in mobile computing and the increasing popularity of HTML5 browsers implies that two out of three of these reasons are no longer legitimate. Portable applications need to work offline, and browsers (and native mobile OS) have turned out to be significantly more competent. In contemporary advanced devices, a great part of the business logic and data handling which used to be server based, now reside on the mobile device itself. Moreover, mobile application experiences are richer than anything that static page-serving could ever perform.
Figure 21: The web application in the past and present

Figure 21 shows the growth in the capabilities of the front end. The contemporary application has a rich front-end which communicates with a thin-cloud back-end. A mobile device communicates to RESTful APIs in the cloud using the JSON objects. This design movement is behind the new era of utilizations that are stateful and data-rich, with quick user response. These multi-device applications run on new cell phones, current desktop browsers, and other portable devices including tablets and phablets. Large amount of data can be stored locally either in a memory or a local data store. This helps in searching, filtering, sorting and grouping of data rapidly as there is no need to make a round-trip to a server to fetch data after every action.

Additionally, these modern applications are significantly more stateful than Web 1.0 applications which means the application has the memory of its own. These applications permit the client to explore through content and information exhibited over numerous screens and sub-screens and to take part in multi-step exchanges within a single response from the server. This means that these applications are exceptionally information rich, permitting the presentation and control of vast information sets in numerous ways.
6.1 The Front-End Development Challenge

The common challenges that are faced by most multi-device applications can be subjectively isolated into following four categories as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Common challenges faced by most multi-device application

| Interface Elements | • Create appealing themes and styles for interactive elements  
|                    | • Present complex data using structured presentation elements like grids and charts  
|                    | • Create a standard visual vocabulary across apps  
| View System | • Dynamically lay out screen elements in response to different screen sizes and resizes  
|             | • Detect and respond to touch gestures beyond simple taps  
|             | • Swap in local language strings, handle RTL languages and keep everything accessible  
|             | • Animate content  
| Logic & Data | • Update the screen when data changes and vice versa  
|             | • Remember application states to enable undo/redo as well as navigation  
|             | • Search, sort, filter, group and validate data  
| Server i/o | • Handle asynchronous calls to the server-side  
|           | • Parse and convert serialized data  
|           | • Call out to server-side code  

1. Interface Elements refer to the client interface – the look and the conduct of application substance including widgets, grids, charts and frameworks.

2. The view system deals with organizing and dealing with the prospective apparatus like the design and intuitiveness of screen components and taking care of client necessities. View system
also handles the center issue of multi-gadget such as building applications that work on both
desktop screens with mouse input and portable screens with motion collaboration.

3. *Logic and data* updates the screen when data changes and update data when the user gives an
input. Moreover, it re-designs the screen when the information changes and updates information
according to the client input.

4. *Server I/O* relates to the back-end and server-side.
6.2 A Front-End Taxonomy

The problem that we discussed in the previous section has already been resolved in the native development technologies. These rich customer applications can be observed in native runtimes such as the *Cocoa* framework for Apple stages, the Flex framework for Flash development, or *Windows Presentation Foundation* for Microsoft platforms. Each of these technology platforms offer similar kinds of capabilities in similar stacks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
<th>VIEW SYSTEM</th>
<th>LOGIC AND DATA</th>
<th>SERVER I/O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic widgets, buttons, bars, text fields</td>
<td>Layout manager, absolute, flexible</td>
<td>State manager, history, undo, routes</td>
<td>Server calls async, conversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound widgets, trees, grids, gauges</td>
<td>Gestures, drag and drop</td>
<td>Data binding 1-way, 2-way</td>
<td>Server method invocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualizations, charts, infographics</td>
<td>Drawing vector, bitmap</td>
<td>Modularity components, modules</td>
<td>2-way data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Containers, panels, cards, models</td>
<td>Visual Effects, animations, filters</td>
<td>Localization RTL, local libraries</td>
<td>Server notification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Accessibility focus manager, ARIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 22: Taxonomy of front-end stacks [12]
Utilizing the inherent abilities of the system libraries and their frameworks, native platforms provides developers a rich tool to structure the application, change the look and feel of the user interface, and automate common development tasks. Figure 22 presents a generic model of the front-end stack and shows how the codes are organized. The individual components of the front end module are:

