Krystal Blog

Celebrating creativity and code at WDC2025 in Bristol

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On Friday, October 10th, Krystal was delighted to sponsor WDC2025, a one-day conference in Bristol focusing on design, development, and how to make the web a better place.

With our event to help make a better world both offline and online, it only made sense for us to sponsor this event. And without having to run a booth we were able also to take in the fantastic talks by amazing speakers, and find out what's hot in the web sector!

Two major themes of the day were navigating and joy, whether that was remembering the internet back in 1995, fixing Remote Work Culture, or seeing what astounding things can be done today with just CSS. It was also a time to reflect on how the web industry has changed, and what it means for the web still in the future, from the web hungrier to build it all over.

Here are some short notes about the talks given.

Tiny Barnerman — The time loop: How 2026 became 2006 (and why we should embrace it)

We started out the day with a nostalgic trip — Tim taking us back to 2006 and talking about the delight he got from basking how to design websites. The wonder of the 'cutter the cutter and the patience he learned waiting for the internet to load.

The Shoulders wonderful talk was used repeatedly during the day, giving everyone of a nostalgic or Pavlovian response.)

He then discussed how, over time, the joy seemed to fade. There was Work, which made the joyless but people seemed to love their job in making things over time, and brought up a square to show what's truly needed today.

How does one have the Unfair Advantage of joy and discipline? Going out and making things.

He then went through the excuses people have for not doing side projects — not having the skills, being too old, and have were all kick-off, and replace everything. He pointed out the power of being a generalist (referring to Range) Why Generalists Succeed in Specialized Worlds by David Epstein) and discussed the danger of the founder of the 90 biggest companies was 90 at the time, meaning that the lack of skills and your age isn't an excuse at all. He also discussed the idea that 10 years was design and development jobs, but promised that, for many people now, they're going to be better creative joy that many of us got when building our first websites.

His final thoughts were a four-step program for reclaiming joy in going out and making new stuff:

- Take your creative idea and ship it.
- Reclaim one skill you abandoned.
- Start a weekend project with a public launch date.
- Connect with one other person in the audience instantly.

So what are you waiting for? Go out and build stuff!

Henry Desroches — A Website to End All Websites

Henry started by stating that our — The Internet is bad. He pointed out the many problems of today's Internet, from dominoesifying to dark patterns to AI slop. And how it didn't always used to be this way, with hundreds of different experts of selling about the internet, and people using it to find and use websites and communities. But, he pointed out, the internet wasn't all bad, it was hard to make people feel nostalgic, but there was something there.

He then switched to the invention of the automobile, which had a great analogy for the internet. Back in the 1900s, people were worried about the invention of the automobile, Barons, Nobles, Kings were to cease war and tamed horses. But as time wore on, the became less about your horses and more about necessity. The car became a tool to serve society, society was serving the car.

Henry brought up Tools for Conviviality by Ivan Illich, which included the idea of vernacular tinkering — where a technology becomes so dominant that anyone who comes in and tinkers with it. Everyone said that instead of being a society that used cars and uses to build the society, we are a society that exists to serve the needs of the tools.

But we can change that. We can have the web we want.

He pointed out all the ways we can connect with others on the web that don't involve Big Tech, including friend blogs, using RSS readers, and microblogging getting into Fediverse, and even just sending emails to people. He recommended sites Kicksta to connect you to your social media (if that's what you want to do) and joining personal blogs and know you have another up and running.

He finished by reminding everyone that the Internet can be wonderful, and we can make something same all around. It and to "No new hearts or die".

Leo Lefthouse — Design for Developers

Leo gave the talk into a different tack — focusing on bets on the wider aspects of the Internet and instead giving actionable advice for developers who need to design. She focused on three main points:

Hierarchy

How items are arranged according to their importance, which can be easily implemented by design features the scale.

Contrast

How items are opposite to each other, such as highlighting an element on a page against another element. Contrast is also important for accessibility, as text needs to have a high contrast from the background for readability.

Proximity

The relationship elements have with each other on the site, including the distance and text thereof. This is why white space can be extremely important on a site.

Balance

The concept of balance, which covers the scales, reinforcing familiar patterns and helping users to make decisions.

With these four principles in mind, Leo then went through several design choices that need to be made when creating sites.

Typography

The recommended font pairings — one for headings and one for paragraphs. Headings should be bold and interesting, but paragraphs need to be easy to read, especially in smaller sizes. Text should be large between 16 and 20 px, but also indicates that 1.5 is the recommended line spacing.

