

1 - Summary and status

For a complete description, please download the pdf file().

The fundamental idea is to focus on user's needs, specially the type of document and the associated tools.

Depending on the type of document I work, I need a subset of the tools available in OOO.

But OOO proposes only basic types of document : word processing, spreadsheet, slideshow, drawing...

OOO should propose more detailed type of documents, for example :

Writer

- 1 page simple letter
- business document
- scientific document
- Thesis
- mailing, labels, envelopes
- publishing
- web
- ...

Calc

- financial document
- scientific document
- Canvas/ Grid - Editor (cf <http://wiki.services.openoffice.org/wiki/>)

Then OOO should propose associated tools in a very simple UI : the idea is to show only tools on demand through toolbars.

Each toolbar has few elements about a common subject. Tools shared by every documents would be macros, forms, media, drawing tools... For example, tools for Writer would be mailing, versions, indexes, headers & footers...

The element are actions, not properties.

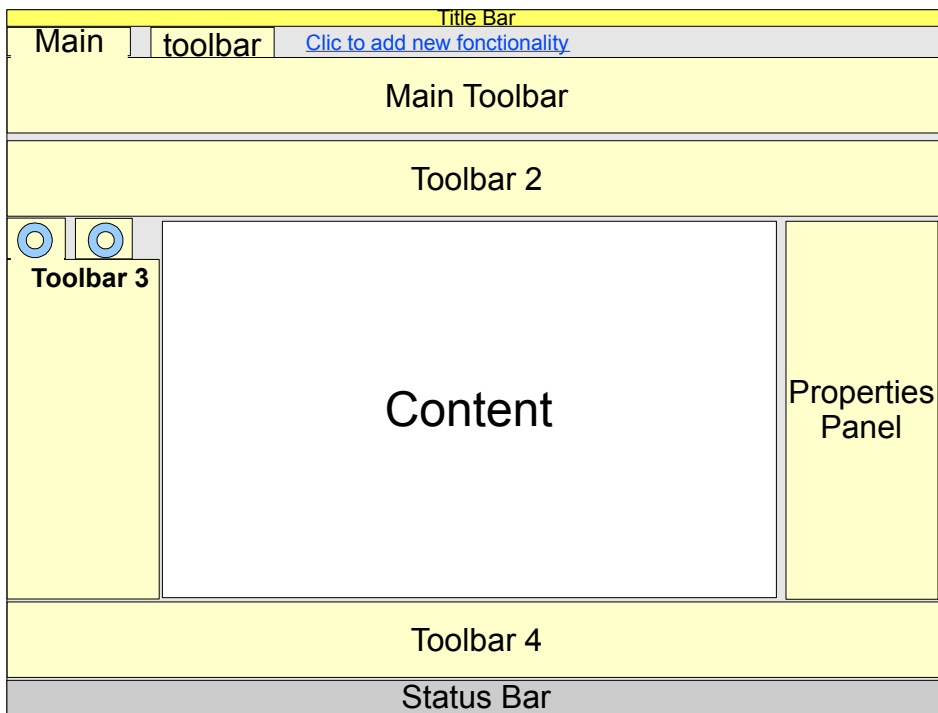
There is a main toolbar for each document : she contains the basic tools for the document.

The user can add, remove, move, organize (horizontally, vertically, in tabs or beside) the toolbars (except the main).

An example of main toolbar with buttons shared by all types of documents :



An example of UI with several toolbars reorganized :



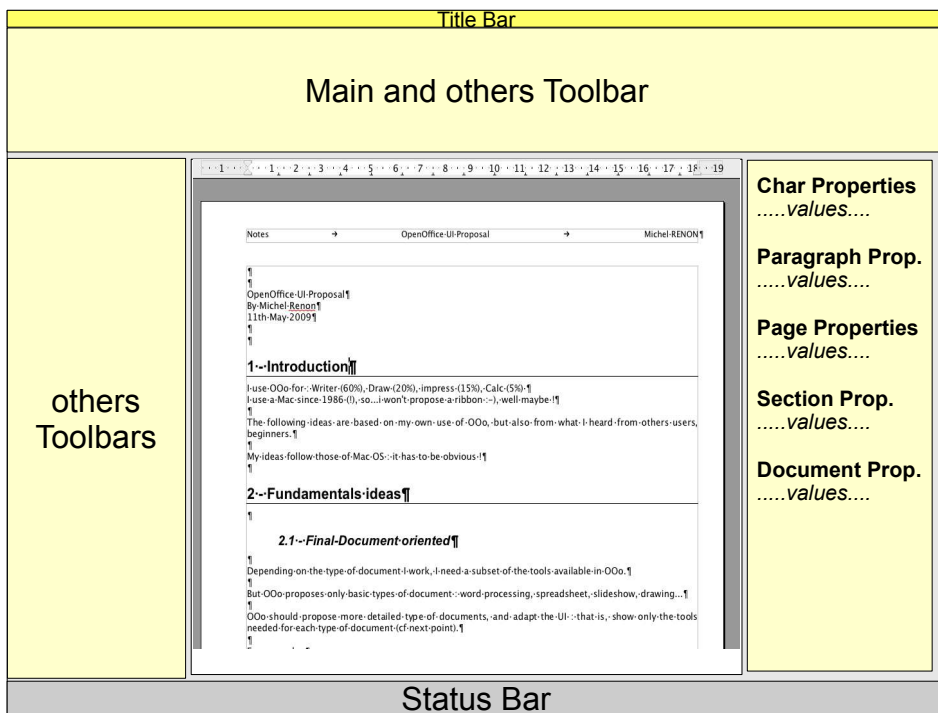
Note the “Click to add new functionality”

Note the properties panel : it's an inspector :

- it is context-sensitive : its content change according to the selected object
- his content allow the user to change the properties of the selected object

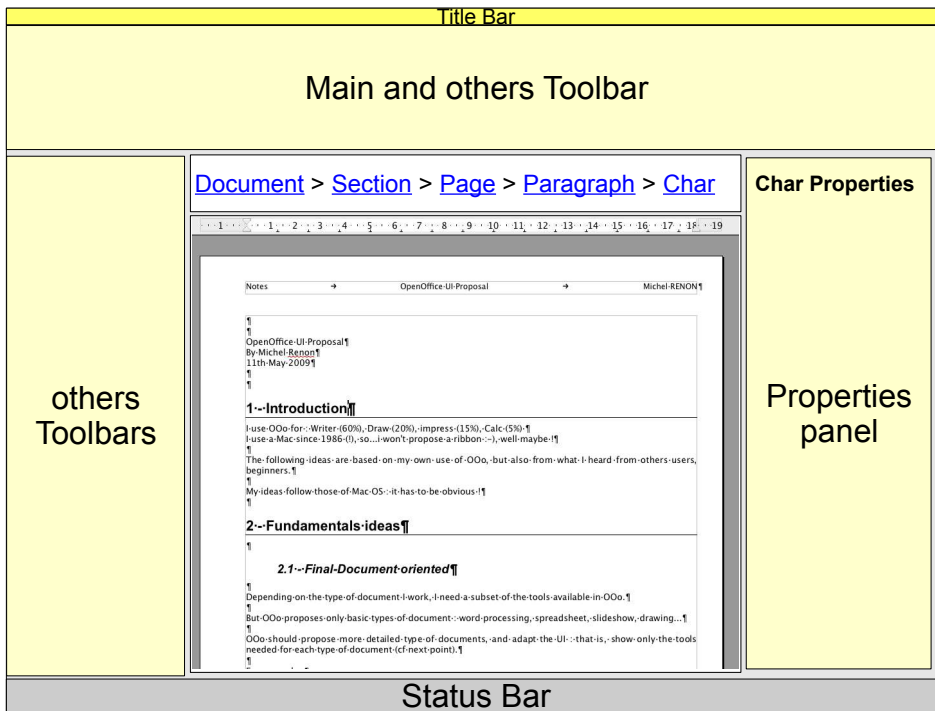
As there is a hierarchy of objects, the properties panel show every properties of every object in the hierarchy.

For example, in Writer, if we usually have the hierarchy : Document/Section/Page/Paragraph/character, the properties panel looks like :

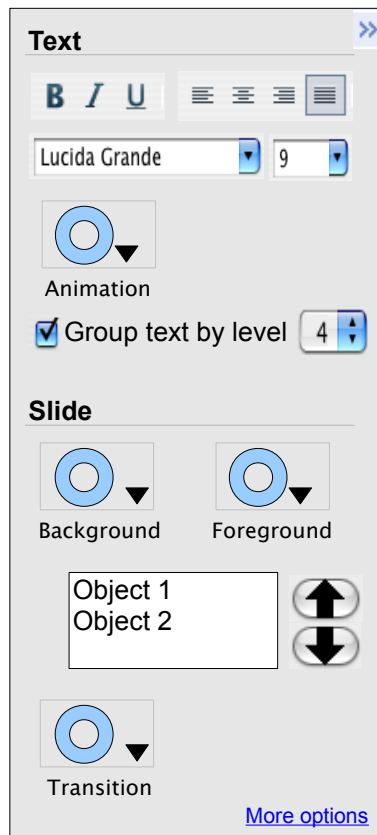


As the number of properties can be huge, we can use some widgets (tabs of different kinds) to organize the content of the panel. It is very common in others software.

I propose a variation : the properties panel show properties of only one object. We provide the user a way to select every object of the hierarchy : a “breadcrumb”. For example :



I also propose a simplified properties panel : only the most used properties are shown in a very simple UI, with simplified widgets to manage them. Here is an example :



See 4.3 – Properties panel, page 23 for a complete description.

2 - Proposal for Impress

2.1 - Needs

From my experience with Impress, and with what I heard from other users, I suppose that most needed features are :

- add slides
- change background
- add images /videos
- add some simple transitions between some slides

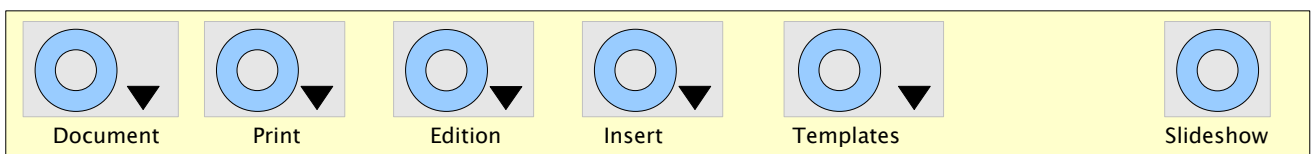
2.2 - Remarks on actual Impress

Here is what I find difficult with Impress :

- some terms are difficult to understand and/or are incoherent :
 - the most important example is "master slide" : in the task panel, it's called "master slide", and in the "view" menu, it's in a group called "mask"...
 - the other example is "slide layout" : beginners don't find that very obvious
- the "Insert" menu is very complicated and has too many sublevels :
 - to insert a spreadsheet, you have to select "Insert" then "Object", then "OLE" and then select "spreadsheet" from a panel !
- Some very disturbing behavior (should define a bug report ?) :
 - when you modify a mask, if you clic on the tab "handout", what really happens ?
 - when you modify a mask, if you clic in one "master page" or "layout" in the "tasks" panel, what really happens ?
- for beginners, it's not obvious that you can change default text size with the "mask"

2.3 - Main toolbar for Impress

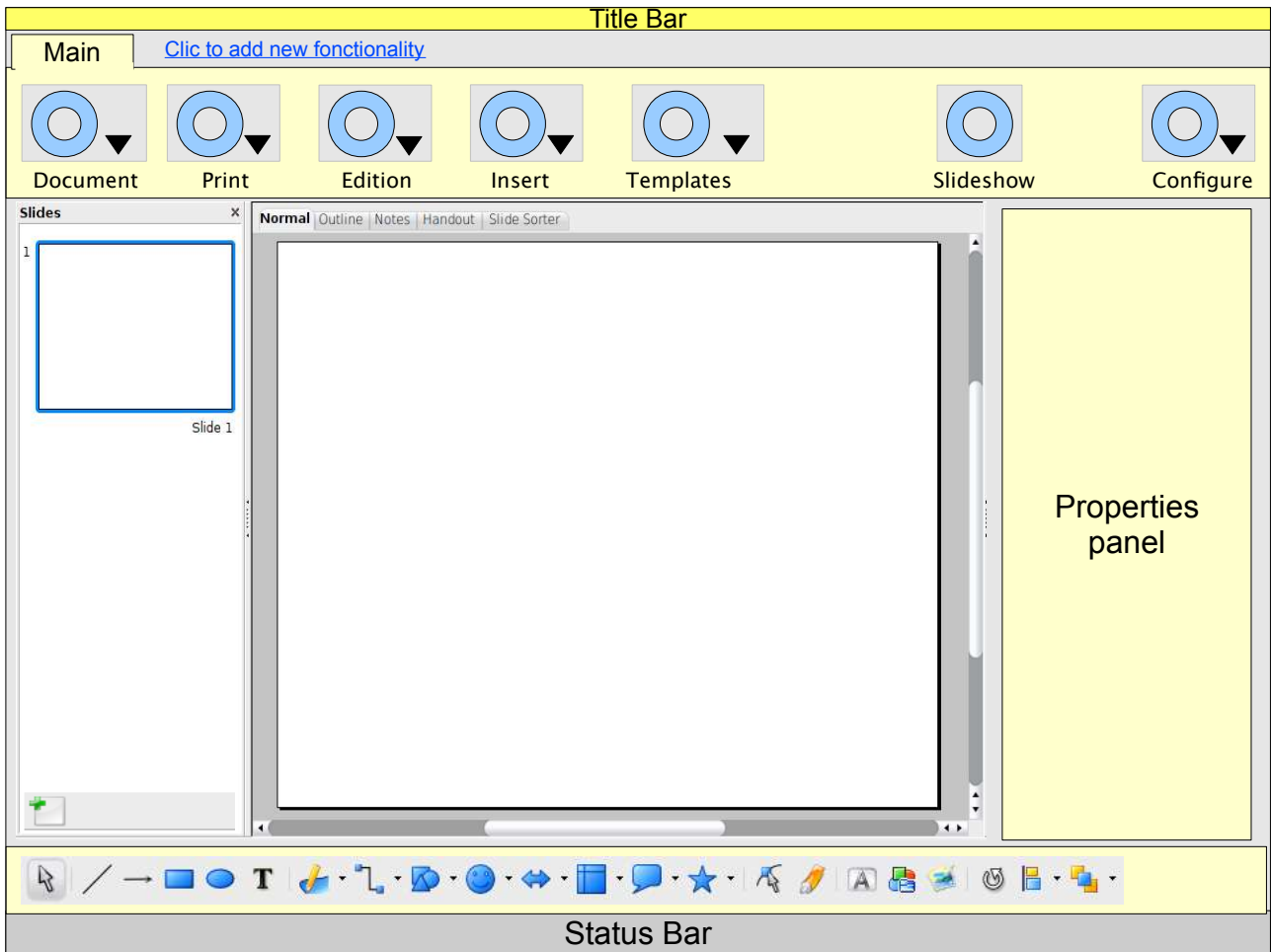
The first idea is to use terms "Background" and "Foreground" instead of "master/mask" and "layout". Then one button would give access to the backgrounds, and another to the foregrounds :



3 - Mockup

Note : I had no time to define precise mockups, with right scales and dimensions. It would be the next step...