### 6.2.1 Interface Elements

- **Basic widgets, buttons, bars, text fields**
- **Compound widgets, trees, grids, gauges**
- **Visualizations, charts, infographics**
- **Containers, panels, cards, models**
- **Themes**
- **Styles**

Figure 23: The components of interface elements

*Basic widgets* incorporate the fundamental presentation components of an application such as *text fields, form elements, buttons, progress indicators, loading indicators, menus* etc.

*Compound widgets* integrate complex showcase components that show more than one data value or include various sub-controls. A data grid, a multi-level file display, a nested list, and a calendar on the date fields are all examples of compound widgets.

*Visualizations* incorporate data driven illustration components such as charts, graphs, waterfall charts, and different graphs.
Containers are the holders for widgets and content which incorporate scrollable displays like nested panels, card-based presentations and modal containers such as alerts or wizards.

Styles include font size, shadowing and other visual effects that are properties of the content or widget set.

Themes are accumulations of style, and illustration resources that give a sound look and feel to the application.

6.2.2 View System

![Figure 24: The components of View System](image)

The Layout manager basically has a set of layout rules to place the different screen components in the x, y, and z space of the application view based on window size, resolution and device type.

Templating is a set of rules that can be applied to convert the placeholders into final content. Complete templating frameworks have the ability to accept complex conditionals and iterations and even full functions.

Gestures are those capabilities that help developer convert the interactions such as touch, scroll, and stretch into the action. Drag and drop is also kept under this classification.
Visual impacts are used for property movements and visual changes including obscuring, recoloring, desaturation and so on.

Drawing APIs are the tools that can be used for crafting rich drawings. Masking, blending, clipping are the composite operations that can be achieved easily using drawing APIs or could be equally considered as visual effects.

Localization is the feature that is used to convert the input and output text strings into different formats based on the application requirements. In the view system, localization is shown as a different block even though this is used in all stages in some way.

A theming framework accumulates different styles and provide a way to apply those to a whole application.

Accessibility is the feature that facilitates keyboard navigation, screen reader compatibility and high visual contrast themes for the visually impaired. Though accessibility is shown as a separate block in the view system, it can be incorporated in different elements of the stack.

6.2.3 Data & Logic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State manager, history, undo, routes</th>
<th>Data binding 1-way, 2-way</th>
<th>Modularity components, modules</th>
<th>Testing IOC, test hooks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data objects queues, hash tables</td>
<td>Data models &amp; stores, group, sort, validate</td>
<td>Persistent data cache &amp; sync</td>
<td>Multimedia, 3D, audio, video</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 25: The components of data and logic
*State Management* is the feature that enables the developers to manage the state of the application. *Undo, redo, and navigation to history* are included in this stack.

*Data objects* refer to data accumulators such as *collections, trees, and queues and graphs*. There are libraries that provide such data objects. However, when these are not available, the front-end stack needs to supply them. Otherwise, the developer needs to supply them.

*Data binding* is a feature that enables simple change synchronization between in-memory information variables and the screen components which portray that information. This definitely eases the developer in composing explicit data interchange administration code.

*Data models* represent data structures that store the application's working datasets. The major data mining operations such as search, filter, sort, validate, and grouping can be performed using the well-featured data models. Additionally, *data models* can assist in serialization and deserialization from wire formats.

*Modularity* refers to code management. This block of front-end stack is a very important block. It helps individual developers and development teams to structure code and manage dependencies using the proper namespaces and architectural patterns.

The *persistent data cache* is a feature used to store and sync application assets and data locally during the read-write events.

The *front-end stack testing* refers to the features provided for automated unit testing and system testing such as error logging and event replay.