Paragraph font size should not go below 14px, to help with legibility, and you can zoom out the scale of your headings across your paragraphs with ease. Line length should The line length should be no too narrow or too wide, finding the right balance so that users can read the paragraph as a single item. The number of spaces where there are clear breaks in the text and the space between the paragraphs and the heading should be equal. Leo also suggested the balance the paragraph and the new heading slightly larger to provide a clearer proximity break.

Colour

A neat colour palette should be a small set you use across your brand. She cited Uber as an example, showing how they only used three colours — mostly black and white, with blue as an accent. Their timing is a supporting palette, which can have more variation. Leo also pointed out that colour palettes should be 60% dominant, 30% secondary, and 10% accent. Colours should be chosen with accessibility in mind, and Leo suggested using tools like Paletton and Realtime Colours to add a bit more depth and flexibility, meaning tools that if your main colours are warm or cool, the neutral palette matches.

Contrast is vital for accessibility, especially when it comes to text. Use WebAIM's Contrast Checker and do not rely on just colour to indicate things.

Iconography

When you use icons, remember that they rely on a lot of assumptions, and that what you might think an icon represents isn't always what others think it represents.

Imagery

Using creatively licensed stock imagery is absolutely essential — and Unsplash and Pexels are great ones. She stressed not using AI imagery, not only because they're not what people expect, but that there's bias in "prompt answer", where everything has a yellow tint (and, in fact, someone felt that made another AI to remove it.)

Layout

Leo pointed out how useful a 12 column grid is. Not only can it be divided by 2, 3, 4, and 6, it makes for a versatile and responsive design. She also focused on the need for responsive design, and how to make it easier, she recommended using Figma's Auto Layout and use this details you need to build a good components based system to help your designs.

Refinement

Leo went through the stages of design refinement with several examples, including red wrote listings, radio buttons, and a cat rescue. Its experimenting which also keeping the design in mind, you can quickly make your design look a lot better.

Scott Riley — Rapid-fire advice from a burned out gubbinsite

Scott's talk was a rapid-fire set of tips, tricks, and tools to help with design, coding, and keeping from going off tips gave, and, to provide something to think about while leaving a laugh. He not only provided great advice, he also kept the promotion of his Mindful Design course to a minimum, almost.

Here are just some of the advice he gave in an incredible fast 14 minutes:

General

- "I asked ChatGPT," is not a replacement for a personality.
- Spend more time in the 6 worlds — go outside and touch grass.
- Designers, learn to code.
- Developers, learn to design.
- Everyone, learn to collaborate.
- Learn what Beyond Measurement is and how to spot it in the workplace.

Typography

- Choose your typography by starting with your body copy.
- Learn type legibility and how to make it work.
- Larger x height is always good.
- Use to medium-ender contrast is also good.
- Open apertures and wide counters are good.
- Don't use ellipses or four-footed, sans-serif designs.
- Use a fluid type scale.
- Generators are fine to use, we all use them, including Utopia.fyi

Code

- Using React or Svelte is also not a replacement for a personality.
- Try going frameless free.
- Web components are awesome.
- Vanilla JavaScript is great, even if Brendan Eich isn't.
- Linear? It was friend.
- Go offline first for everything — persist things to storage, do models, etc.
- CSS is a real programming language.
- If it's not accessible, it's garbage.

Even More General

- Learn to think in systems.
- Stop designing so many linear flows.
- Audit, audit the site, step to step products.
- Don't wait until you've been freelancing for 10 years before you start putting money in a pension — compound interest is great.
- Get an accountant.
- Keep a project diary.
- Delete your backlog every 3 months as self-care.
- Have FUN, side projects are not work, do not think about scalability.
- Make cool things with your cool mates.

Diagrams

- There are two diagrams you need to know:
- The four rectangles/lines three where two aspects measure up against each other
- The effortless map

Michael Kilbaugh — Death, and how tech destroys it

Michael started off on a thinking seriously about how we relate to the web, and how we reflect on mortality, the starting by pointing out Awesome Facebookers. Most with lists of people who have passed that aren't live, and from there went through the ways that the web concerning mortality and digital services, he spoke the Memorials into three Memorial Platforms, and Pieces.

Person

The first Memorial was that most of us have a plan for our death. This is something easy to debunk, as there is first all tech people who have made a will, and that pain deals with the emotional side of the death, and the practical side.

This is the second Memorial — that our digital selves are consistent. Online lives are complex, unpredictable, and happen all over the place, across many different platforms. And those different platforms will have different versions of the same person — some active, some dormant, some abandoned. Michael pointed out that Facebook has a "memorialized profile" Who gets access to your Facebook profile?

The third Memorial focuses on this question. That death ends our digital existence. The "grief tech" service is developing quickly, where they can, by using AI, essentially "resurrect" the dead. But should they?