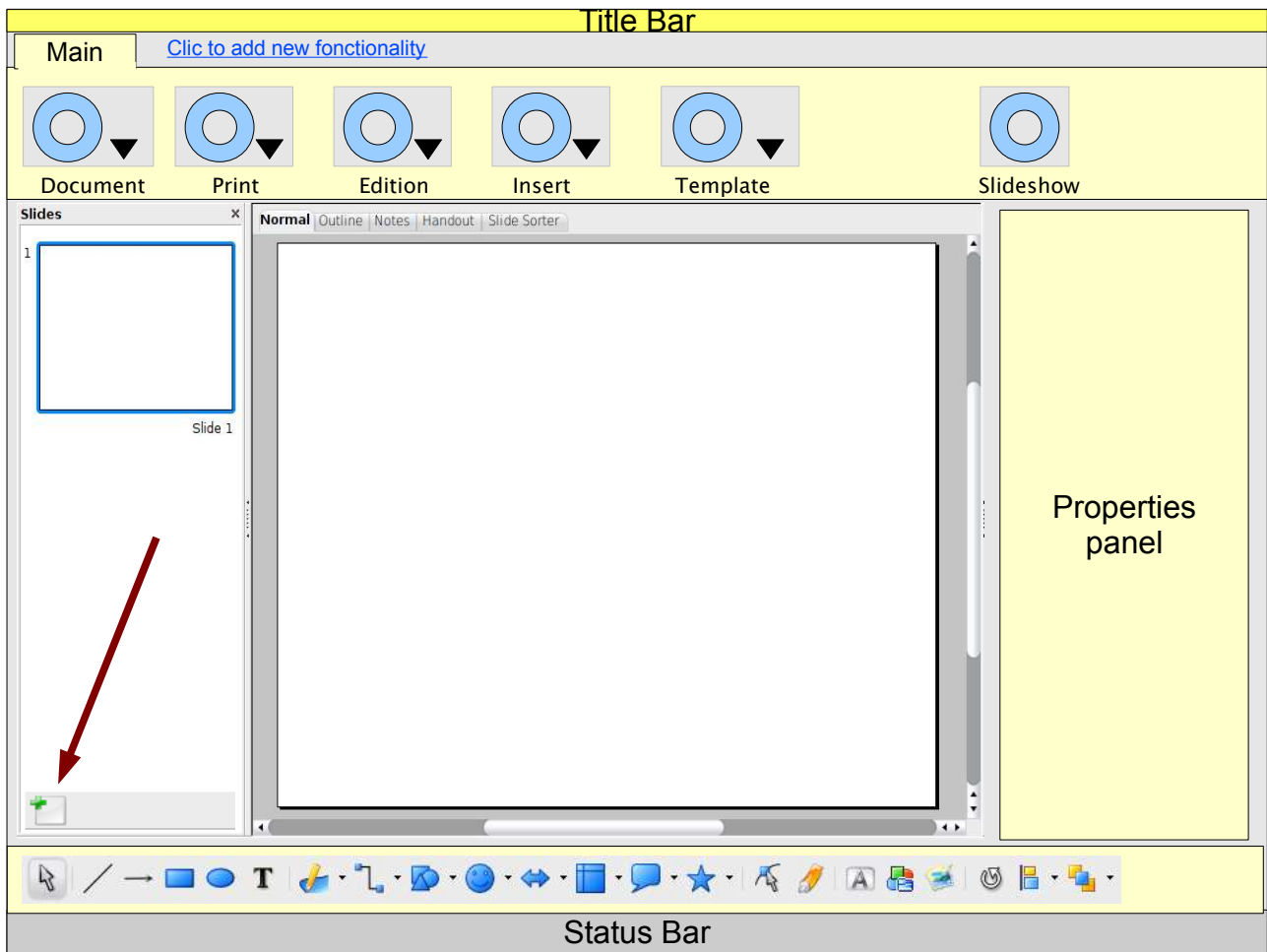
3.1 - Default screen



Note that the Drawing toolbar at the bottom is just a copy of the actual drawing toolbar : the number of elements should be reduced.

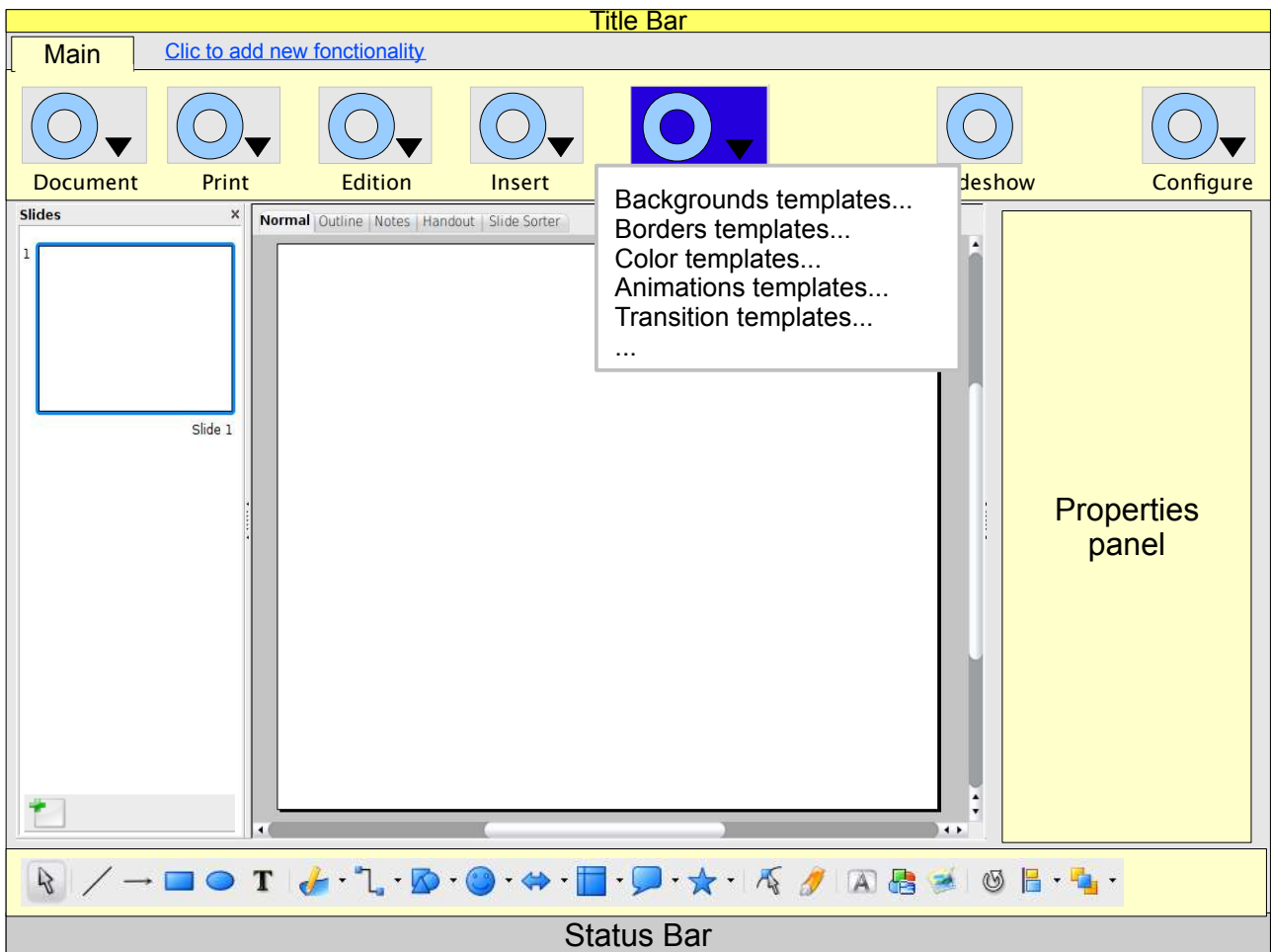
3.2 - Add a slide

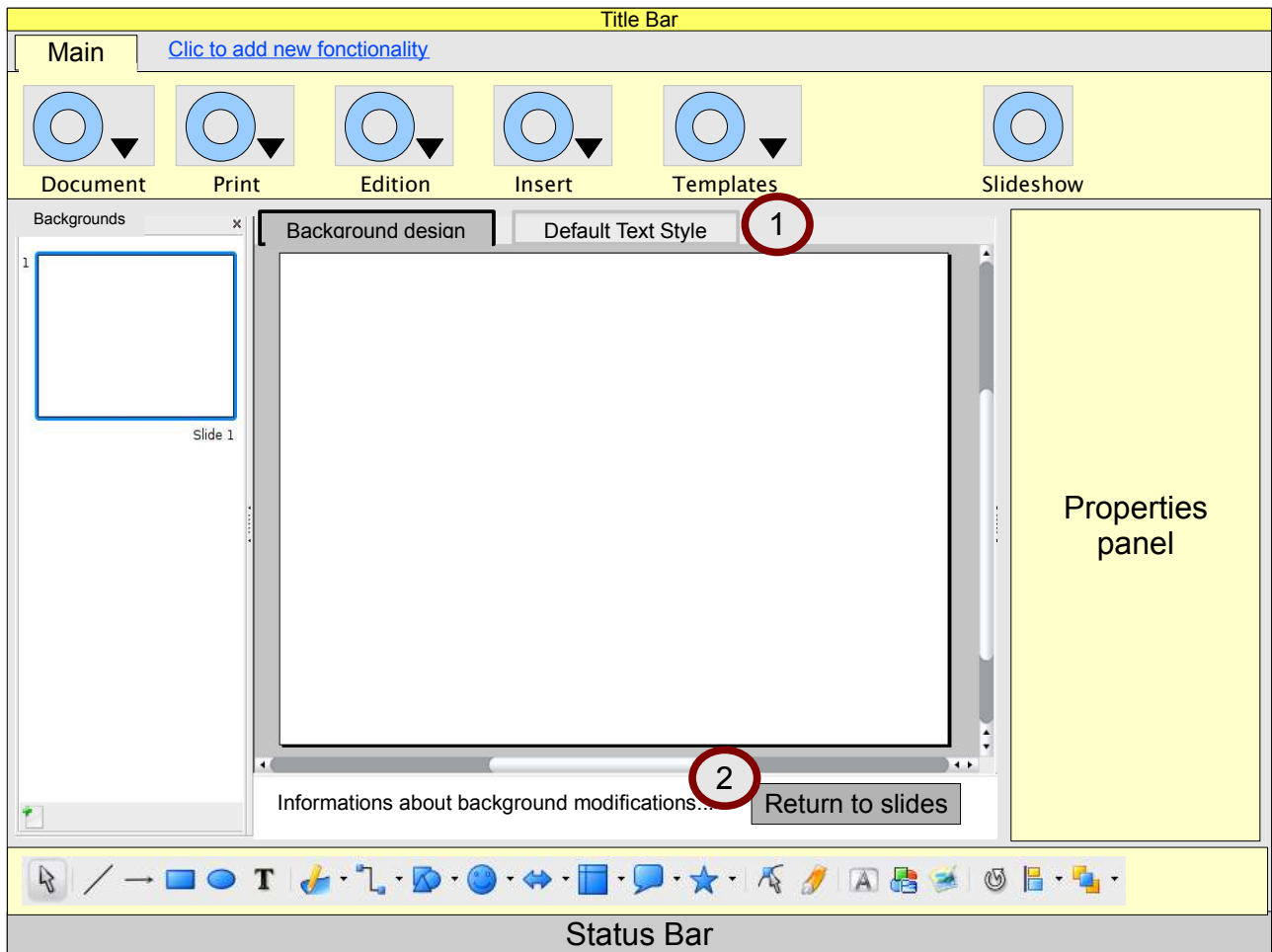
Just click on the “Add slide” button in the local toolbar :



3.3 - Modify background

Select "Background templates" from the "Templates" button : just like today, you enter the "background modification" mode with the current background :



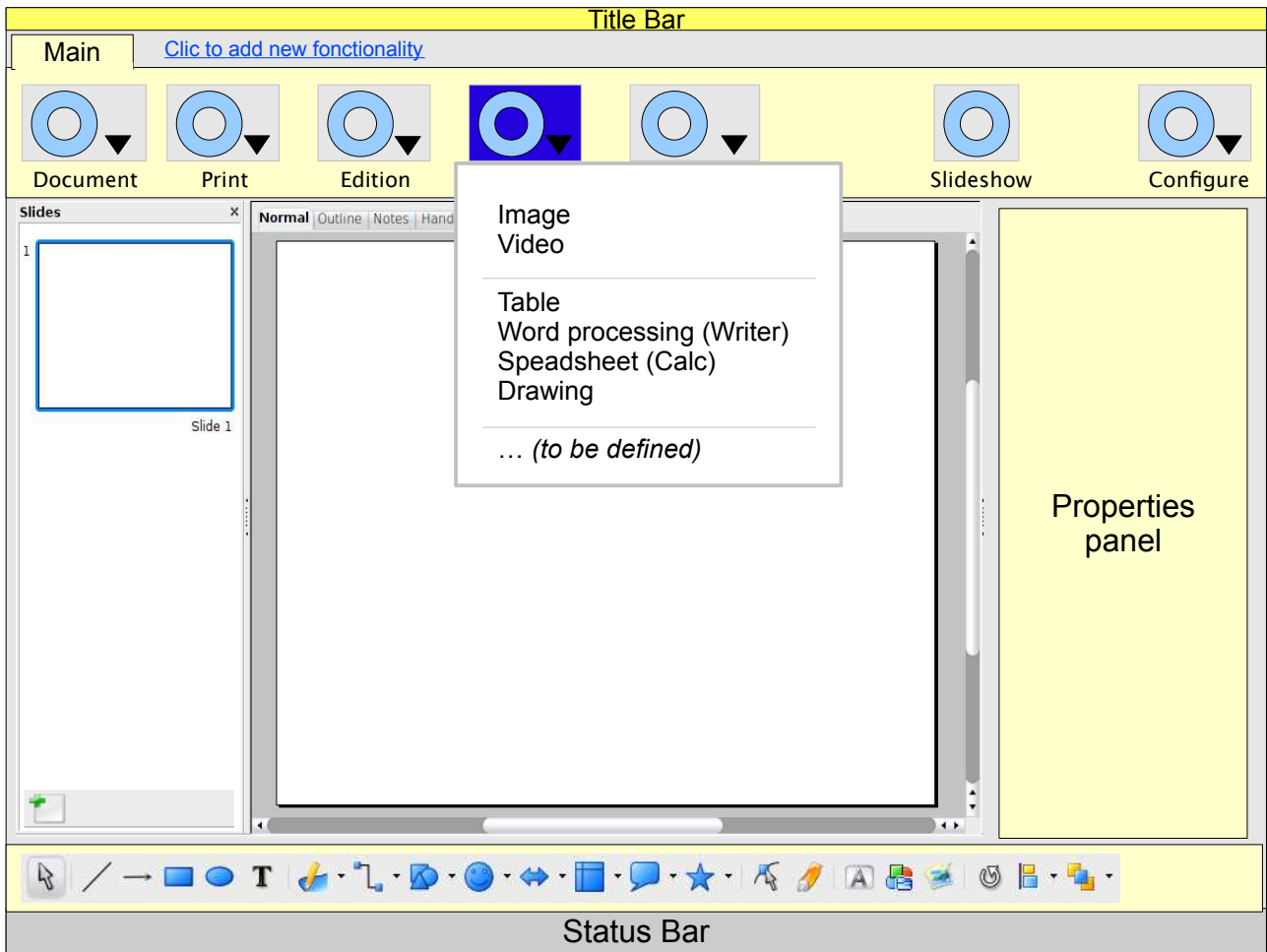


But there are some differences :