*Multimedia capacities* incorporate the capacity to install and customize system video and sound playback inside of an application.
6.2.4 Server Communication

The server communication stack deals with server-side communication, including request/response, full-duplex, handshaking and push-pull events. System libraries generally facilitate in-server communications. However, in the case of web technologies, the browser sandbox model prohibits raw socket communication and provides only the higher level facilities such as web sockets and XHR.

This taxonomy excludes capabilities that are ordinarily handled by the operating systems such as font rendering, threads or sensor APIs, so their browser analogs (web fonts, web workers, geolocation, etc.) are excluded as well.
6.3 Applying the Taxonomy to the Web Platform

If we apply the front-end taxonomy to various web platforms, the outcomes are self-evident. This section compares various front-end web platforms with their capabilities based on tabular taxonomy from Figure 22.

Pre-HTML:

If we review the history of web development, *HTML* can be considered as the foremost front-end tool which is still in existence. When we look at the *pre-HTML* web platform, there are only limited number of tasks one can perform. In *pre-HTML* browsers, if we want solutions to any problem, we have to build almost everything from the earliest stage or utilize non-browser plugins for abilities like graphic design, video and full duplex server interchanges. Figure 27 shows the front-end taxonomy applied to *pre-HTML*. The green components show the features that are supported by *pre-HTML*.

The *pre-HTML* web platform has very limited capabilities.

*Interface elements: Pre- HTML* has a tiny set of basic widgets, and a very few styling and layout capabilities.

*View system:* The layout manager is primitive, and the developer has to create their own layout.

*Logic and data:* The front-end has nothing to facilitate the data structure. All the actions related to data are carried out in the back-end. Hence, many server calls are made during execution.

*Server I/O:* The front-end to back-end communication is done using request/response HTTP calls.

Most first generation web applications were built using a small subset of browser capabilities.
Figure 27: Pre-HTML compatibilities in the front-end stack [12]
HTML5

HTML5 emerged with numerous capabilities added to HTML. Although HTML5 introduces a lot of new capabilities, the front-end taxonomy for HTML5 remains incomplete as compared to ExtJS platforms. In Figure 28, we list features missing from HTML. The green blocks are those features available in HTML5.

Interface elements: HTML5 introduced different input widgets including range sliders, color pickers, date/time pickers, and progress bars. It also has the capability of manipulating the gradients, borders of the elements. However, it lacks compound widgets, visualizations, containers, and themes.

View system: As a layout management tool, HTML5 introduced flexbox which can be used to design a comprehensive one-dimensional layout. However, its implementation is slightly different in older webkit browsers such as, Internet Explorer 10, Chrome and Safari. For two-dimensional lattices, they have a grid layout which can only be implemented in Internet Explorer. HTML5 also introduced multicolunn which can be used to arrange text in columns automatically, but the column widths are not customizable. HTML5 has support for recognizing touch events. In Internet Explorer, touch events are implemented using a pointer event, whereas other browsers recognize the touch. This indicates that touch events are not consistent in all browsers. Moreover, the drag and drop API of HTML5 is poor too. It is based on the Internet Explorer 5 Microsoft drag and drop API which has too many events [12].

Other attractions are WebGL (Web Graphics Library), SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics) and canvas to support two-dimensional and three-dimensional graphics, bitmap and vector, motion graphics CSS animations, and transitions.
**Logic and data:** The history push was introduced for storing the history. It does not have any support for data binding. One of the major improvements was the introduction of audio and video input support.

**Server I/O:** Full duplex server communication can be achieved using web sockets. Also, the introduction of the `XMLHttpRequest (XHR) API` provides the client functionality for transferring data between a client and a server. The `XHR` enables a webpage to update certain part of the page without the need to refresh the whole page.

---

![Diagram of HTML5 compatibilities in our front end taxonomy](image)

**Figure 28:** HTML5 compatibilities in our front end taxonomy [12]
JavaScript

JavaScript was first delivered in 1995. With the ascent of JavaScript, various libraries, preprocessors, frameworks, and scripts have been developed to extend the browser functionality. With so many JavaScript frameworks, one must select one of several available libraries. Choosing a front-end technique that best suits the application portfolio, the skill base, and the arrangement necessities is one of the major concerns in web development today.