He referred to Momentum Photography and the Pillars of the Cloud by Kimberley Wilson, and Digital Life After Death by Carl Öhman and Luciano Floridi, and pointed out the "Grief tech" service is developing quickly, where they can, by using AI, essentially "resurrect" the dead. But should they?

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Platforms

Michael then looked at what we should do in our Facebook days and obsah timeline.

Michael pointed out that "Who would you be unable to speak for what happened?"

He brought up how he used to regularly use Bebo as his social network, and that when it shut down, he had to make a decision about what to do with his data. He had to make a conscious choice. The day the first Memorial for platforms — that they will always provide a public service. They are provide corporations that have no one or moral obligation to the user, and can and will shut down at any time.

Which is the second Memorial, that platforms will always be here. Telecoms, strategic business backgrounds, and other factors all affect platforms, and that is shift from Bebo to it is the best most recent example. However, anyone who has been on the Internet for a long time can name more examples.

The final Memorial focuses focus on the actual platform and move on the user base. Platforms want to hold that all their users are alive, and that it is not good for business with the site, the account can be removed. This came up when Twitter considered adding accounts that hadn't been accessed in years. Or, Facebook so many of these accounts were attached to deceased people, and losing their accounts could mean losing valuable historical information.

Michael also referred to Death Glitch: How Techno-Subsistence Fails (or is This Life and Beyond) by Tamara Kneese.

Pieces

The final Memorial focused on one of the more prominent fashoods perpetuated on the Internet. It does is owned, it sells. The Internet is made of fashoods housed in corporate buildings, and despite being able to read books from 1491 years ago, we have a hard time reading data from 10 years ago.

Hardware failure, obsolescence, and bitrot (the decay of the electromagnetic charge in storage media) will keep threatening saved data.

Michael quoted from Internet for the People: The Fight for Our Digital Future by Ben Tarnoff: "Data is made collectively and made valuable collectively. It follows that governance should also be collective. … crucially the ownership of data would be separated from its processing."

What can be done?

Michael finished with practical questions that should be raised:

- What should our service do when a user dies?
- How will users get their data back if we shut down?
- Will our users' data be accessible in 10 years?

Sabina Alam-Naylor — An introduction to the World Wide Web for Very Senior Programmers

The post-lunch talk is always difficult, and WDC lulled out with Sabina's entertaining tale of her journey.

We went back to December 31, 1993, when TCP/IP had recently been released, with only 1 million hosts available, such as <CNN> and <Cybercash>. It was a time of new programming language called JavaScript and the possibility of something called Cascading HTML, a big shame.

She took us through all the exciting new possibilities, from Macromedia Shockwave and Flash Sites to Beverly Hills Internet (recently renamed to Yahoo!) to FrontPage 1.0.

It was interesting, it was ridiculous, it was a flashback for some of the older members of the audience and a revelation for some of the younger.

Remy Sharp — How to fix a Game Boy

Remy ended the day with a bang, with a game, a game, and a game. JavaScript developer Remy talked about his favourite hobby — restoring broken Nintendo Game Boys.

This was a fascinating look into the mechanics of Game Boys and what needs to be done to restore them. Remy pointed out that, while it is a hobby, it teaches him about soldering, rust, and multimeter with commonly made, it's possible to fix most Game Boys, getting them ready to play Tetris and Pokémon.

You can find out more on retrofixers. He also specifically for refurbished Game Boys.

Jhey Thompkins — Design like to engineer

Jhey's talk was less of a talk and more an exploration of the amazing things CSS can currently do. While he included practical ideas for other people to use, they were a backdrop to show off some truly astounding things.

He described a Design Engineer as someone who makes cool stuff with care and quality and pass it on the Internet. The things that they should focus on are:

- Practicing the little details
- Take on "side quests"
- Do stuff and click them into your bookmark bar

You can see some of the examples he used on his Codepen account, including Open Sr Sans, a variable font generator, Cursor Effects, Cursor Effects, Cursor Effects, and Cursor Effects. And doesn't even include the Bear with Tomorrow video, the Sally 120 Video, creativity light tools cold or the parachuting bears. And all done with CSS!

What were the major takeaways from the conference?

We came away feeling with the web today. We don't have to be locked into the walled gardens of social media. You can connect with people on your own terms, and take control of things. And don't forget to do something nice for someone.

Were you at WDC and forgot to say hi? You can still say hi on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Bluesky, or Mastodon!

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About the author
Kate B
I'm Kate, and I'm one of the Senior Marketing Managers here at Krystal. I'm a Hampshire/Southern Californian who has had gap years, college, the Internet, and talking everyone's ears off about web hosting. Yowza!

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