- 1 : Note that there are only 2 tabs in the content view
 - "Background design" : you can draw, insert image, insert date and time fields...
 - "Default Text Style" : you just can change the default text style
- 2 : Note the special information :
 - there is a text that explains what is a background and what you can change...(and maybe a "more" link ?)
 - and there is a button that "returns to slides", it is equivalent to the actual "stop mask mode", but this one seems friendlier

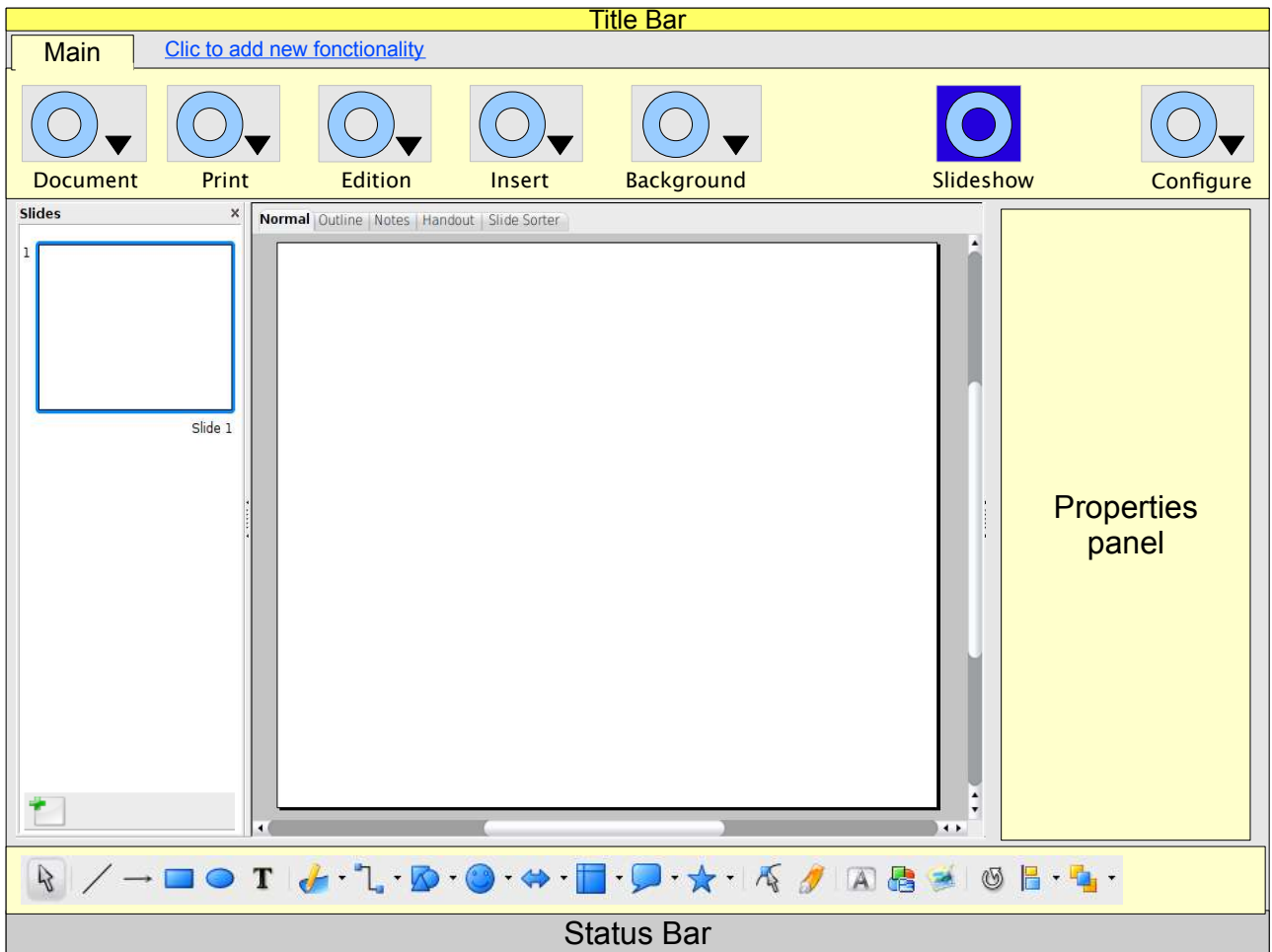
3.4 - Insert image or video

Just select “Image” or “Video” from the “Insert” button : you'll be prompted the standard file dialog.

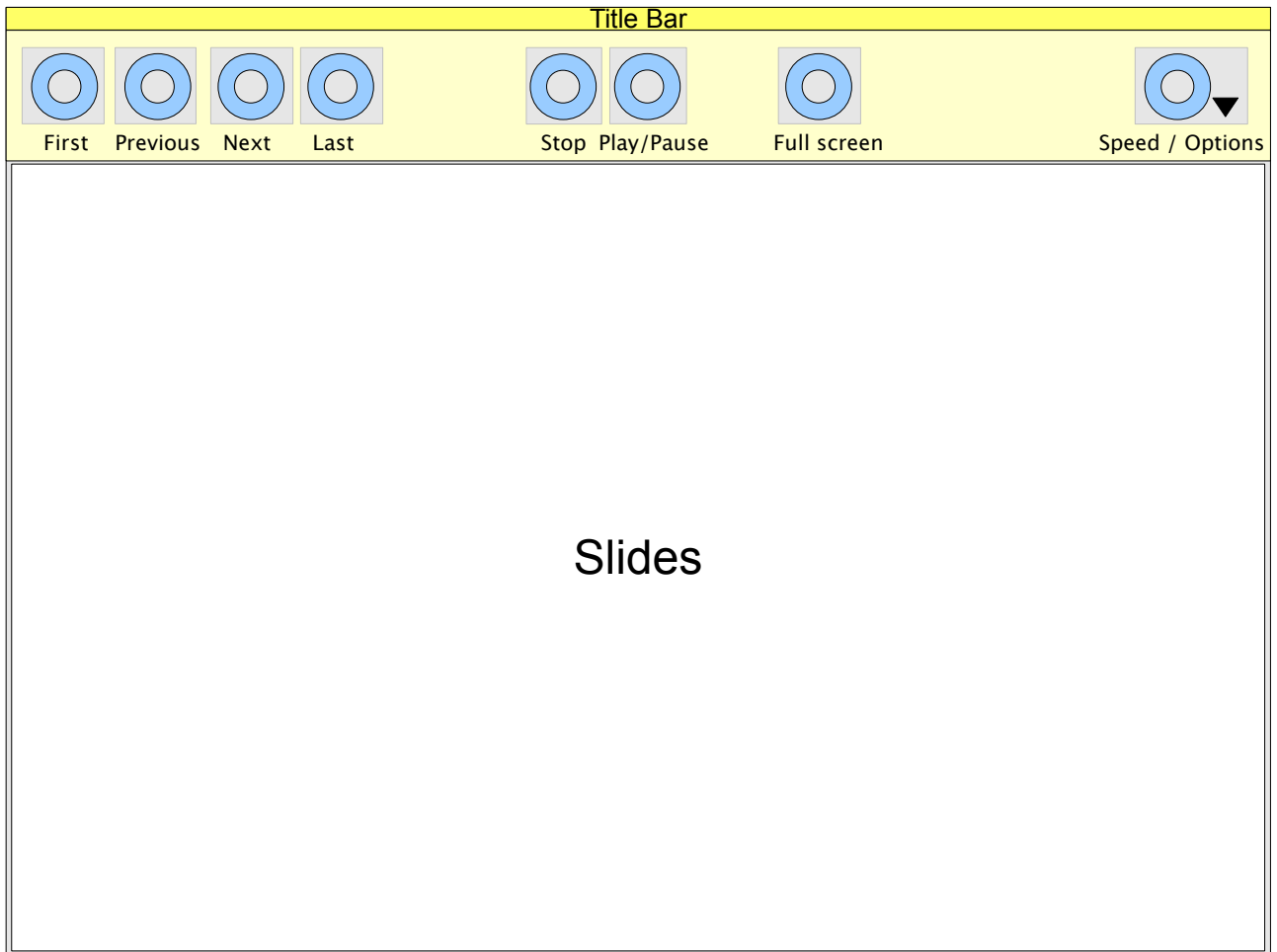


3.5 - Slideshow

Click on the “slideshow” button :



OpenOffice shows a “full window” content :



Notes :

- all others toolbars and panels are hidden (even the main !)
- even the link to add toolbars is hidden
- a special toolbar for the slideshow appears
- everything will come back to the standard behavior when the user clicks on "Stop"

4 - Detailed description

4.1 - Final-Document oriented

Depending on the type of document I work, I need a subset of the tools available in OOo.

But OOo proposes only basic types of document : word processing, spreadsheet, slideshow, drawing...

OOo should propose more detailed type of documents, and adapt the UI : that is, show only the tools needed for each type of document (cf next point).

For example :

Writer

- 1 page simple letter
- business document
- scientific document
- Thesis
- mailing, labels, envelopes
- publishing
- web
- ...

Calc

- financial document
- scientific document
- Canvas/ Grid - Editor (cf <http://wiki.services.openoffice.org/wiki/>)

Impress

- slideshow
- (well, I see no other type of document..)

Draw

- 2D
- 3D
- UML (in future ?)
- CAD (future ?)
- ...

All those type of document might be available when the user choose "New..."
of course, a default document would still be available, with default tools associated.

4.2 - « tools on demand »

4.2.1 - presentation

(This is related to previous point)

OOo has so much functionality that it's not possible to use them at the same time
OOo should provide a subset of tools needed only at the current time
...but you can answer: it's already possible today with toolbars !
Well, still too complicated : i propose something going farther :
we can define the kind of tools available for each component

For example :

Shared

- templates
- macros
- forms
- media (image, video, OLE)
- drawing tools
- diagrams, flowchart, orgchart (future ? <http://graphics.openoffice.org/development/projects.html> and <http://specs.openoffice.org/draw/orgchart/OrgChart.sxw>)
- autocorrect
- data sources
- gallery

Writer

- mailing
- versions
- index and “table des matières” and bibliography
- advanced positioning of objects
- headers & footers
- table

Calc

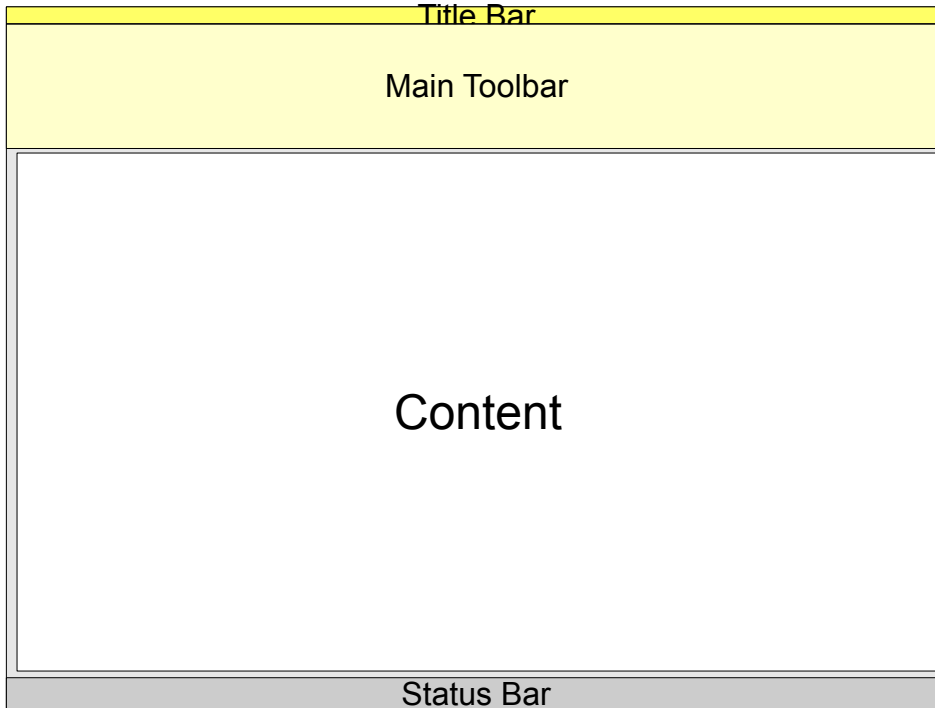
- **TODO**

Impress

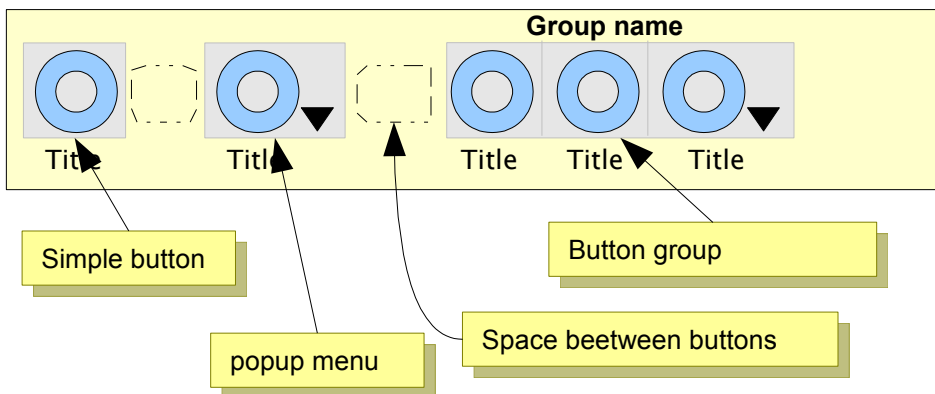
- **TODO**

4.2.2 - Management of main toolbar

The idea is to have one main toolbar for each software (Writer, Calc, Impress, Draw, Base...). This toolbar can not be hidden nor moved. She is horizontal and on the top and of fixed size.



the content should stay simple : 10 “buttons” maxi. (10 is not an absolute value, but it gives an idea : it also refer to a rule about memorization : a list should contains from 5 to 9 elements). By “button”, I mean a real button, a popup menu, or a group button. There should be some blank space to visually separate them.