Some of the questions that arise in web development are “what is the best framework” or “should we be using framework x or y.” But these are all misconceived questions. The right question for development teams to ask should be related to the kinds of app to build, the language and skills of development team, app’s maintenance lifetime, the browsers which the app need to support, the size of application development team, and additional requirements.

The selection of framework depends on various factors. For example, a pure content application which is developed and maintained by a solo developer and targets modern browsers, no framework is needed. On the other hand, if the application is a complex portfolio and an integration of a number of interdependent apps are developed by a large and changing team, then it is good to standardize on a single framework across the organization.
6.4 A Quick Overview of Framework and Library Stereotypes

Table 3 shows the selection of the most visible frameworks and libraries in the web app development community.

Table 3: Major Development Frameworks and Libraries [12]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bootstrap + Plugins</td>
<td>CSS framework for responsive web sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backbone + Underscore</td>
<td>Minimalist architectural framework + utility data classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angular JS</td>
<td>HTML-based architecture package for modern browsers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ember + Handlebars</td>
<td>Highly structured architecture framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jQuery + jQueryUI</td>
<td>Easily learned, unstructured UI libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ext JS + Deft.js</td>
<td>Highly structured, full stack framework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Bootstrap** is a CSS framework that provides interface elements and some view management capabilities like theming and layout. It has become very popular for websites that primarily display content.

- **Backbone.js** is a minimalist MVC package with some data manipulation capabilities provided by Underscore. It provides no interface elements or view management capabilities.
• **AngularJS** describes itself as a toolkit for creating frameworks. It provides an *MVC* structure with a rich *HTML*-based templating system that allows widgets to be created declaratively using markup.

• **Ember** is an opinionated *MVC* package that provides object and data binding and a full component model.

• **jQuery + jQueryUI** is a classic combination that provides interface elements and some view management capabilities without any architectural or data handling capabilities.

• **Ext JS + Deft JS** is a full front-end *JavaScript* development stack with the *Deft JS* library providing inversion of control capabilities to enable easier testability.

When we apply the front-end taxonomy to these different frameworks, we can see that, except for *ExtJS*, each of these frameworks or libraries tackles a piece of the development stack front-end. The first block which is grey represents the stack that is not present at all, the second block in light-green is the stack which is partially developed whereas the third block in dark-green signifies the fully developed stack.
### 6.4.1 AngularJS

*Angular JS* prioritizes the *logic and data* side. The *interface and view* system design are completely developed by the developer. *Angular JS* provides the attributes to bind the input and output to the model which is the *JavaScript* variable. *Angular JS* is good for single page applications. Figure 29 shows the features that *Angular JS* completely or partially supports.

![Angular JS functionality map](image)

*Figure 29: Angular JS functionality map [12]*
6.4.2 Backbone.js

Backbone.js is a framework with RESTful JSON interface. Figure 30 has most of the stack blocks in grey which signifies that Backbone.js assumes most of the UI elements come from somewhere else, i.e. from front-end designers. Backbone.js is used to keep various parts of the web application synchronized such as multiple clients and servers.

![Backbone JS functionality map](image-url)

Figure 30: Backbone JS functionality map [12]
6.4.3 Bootstrap

*Bootstrap* is a framework that has a well-developed set of widgets, buttons, forms, responsive containers, and panels. As a view system, *Bootstrap* contains *HTML* and *CSS* based design templates and also supports other *JavaScript* plugins. However, it is a front end framework that helps in developing a very sophisticated user interface and does not have any provision for the server side code as shown in Figure 31. So, all the I/O calls have to be done at the back-end or server.

![Bootstrap functionality map](image)

*Figure 31: Bootstrap functionality map [12]*
6.4.4 JQuery

JQuery is the most popular JavaScript library in use today and was developed to simplify the client side HTML scripting. JQuery makes DOM traversal, DOM manipulation, event handling, animation, and Ajax much simpler to use. JQuery UI is a set of widgets, themes, and styles built on top of JQuery library. But again, JQuery UI does not have any facility that contributes to the data and logic side of the application. The front-end stack for JQuery is shown in Figure 32.

Figure 32: JQuery and JQueryUI functionality map [12]
6.4.5 Ember JS

*EmberJS* uses the *handlebars template*. The handlebar template is like *HTML*, but has the ability to embed expressions which change with what is in the display - which means the *data binding* is the strong point. Therefore, we do not need to write any additional *JavaScript* to keep the display up-to-date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic widgets</td>
<td>Compound widgets, trees, grids, gauges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buttons, bars, text fields</td>
<td>Styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Containers, panels, cards, models</td>
<td>Visualizations, charts, infographics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Layout manager, responsive grid</td>
<td>Drag &amp; drop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag &amp; drop</td>
<td>SVG, canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theming computed styles</td>
<td>Theming computed styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Template iterations, conditionals</td>
<td>Visual Effects animation, filters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Effects animation, filters</td>
<td>Localization RTL, local libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localization RTL, local libraries</td>
<td>Accessibility focus manager, ARIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State manager</td>
<td>Data binding 1-way, 2-way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data binding 1-way, 2-way</td>
<td>Modularity components, modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modularity components, modules</td>
<td>Testing IOC, test hooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data objects queues, hash tables</td>
<td>Data models &amp; stores, group, sort, validate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data models &amp; stores, group, sort, validate</td>
<td>Local storage, indexed DB, app-cache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local storage, indexed DB, app-cache</td>
<td>Video, audio, WebGL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
<th>INTERFACE ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XHR async, conversion</td>
<td>Server method invocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Server method invocation</td>
<td>Sockets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sockets</td>
<td>Server Notifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 33: Ember functionality map [12]
6.5 The Ext JS Stack

Figure 34 shows the front-end taxonomy for ExtJS. From this figure, we observe that ExtJS gives a more complete framework compared to the other JavaScript frameworks we discussed earlier.

ExtJS offers an exceptionally wide choice of basic and compound widgets, a high level view package and a lower level drawing API, a rich bundle of containers and themes, and a clean visualization framework. All these capabilities are engineered and tested to work together. ExtJS
is professionally maintained, updated in a synchronized fashion, and backed by a customer support team.

Actually, in the few spots where ExtJS lacks some features, the structure empowers the developers group to expand it in ways that permit their code and the framework code to cooperate. For instance, if the inherent formats don't cover the outline case, one can compose new designs, and the new designs will carry on precisely as an implicit format. Likewise, there are a wide variety of themes, compound widgets and different extensions accessible from Sencha partners on the Sencha website. Whether one utilizes standard components, expands the standard components ourselves, or uses extensions from Sencha market, one can generally get expected results. Hence, ExtJS makes application development, testing, and maintenance much more straightforward.

Additionally, ExtJS offers a broad set of data classes such as key-value stores and hashmaps. ExtJS also gives the great state administration at the data level, permitting information exchange via the session class. ExtJS helps developers to oversee application data, as well as give them intense tools for empowering clients to interact with data to settle on convenient business choices. For instance, the ExtJS data grid is a best-in-class compound widget for high performance, sortable, filterable presentation of large datasets in a tabular format. These data management and presentation capabilities are particularly essential in associations that assemble data driven applications for clients.
ExtJS now provides a mature framework built to fit the most demanding mobile app needs and it is called Sencha Touch. Touch inherits the best of ExtJS and has took it to the next level by upgrading to utilize CSS3 and HTML5 practices.

Harbinger Systems compared different JavaScript Frameworks. Figure 35 presents the results of their analyses. ExtJS stands out as having most of the features [6].