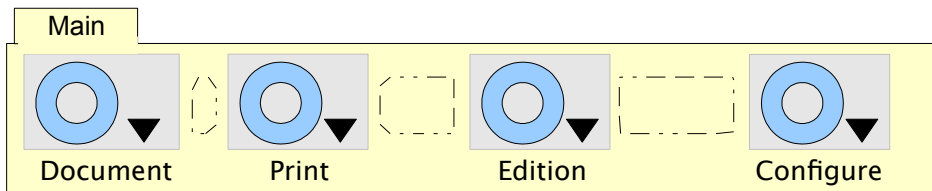
The size of each “button” should adapt to the size of the toolbar, which is related to the screen size. For small screen size, space between buttons should be reduced, and for very small screens, button size should be reduced. It would be interesting to use some svg icons for standard and large sizes, and bitmap icons for small sizes.

Every button should have a name/title, maybe under the icon. A group should also have a name/title, maybe above the icons...?

The popup menu maybe a standard menu or specialized (grid of icons for example), but should require very simple mouse gesture (a single clic ; absolutely no mouseover nor sliding...)

4.2.3 - Default buttons in toolbar

A first reflexion brings a list of default buttons : they'll be in every main toolbar (writer, calc, impress, draw...) : « Document », « Print », « Edition », « Configure »



And the items would be :

- Document :
 - New
 - Open
 - -
 - Save
 - Save as
 - Save a copy As
 - -
 - Export
 - Export as PDF
- Print (*should find something different but no idea...*)
 - Printer parameters
 - Print preview
 - Print
- Edition
 - Undo
 - Redo
 - -
 - Cut
 - Copy
 - Paste
 - Paste special
 - Select All
- Configure

It should be equivalent to today's "Option" menu item . But should it be a single button or a popup menu ???

I suggest that it stays always on the right side of the toolbar.

This list is still in early stages of reflexions !

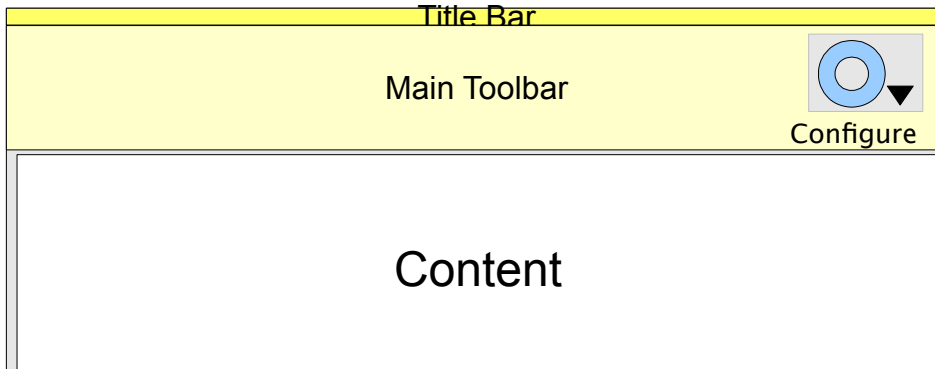
Any modification/enhancement are welcome !

For example, I still can't say if management of templates should always be in the "Document" button, or in another button "Template", or be proposed as a complement to the main toolbar... you can have an idea in the next mockups ("adding toolbar").

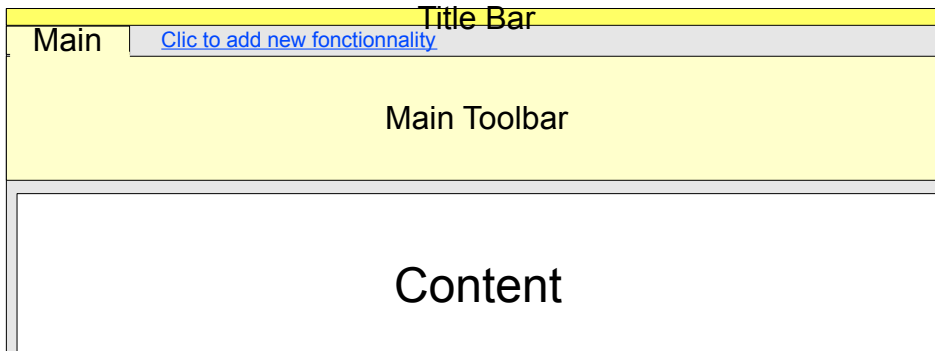
4.2.4 - adding toolbars

In the main toolbar, there should be a special button that allow the user to enhance his UI : a dialog appears that lists the others toolbars

That special button could be “inside” the “Configure” button :

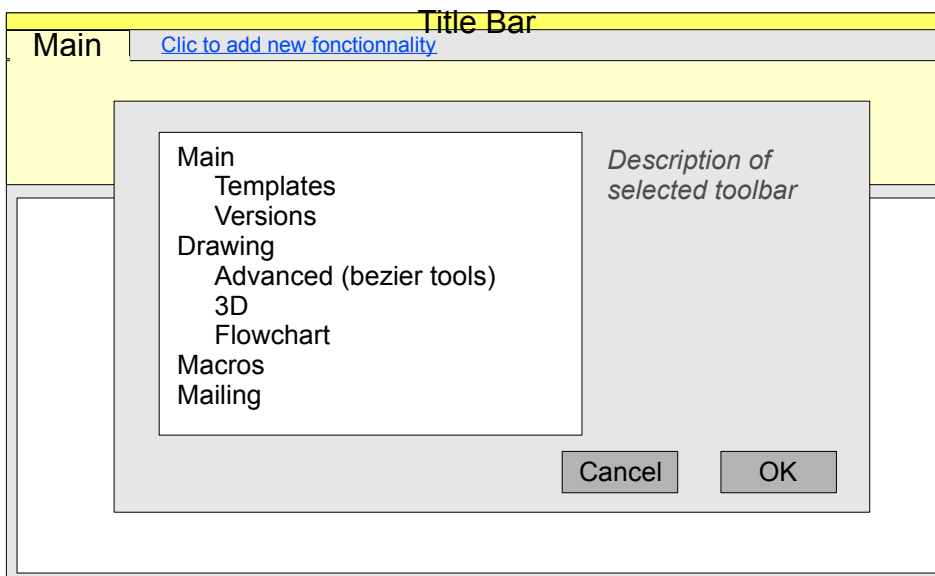


Or, if we consider that the main toolbar is always drawn like a tab, we can use the empty space next to the tab's name :



Finally, I find that second proposition more interesting : it's very clear, users don't have to guess (“where is that **** tool ???”) because it's explicitly written.

So, a panel should appear, with the list of available toolbars :



The panel should indicate which toolbars are already visible with checkboxes, it may allow to add several toolbar in one clic...

we can imagine that the list has 2 levels :

the second level would be some complements or modifications to the associated first level toolbar.

For example, a first level toolbar could be “Draw”, and an associated second level would be “3D objects”, another could be “Advanced” (Bezier tools...).

Complements could be installed by :

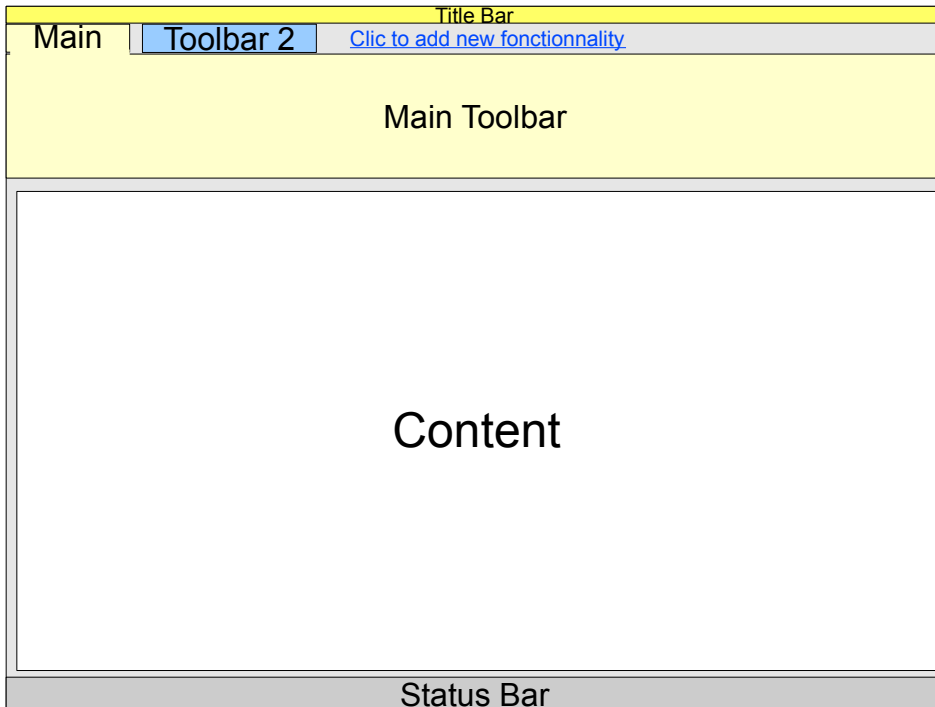
- adding new buttons

- modifying buttons
- removing buttons
- adding new popup menus items
- modifying popup menus items
- removing popup menus items

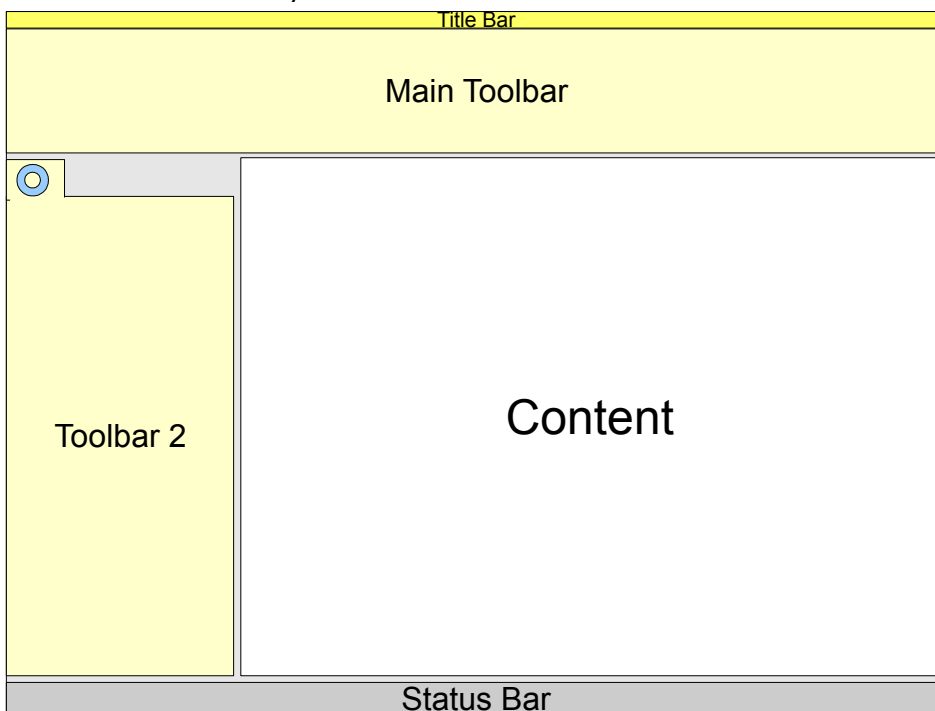
Toolbars can be added or vertically :

- horizontally : the main toolbar becomes a tab view
- vertically : a tab view on the left side of the window

toolbar added horizontally :



toolbar added vertically :

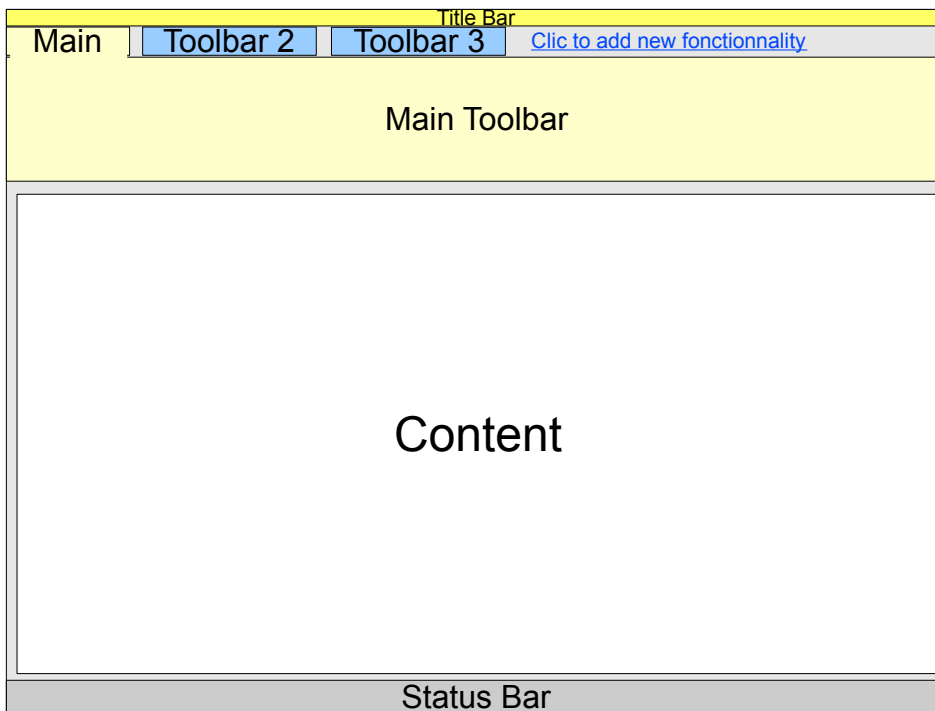


IMPORTANT NOTE :