![Figure 35: Harbinger’s comparison of various JavaScript frameworks](image-url)
7. CONCLUSION

MVC is a currently popular architectural design. We showed that MVC decouples an application into different elements and allows a developer to focus on each element separately. The MVC architecture loosely couples the different element after building the application. MVC is now the best practice in web development and there are many applications implemented with MVC architecture. The user interface plays a significant role in the modern application. The application should be smart and user friendly. There are various UI technologies evolving, and ExtJS is one which offers a more complete framework than other known JavaScript frameworks. ExtJS framework is a simple, robust, easy to use and a very transparent JavaScript framework. This is also referred to as Sencha.

We compared two similar applications built using MVC but with different client tools. The application built using ExtJS offers more benefits than the one using cshtml. Though we cannot explore all the features of the ExtJS in one simple application, we have shown advantages via the basic bookstore application.

We presented a comparison of ExtJS with several other JavaScript frameworks which are currently popular. The choice of front-end technology depends on the type of applications and the nature of the organization. Our comparison, shown with the help of front-end stack, illuminates the advantage of using some of the popular JavaScript frameworks and also the components lacking in those frameworks.
8. REFERENCES


[4]. MindTelligent Inc., Model View Controller (MVC) architecture


APPENDIX

A. Setting up the environment

We can develop a web application using MVC4 or ExtJS alone. However, we need some backend code to connect to an external database server. ASP.NET MVC4 uses C# and generally the front-end is written in asp or html. The steps to setup the environment to integrate the server side code with ExtJS.

1. Download ExtJS, and extract the .zip file.

2. Create the project in Visual Studio 2012
   a. Choose new project.

   ![Visual Studio New Project Dialog]

   b. Under Web, select "ASP.NET MVC 4 Web Application"

   ![Visual Studio Project Templates]

   c. Name the solution and provide the location.

   d. For "View Engine" choose "Razor."
e. Click "OK" to create the project.

3. Add necessary files to the web project.

   a. Creating a tree structure of folders is important to manage all the files. Create a folder to keep all the JavaScript files. From the downloaded file, copy the entire folder resources and paste it into the folder you created for keeping the JavaScript files.

   b. Also, copy the file ext-all.js and paste it into the "Scripts" folder in the project.
4. Now bundle the JS files so our project can use them.

   a. In the Solution Explorer, inside the App_Start we can see a cs file named BundleConfig.cs.

   b. Add the following codes in the method RegisterBundles.

       bundles.Add(newScriptBundle("~/bundles/extjs").Include("~/Scripts/ext-all.js"));

   c. Also bundle the .css file in the same file using the codes like below

       Bundles.Add(newStyleBundle("~/Content/extjs").Include("~/extjs/resources/css/ext-all.css"));

5. Render your bundles in the _Layout.cshtml file so that any view can use it.

   Add the following lines of code inside the <head> tag of _Layout.cshtml.

       Styles.Render("~/Content/extjs")

       @Scripts.Render("~/bundles/extjs")

6. Add a JavaScript reference so that you have intellisense support. Inside the Scripts folder, open the file named _references.js then add the following code to the end of the document

       /// <reference path="ext-all.js" />
7. Test the environment.

a. At the very bottom of the file Index.cshtml, type the following (notice that you should have intellisense working):

```<script>Ext.onReady (function () {alert ('hello')}) ;</script>```

b. Build and Run.[7]

In the above method, ExtJS serves only as a front-end tool. All the functionalities are written at the backend.

However, we can use ExtJS to develop these functionalities and the backend can be used only to communicate with the SQL server. In such an architecture ExtJS has its own model, view and controller. The steps for setting up the environment in the following section.

1. Download ExtJS, and extract the .zip file.

2. Create the project in Visual Studio 2012

a. Choose New Project

b. Under Installed-Templates-Visual C#-Web, select "ASP.NET MVC 4 Web Application"
c. Choose the empty template.

![Project Template]

3. Create the folder structure as follows.

![Solution Explorer]

It is not necessary to create a folder for `store` as this can be placed inside the `model` too.
4. Copy the unzipped ExtJS folder and paste it inside the project directory. Reopen the solution. The folder `ext-4.2.1` is included in the project.

5. Set the ExtJS path in the file that is used to render.