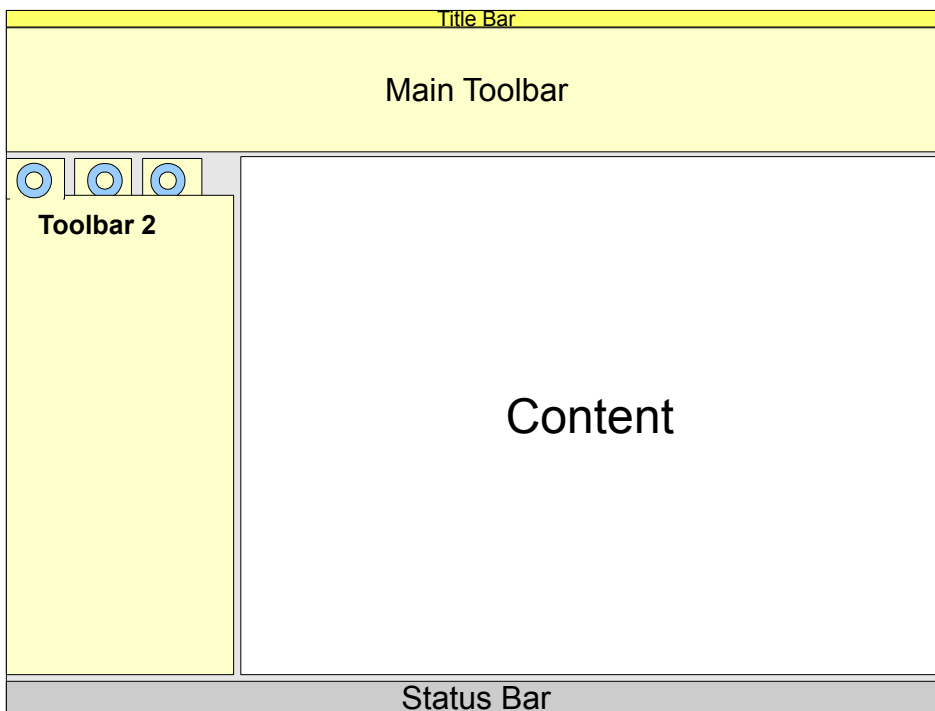
in the followings mockups, the main toolbar for vertical version has not a tab name : it's not a design decision, it's just a lack of time to modify the mockups...
It may be a subject of discussion : should the main toolbar have a tab ?

4.2.5 - multiple toolbar for small or standards screens

As the user adds more toolbars, they stay in their tab : it is ok for small or standards screens



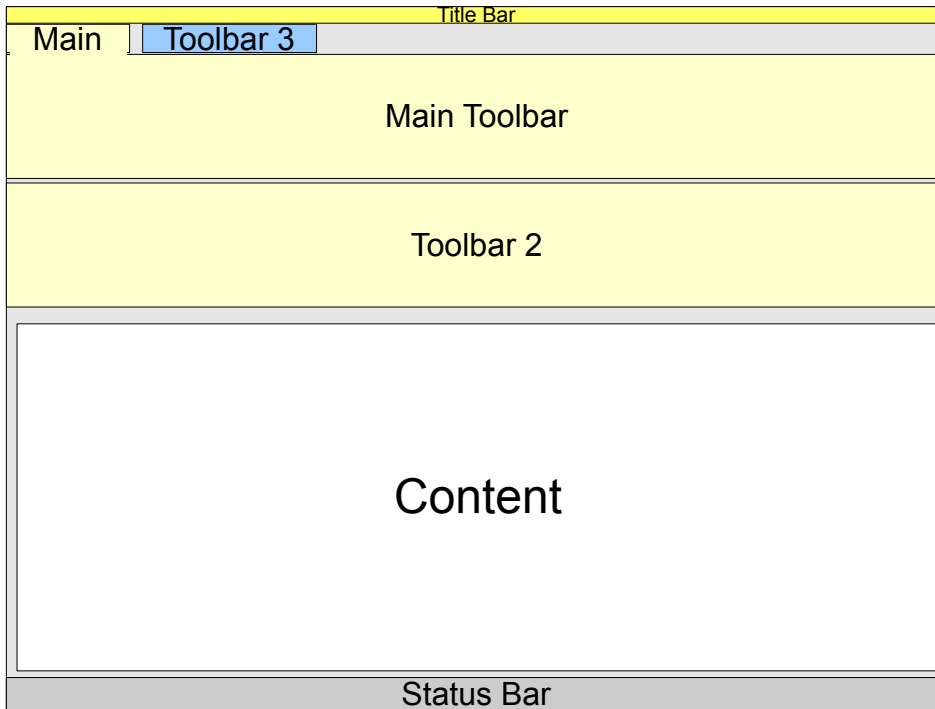
Vertical version :



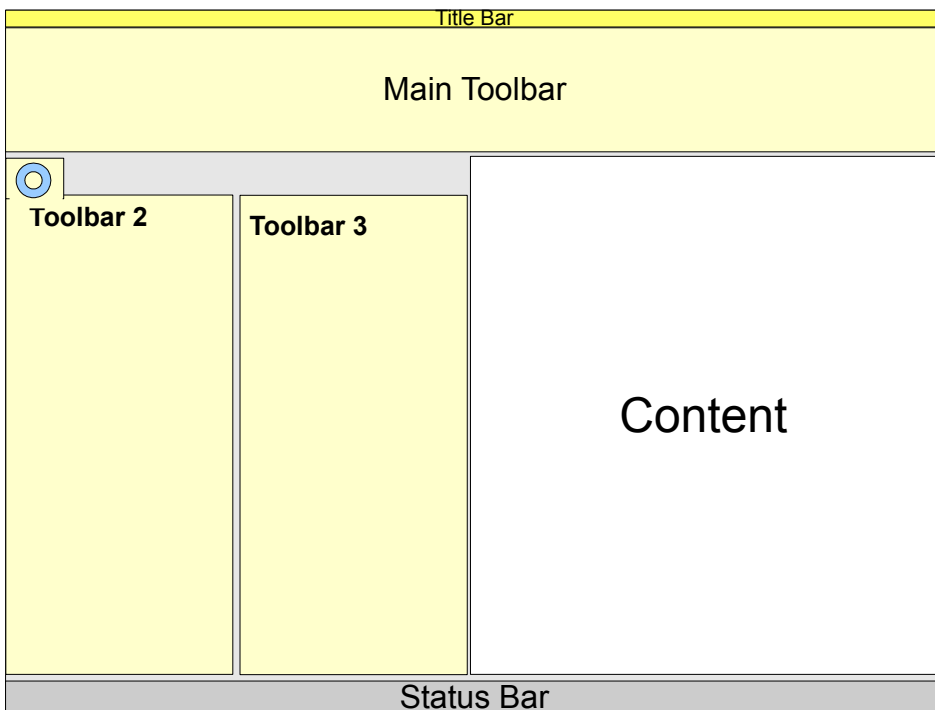
for the vertical toolbar, the tab shows only icons. They adapt their size to the width of the tab. The name of the toolbar is under the chosen icon.

4.2.6 - multiple toolbars for big screens

An option for big screens would be to allow some toolbars to have their own panel : a right clic and a context menu would allow to “detach” a toolbar
Horizontal version :



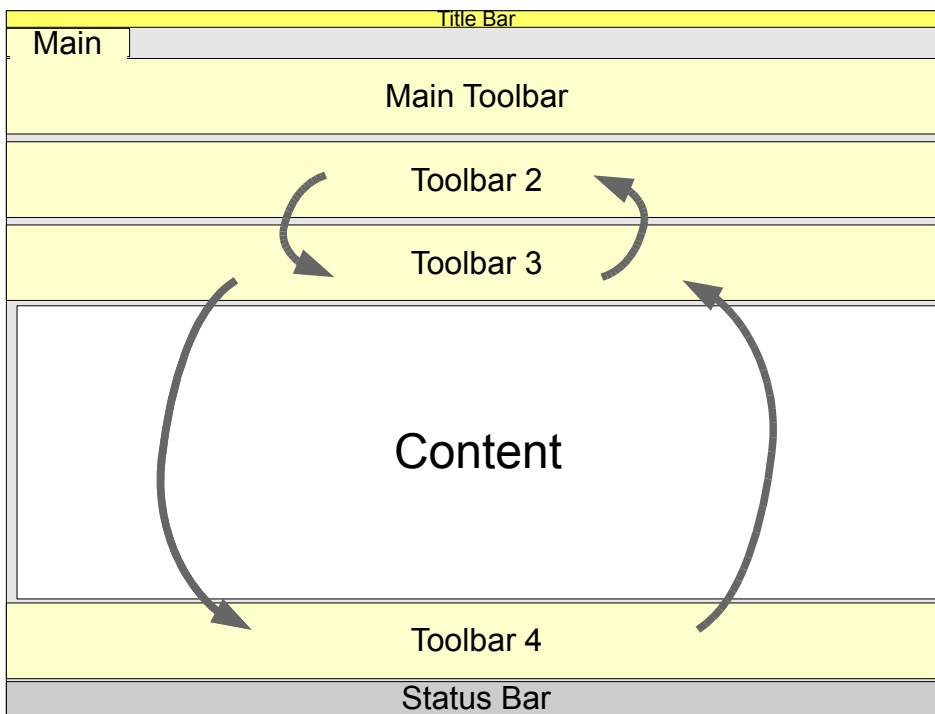
Vertical version :



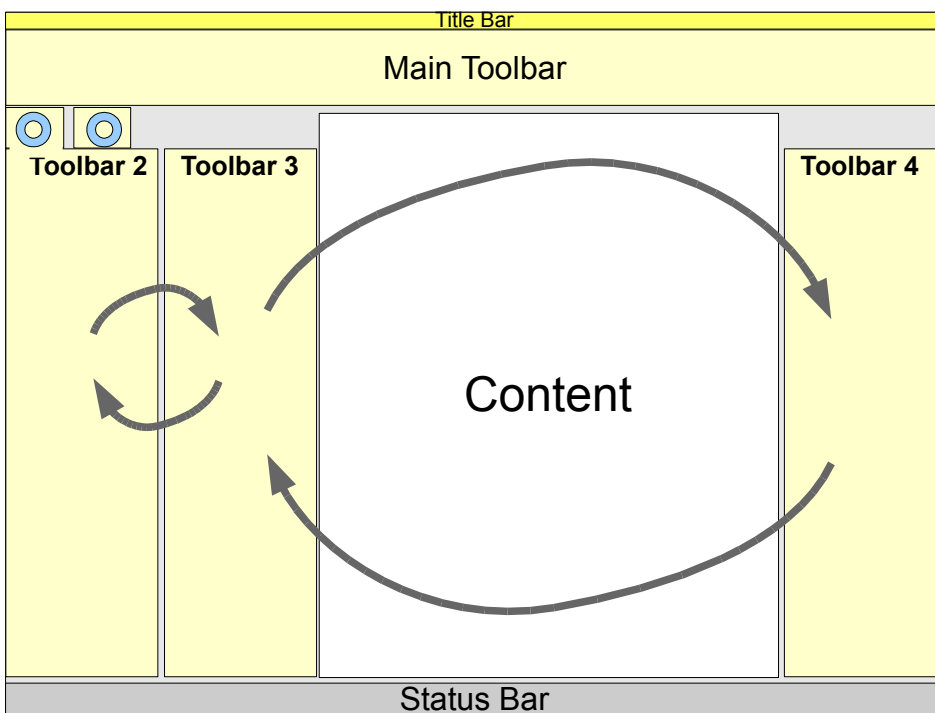
a detached toolbar could be attached again through the context menu.

4.2.7 - reorganize toolbars

After that, it would be possible to move horizontal toolbar up or down, and vertical toolbars left or right, with the context menu of each toolbar :

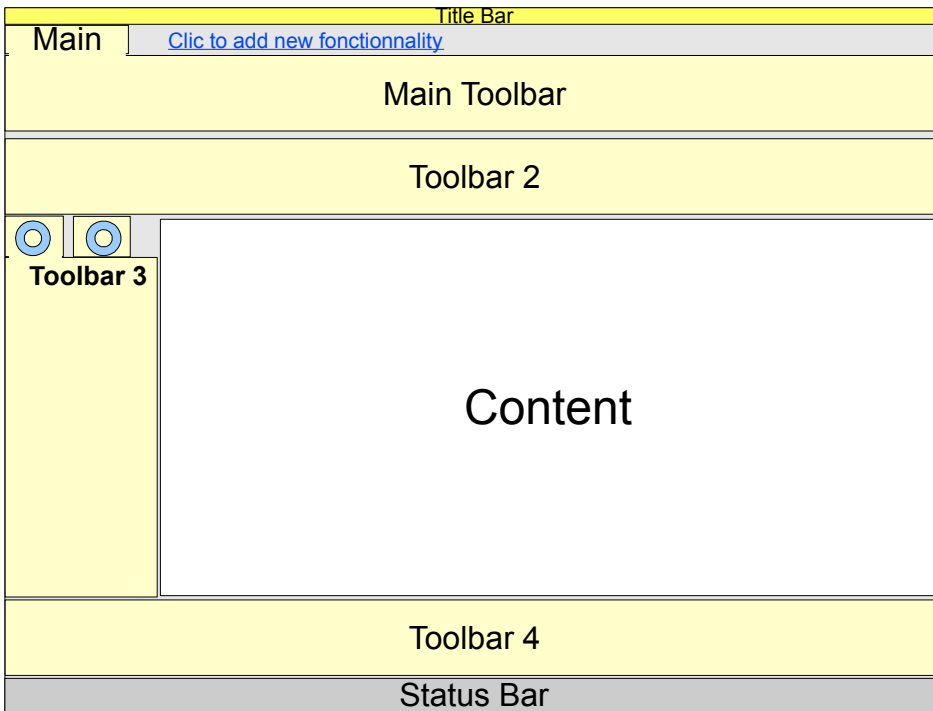


Vertical version :



4.2.8 - Horizontal and vertical toolbars

Finally, users with big screen sizes should like the possibility of mix :



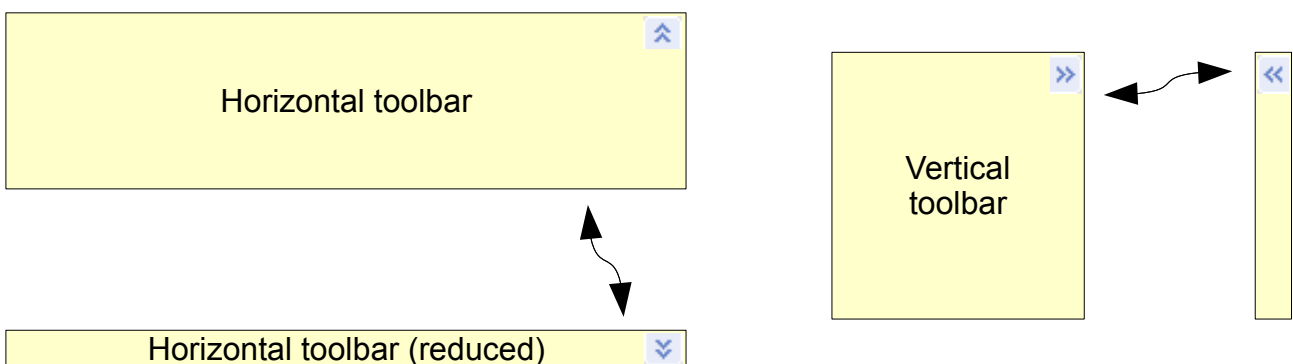
4.2.9 - Context menu for toolbars

Here is a example of context menu for toolbars :

- Detach
- Attach
- Transform horizontally (or vertically)
- -
- Move up (or Move left)
- Move down (or Move right)

4.2.10 - Showing/Reducing toolbars

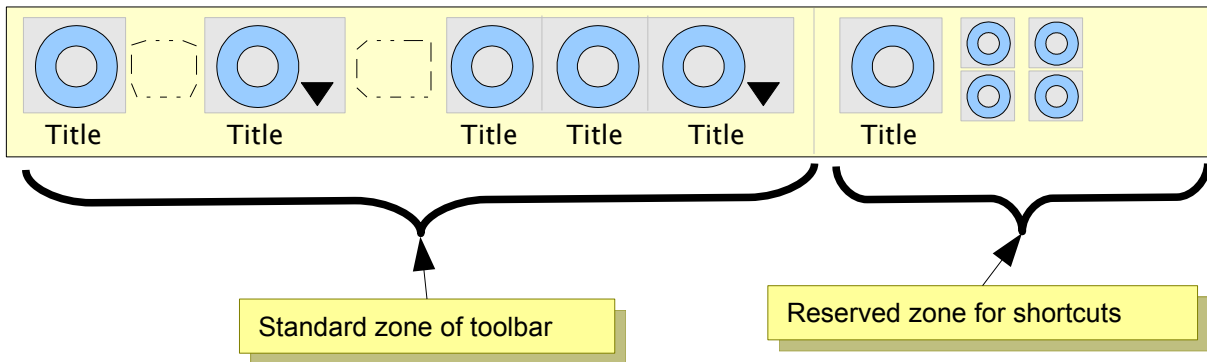
Every toolbar (except the main) has a little widget that allows to reduce/show the toolbar (thanks Google for the icon of the widget !). It may be at the top-right of the toolbar.. The icon changes if the toolbar is horizontal or vertical.



If you click on the reduce widget with a special key (ALT or CTRL), it reduces or shows all toolbars (except main of course).

4.2.11 - Enhancements for toolbars

Power-users should be able to customize their toolbar by adding shortcuts in a reserved zone of the toolbar. Shortcuts would be only single buttons (no popup menu.) and they could be in different sizes : standard or small.



4.3 - Properties panel

I suggest to separate the functionality of “actions” and “properties”.
The “actions” should be in toolbars, and properties should be in another panel.
It would be a kind of “inspector”.

The toolbars :

- are always visible, it's up to the user to show or hide them
- have always the same content
- their content is almost buttons : they allow to perform “actions”

example : “add a line in table”

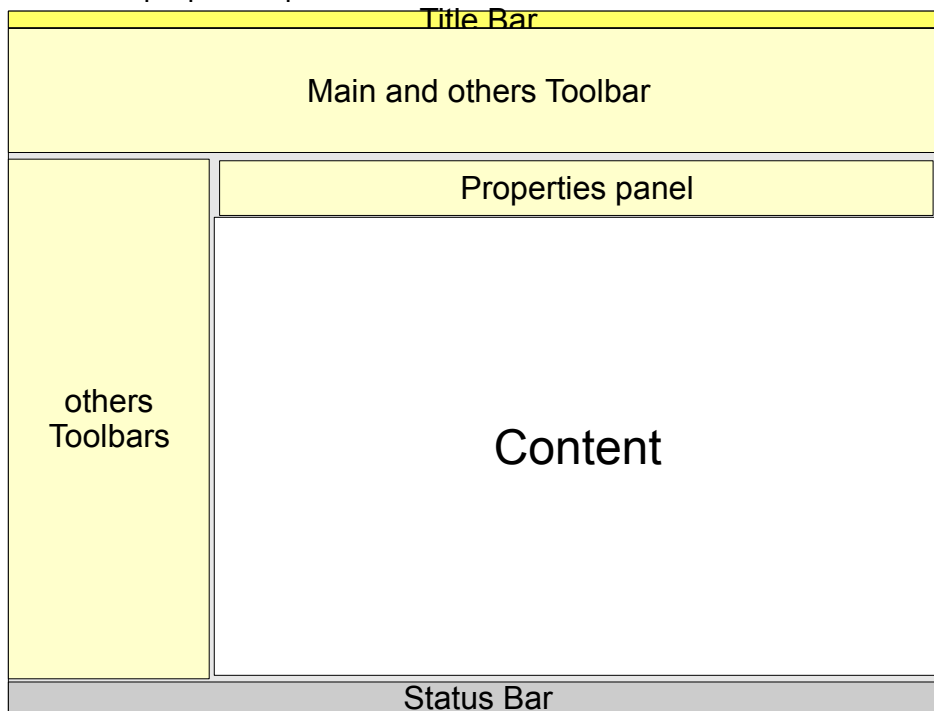
That properties panel :

- is context-sensitive : its content change according to the selected object
- their content allow the user to change the properties of the selected object

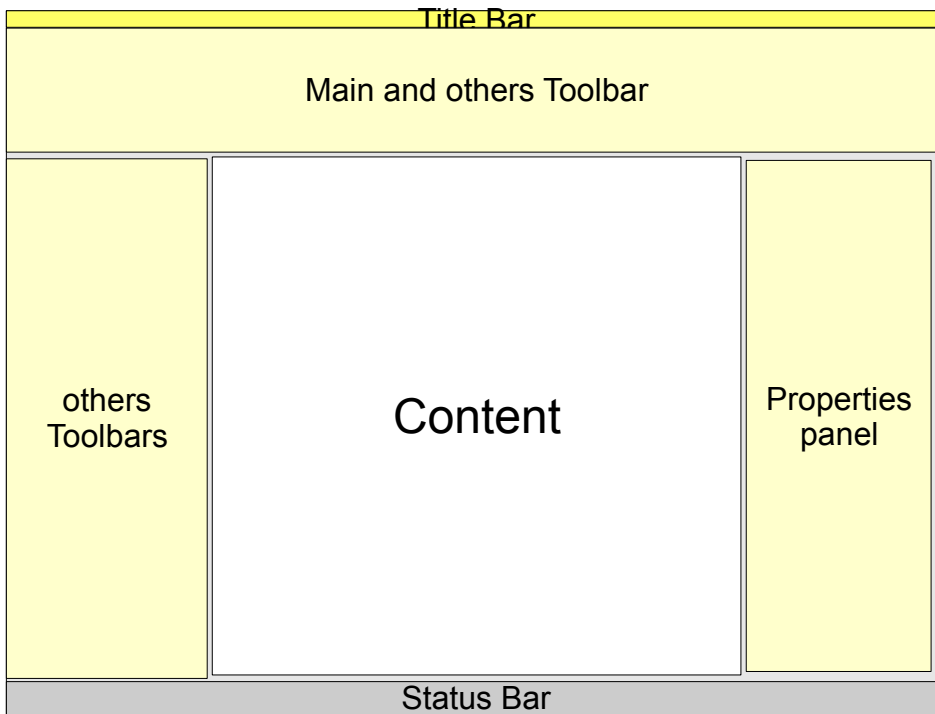
example : “change border of selected cells of table”

The properties panel should stay beside the content, but could be horizontal or vertical.
It should work as an inspector : no need to validate change, no modal behavior.

Horizontal properties panel :



Vertical properties panel :



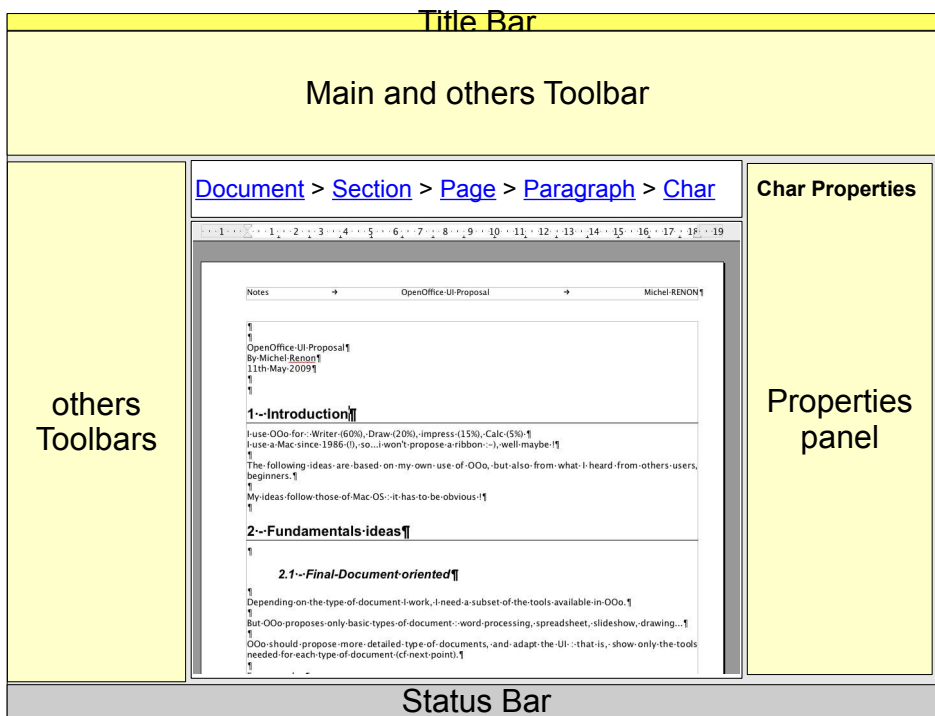
4.3.1 - Important question about selected objects

When working with properties panels, I taught “if the selected object is a character in Writer, how can I modify properties for the paragraph, or the page or the whole document ?”...

We have a hierarchy of objects, and we have 2 ways of managing their properties :

- the properties panel shows the properties of every object of the hierarchy (that's what usually done, for example in Word 2001 for Mac, or in Adobe software IIRC)
- we provide the user a way the view the hierarchy and to select one object : the properties panel shows only one object.

The second way interested me : and if we provide a kind of “breadcrumb” ?
It could look like that for a writer document :



questions

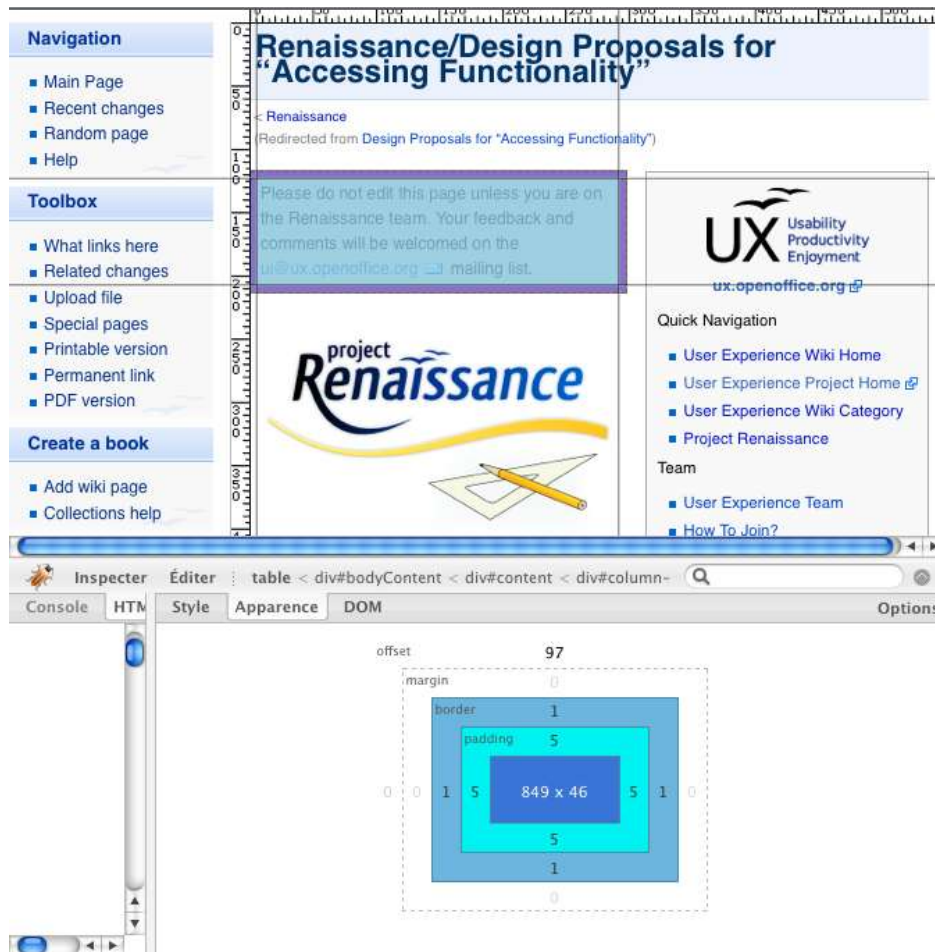
what should be the right place for the breadcrumb ?

- Above the content ?
 - pro : easy to understand the relation with the content,
 - cons : long mouse movements from breadcrumb to properties panel
- above the properties panel ?

Can we use the breadcrumb to show some additional informations ?

For example, why not reuse the concept of firebug (a Firefox extension) ? When the user move the mouse above an element in the breadcrumb, the associated part in the document is highlighted, with special colors for margins...

It may allow direct manipulation of margins, position...



*an example of Firebug on a web page :
the user has visual indication about margins, borders of a table*

This could be activated by a button at the left of right of the breadcrumb. It would be useful for power-users.



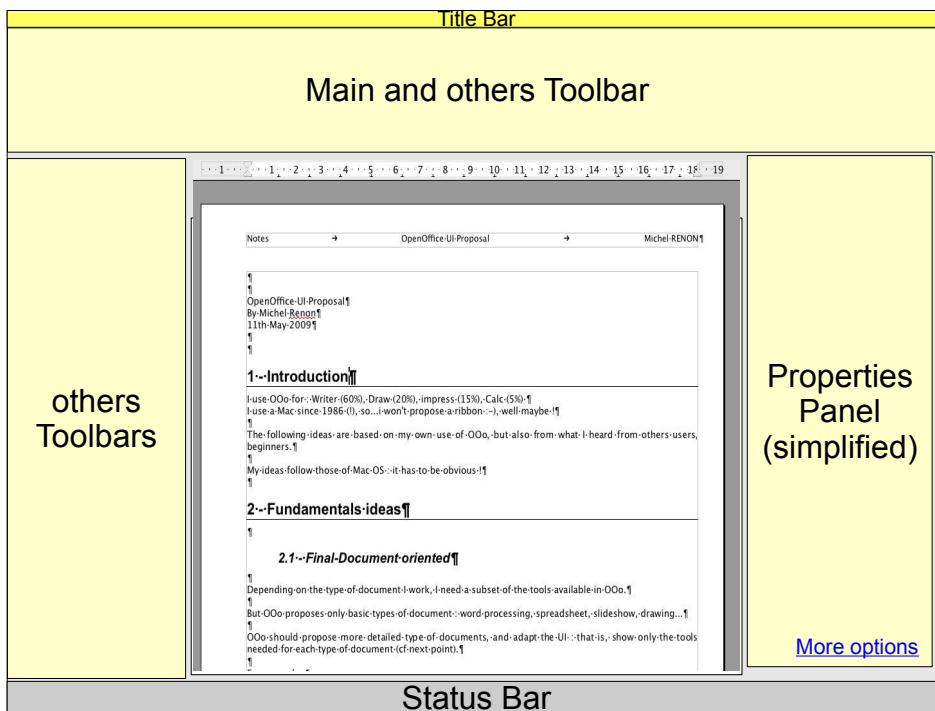
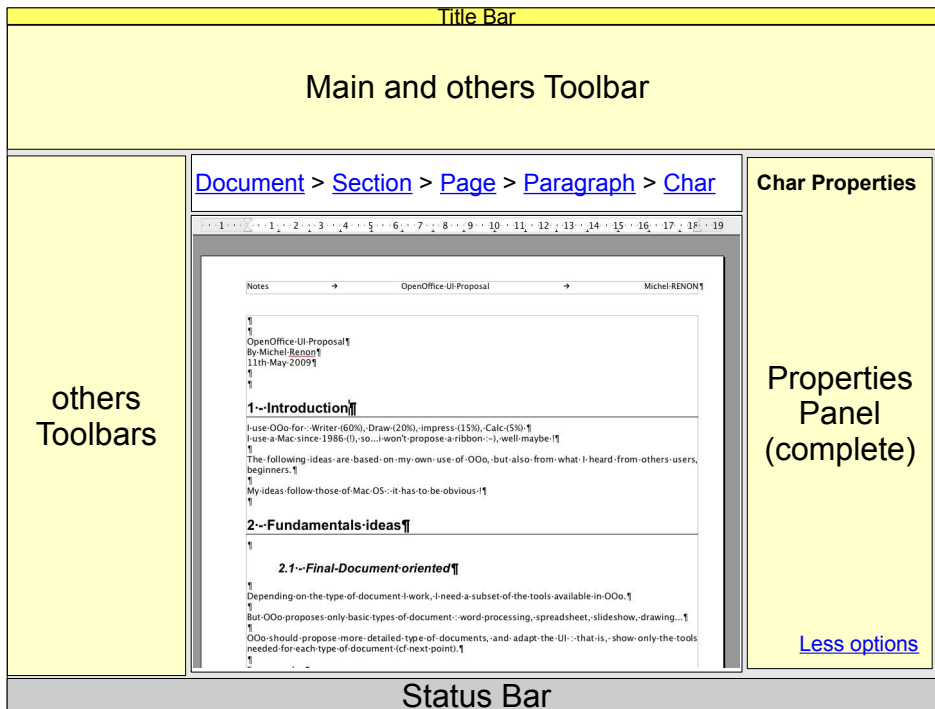
4.3.2 - But for beginners ?

With those reflexions, I had another questions : isn't it too complicated for beginners ? What can we propose for them ? Can we have one properties panel for all users ?

I arrived to the conclusion that it would be better to propose 2 versions of properties panel :

- a very simple for beginners
- a standard, complete for others

User would be able to switch from one to other with a simple link, for example at the top or bottom of the panel)



4.3.3 - Simplified version of properties panel

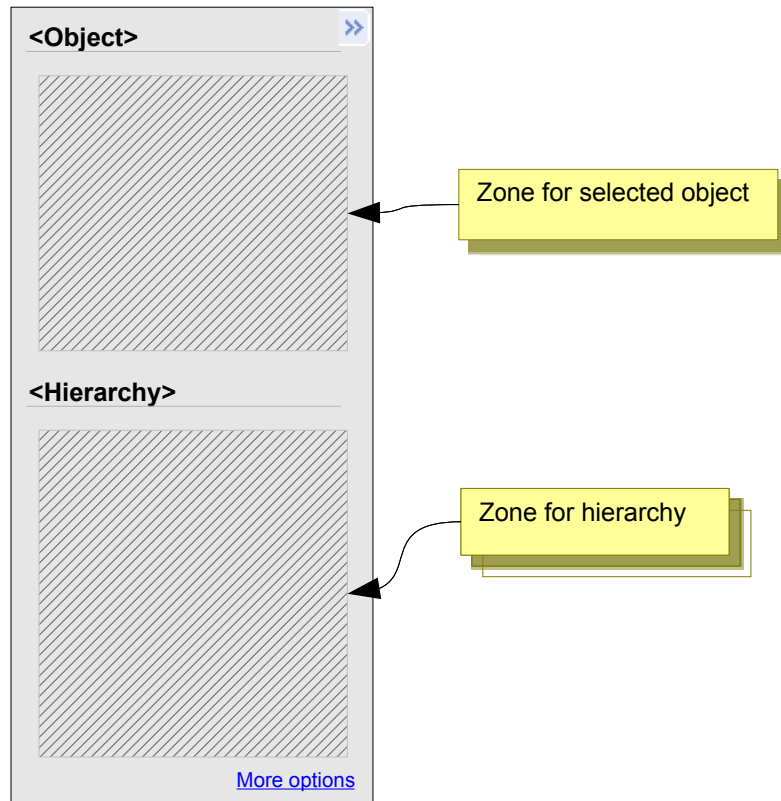
The idea is :

- to show only most important/used properties of objects
- to propose predefined templates (the best example is the new simplified table in Impress 3) instead of specialized values
- to show the hierarchy in one panel (no tabs, no hidden subviews...) : no need for a breadcrumb or similar

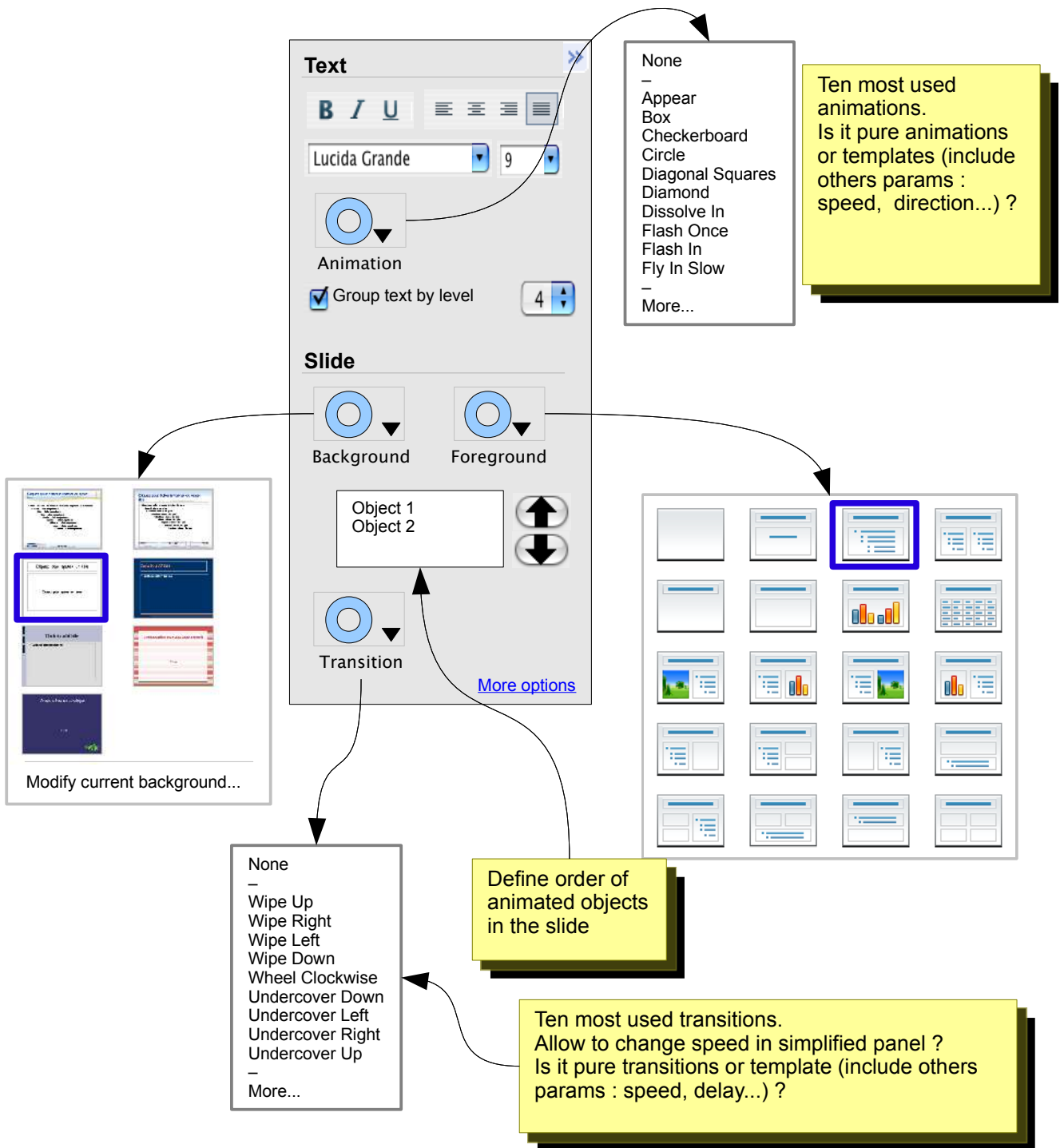
From a technical point of view, the panel would be composed of 2 parts (of fixed size):

- one about the current selected object (text, image, shape, table...)

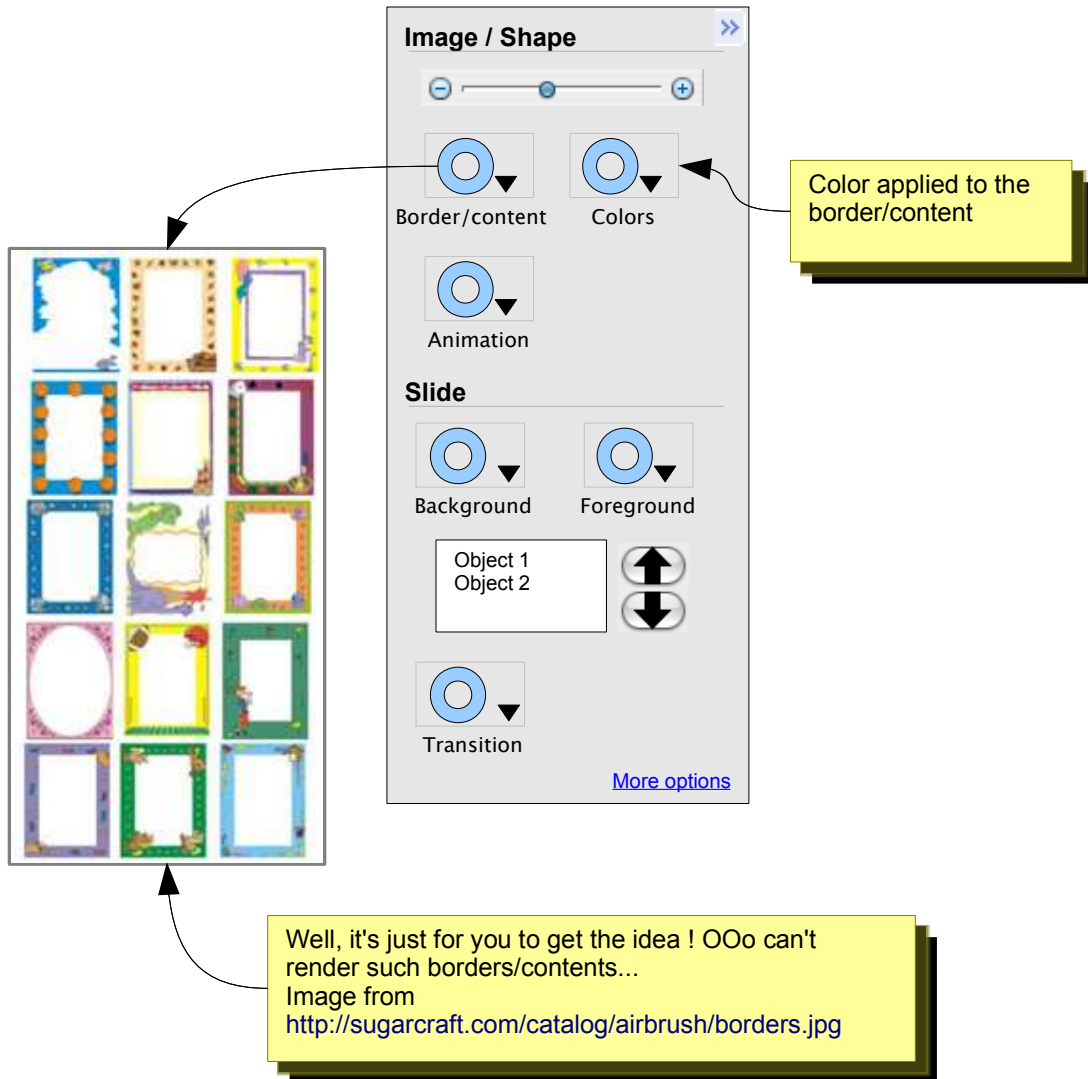
- the other about the hierarchy of the document :
 - for Impress : Slide, background
 - for Writer : page, document



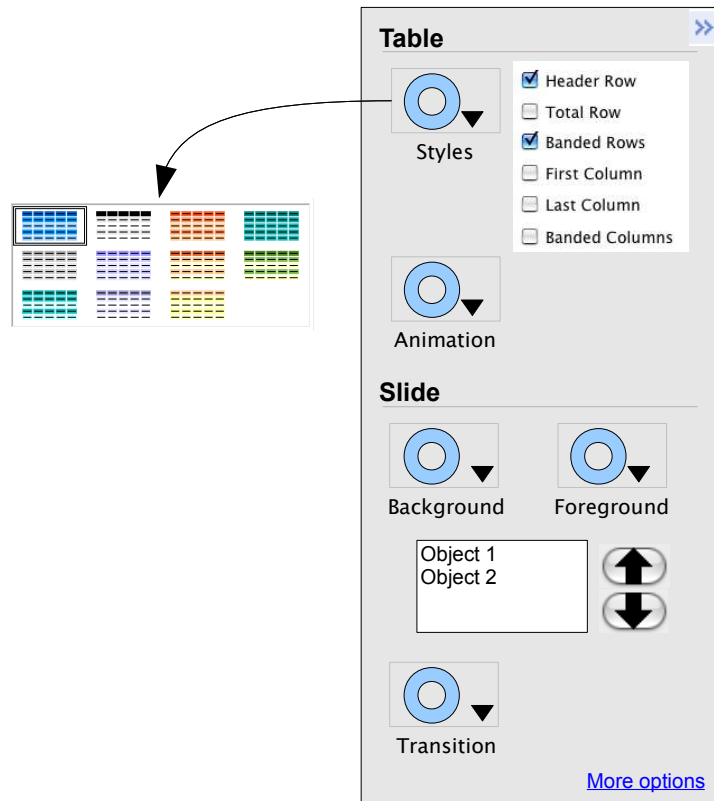
4.3.4 - Example : Text panel in Impress



4.3.5 - Example : Image / Shape pane in Impress



4.3.6 - Example : Table panel in Impress



4.3.7 - Example : Text panel in Writer

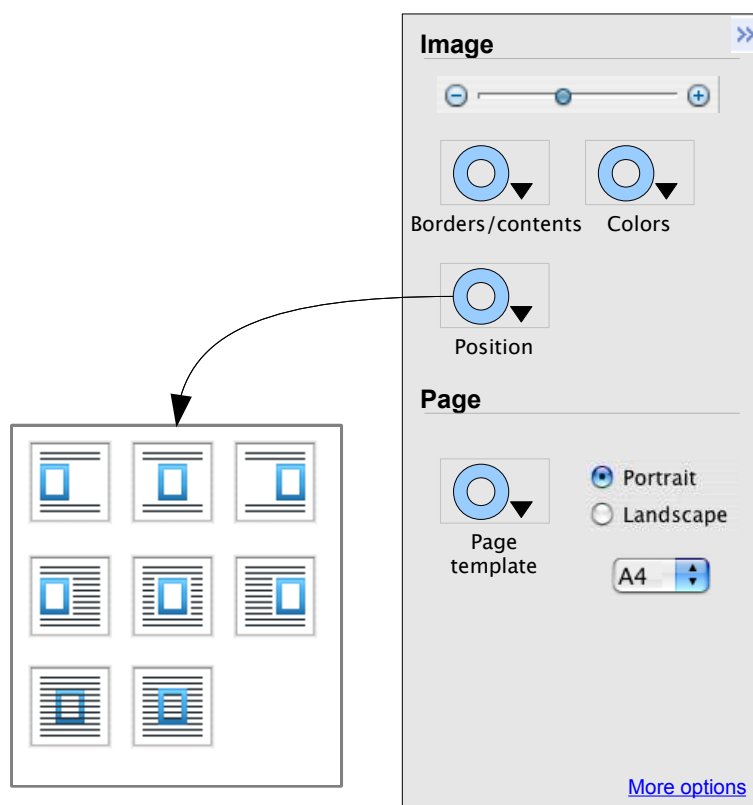
The image shows a screenshot of the 'Text' panel in OpenOffice Writer. The panel is divided into two sections: 'Text' and 'Page'. The 'Text' section includes bold (B), italic (I), and underline (U) buttons, followed by font face (Lucida Grande) and size (9) dropdowns. Below this is a 'Paragraph template' section with a circular icon and a dropdown arrow. The 'Page' section includes a 'Page template' section with a circular icon and a dropdown arrow, and orientation options: 'Portrait' (selected) and 'Landscape'. Below these is a paper size dropdown set to 'A4'. A 'More options' link is at the bottom right of the panel. Two arrows point from the 'Paragraph template' and 'Page template' icons to example pages. A yellow note box is positioned below the panel, containing text and two notes.

This example is not exact : it defines contents and it should not...
It's just to give an idea : to show predefined pages (size, margin, headers, footers, colors...)
This example comes from Word Mac...

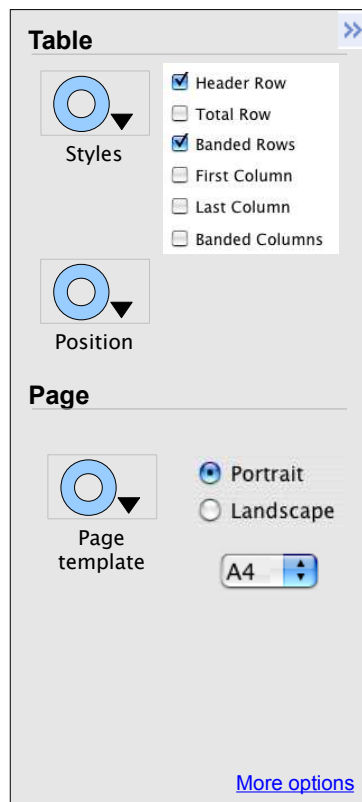
Note 1 : should the page template include orientation ?

Note 2 : OOo should insert/remove automatically special page break in order to change the current page's attribute

4.3.8 - Example : Image / Shape panel in Writer



4.3.9 - Example : Table panel in Writer

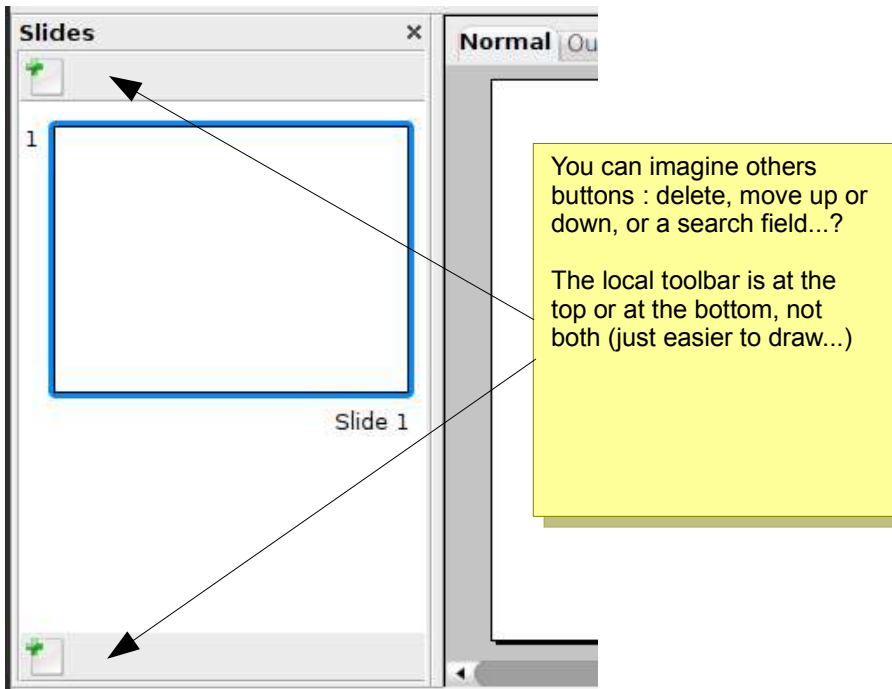


4.3.10 - Questions

- What about special cases ?
- edit text in a table ,
 - edit shape in writer
 -

4.3.11 - Local toolbars

In some very special cases, I suggest to use local toolbars :
for example, in Impress, under (or above) the slide list, there should be some simple toolbar, with “add slide”, “delete slide” buttons.



4.4 - Important question about MenuBar and Tabs

One of the hottest subject in last months of reflexion has been “tabs for document” : that is, reuse the concept of tabs introduced by Google Chrome.

One consequence is another question : what about the menu bar ?

About “tabs for documents”, I already proposed to keep that optional, for power-users.

Some of my friends are beginners with computers and I can tell you that they don't even know that tabs exists...and if I tell them “open that web page in a new tab”, I understand they get frightened !...

It's already difficult for them to manage several windows, don't oblige them to use tabs for documents.

About the menubar...

As a Mac user, I would say “there must be one” (every Mac app must have one, even if there are only the “application”, “file” and “edit” menu)

But after the first reflexions about toolbars, i'm not sure...

5 - Others Ideas

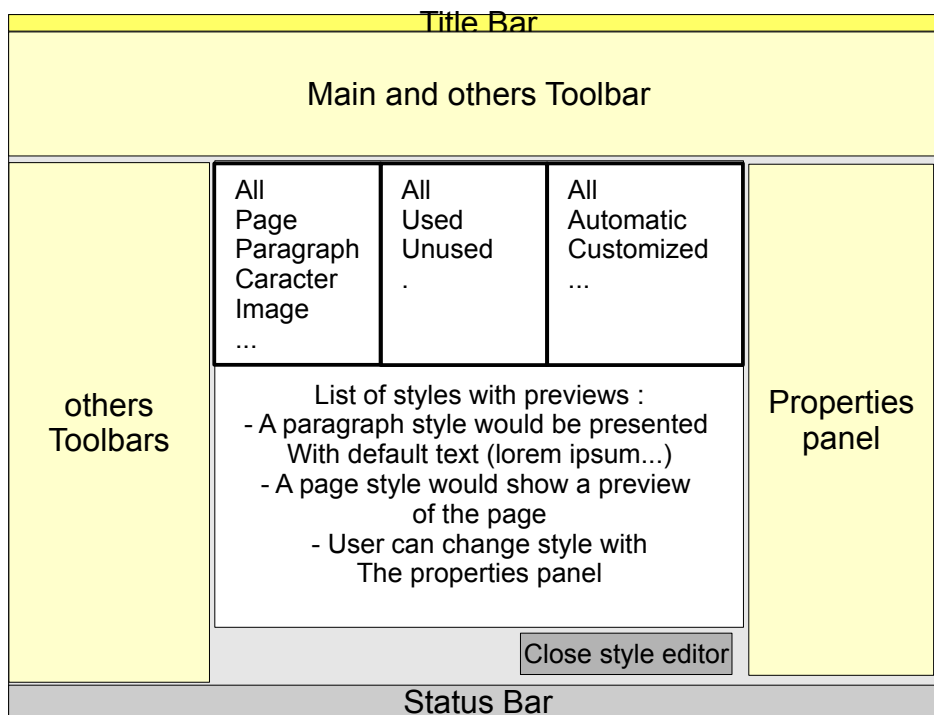
5.1 - Enhanced Styles

Important Note :

it's an idea specially for Writer, because I use a lot styles in Writer.
And I don't know if it may be useful for others...

I imagine a "style editor" that looks like the iTunes Browser !

Let's suppose there is a button "modify" just beside the "Style" menu.
When the user clicks on this button, the style editor pops :



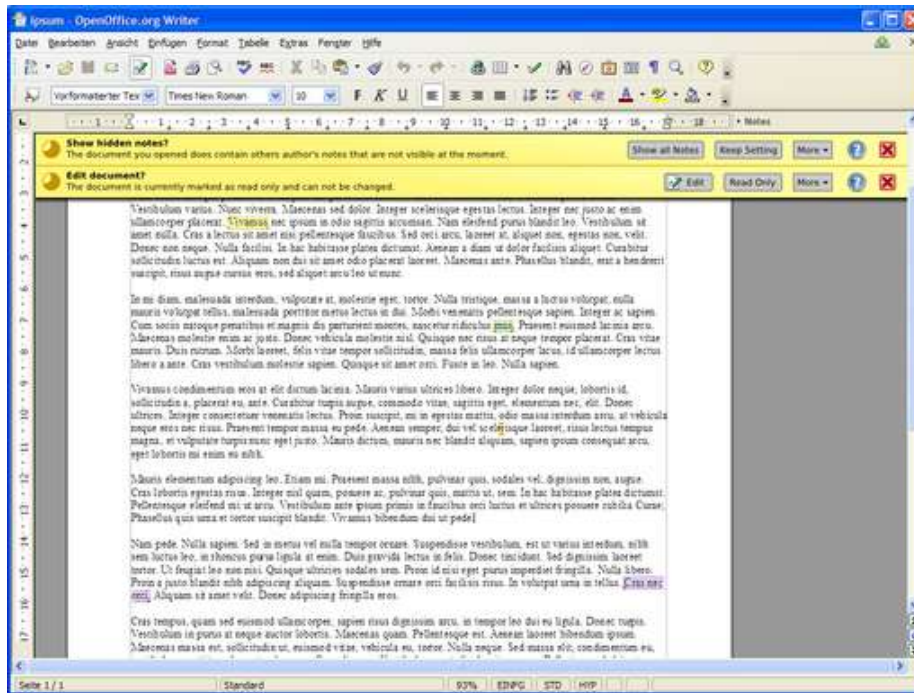
it is a very draft idea ! It needs some polishing...

Another draft idea : is the term "style" obvious ? What if we replace it by "template" ?
We would manipulate some "paragraph templates", some "pages templates"...

5.2 - In-window UI

I would suggest to change the UI of Search&Replace and to use something similar to Firefox.
That has already been proposed for OOO :

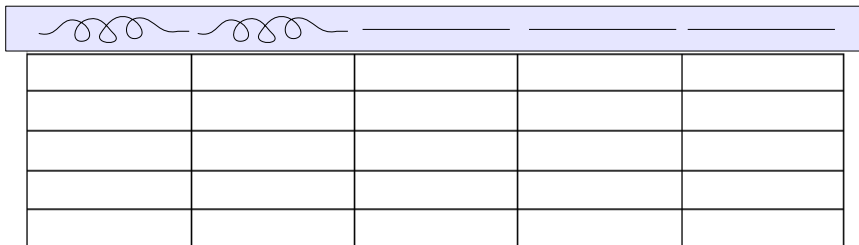
http://wiki.services.openoffice.org/wiki/User_Experience/DirectManipulationSnippets#Same_Functionality_For_The_Document



5.3 - Column resize

One of my biggest problems with table is column resize : it's difficult to manage them easily. I had an idea based on...Next's Interface Builder !!

Why not show some information about the state of columns (fixed size or dynamic size) through some simple icons : a spring or a simple fixed line ?



(sorry, I designed the spring myself !)

Just click on a spring or a line to switch : then when you resize, the behavior will be obvious...

But this brings a lot of questions :

- how and when does the header appear ? (at mouse hover, at mouse click in column separator, click on a special button...)
- How and when does it disappear ? (immediately on mouse out, a fade out after few seconds, click on a special button...)
- Where is it drawn when the table has a lot of rows ? (first row, current row, just above the mouse...)
-