



Drupal 7 vs. Drupal 8

**Which Drupal Version Will Help You
Conquer the World?**

ZAP!



Drupal 7 vs Drupal 8

In a match-up between a mature version that uses several contrib modules and one with multilingual superpowers built in, which Drupal version will help you conquer the world?

Introduction

The debate about which version is better--Drupal 7 or Drupal 8--is as hotly contested as Batman[®] vs Superman[®]. There are some striking similarities. Like Batman, Drupal 7 is older and requires several config modules to get the job done, but it exhibits reliable maturity and resourcefulness. Drupal 8 is bigger and more powerful with lots of built-in superpowers, like being multilingual ready.

In a match-up between these two Drupal versions, which one will help you defeat the challenges of website localization, improve automation and integration, and leap over dev obstacles big and small?

This e-book compares the capabilities and weaknesses of both Drupal 7 and Drupal 8, to help you determine which version has the power to help you take over the world.

Drupal is a PHP-based free, open source content management software created by Dries Buytaert in 2001. The Drupal community is one of the largest open source communities in the world, with 1.3 million members that actively contribute to create free modules and to customize its functionality. There are over one million Drupal websites. It is one of the world's most popular content management systems for managing large scale digital experiences in a number of industries, including healthcare, higher education, government, media and publishing.¹

Drupal 7



Drupal 7 Super Features

Drupal 7 has been consistently ranking as one of the most popular open source software platforms, because it is stable and mature with lots of modules, features, and configurations that offer strong support.

Maturity

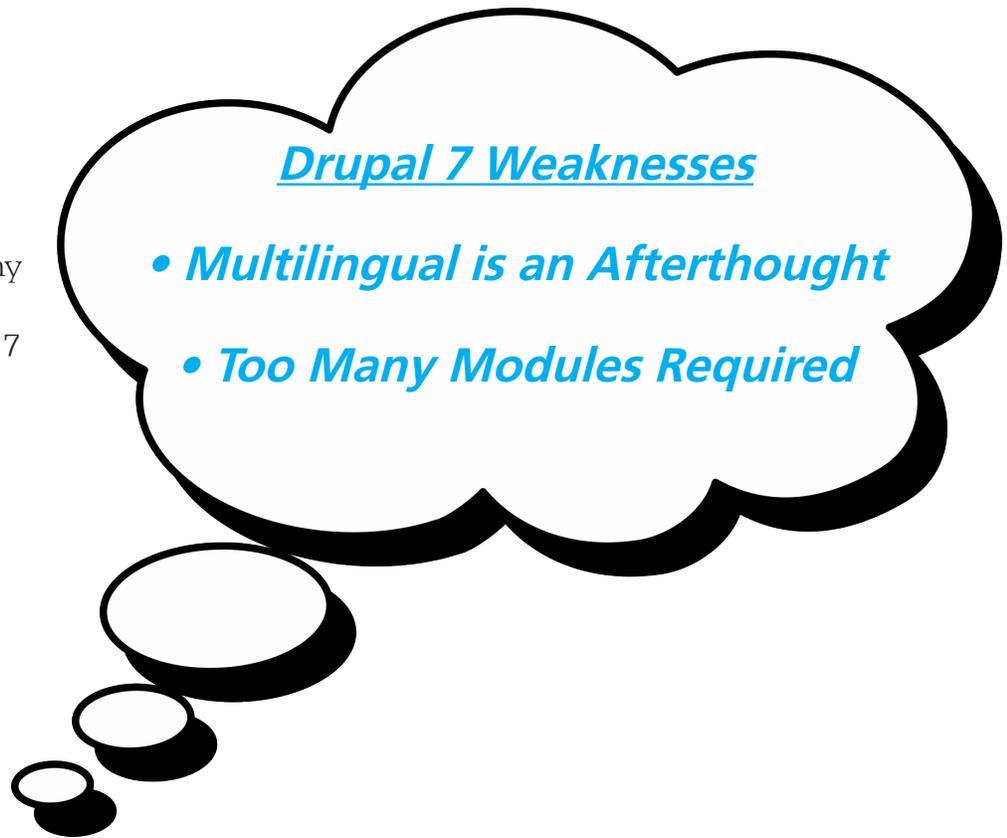
Batman experts estimate that Bruce Wayne is about 32 years old. While Batman isn't old, he's not exactly the youngest superhero in the DC Comics line up. The same is true of Drupal 7. Drupal 7 was released in 2011, which in terms of software is considered "mature." Drupal 7's maturity is one of the things users like most about it. It's proven, very stable, and reliable.

Stable Modules

Drupal 7 has a six-year head start on Drupal 8, so it's had more time to develop stable modules. In addition, its architecture is more similar to Drupal 6, so it was easier to port modules from 6 to 7. Drupal 8 is completely re-architected so the migration gap is larger. Drupal 7 supports a wide array of stable, mature modules, so both--users who are new to HTML and experienced web developers--have lots to choose from. While this offers maximum flexibility, it's both a blessing and a curse (see Drupal 7: Known Weaknesses) because Drupal 7 requires too many modules, especially when it comes to translating content.

Support

For now, Drupal 7 is the “Long Term Support” version of Drupal. “Drupal 8 may have years of development ahead.” It won’t get any new features, but it will continue to get bug fixes until October 2017 and official security support up until 2020.²



Drupal 7 Know Weaknesses

Multilingual is an Afterthought

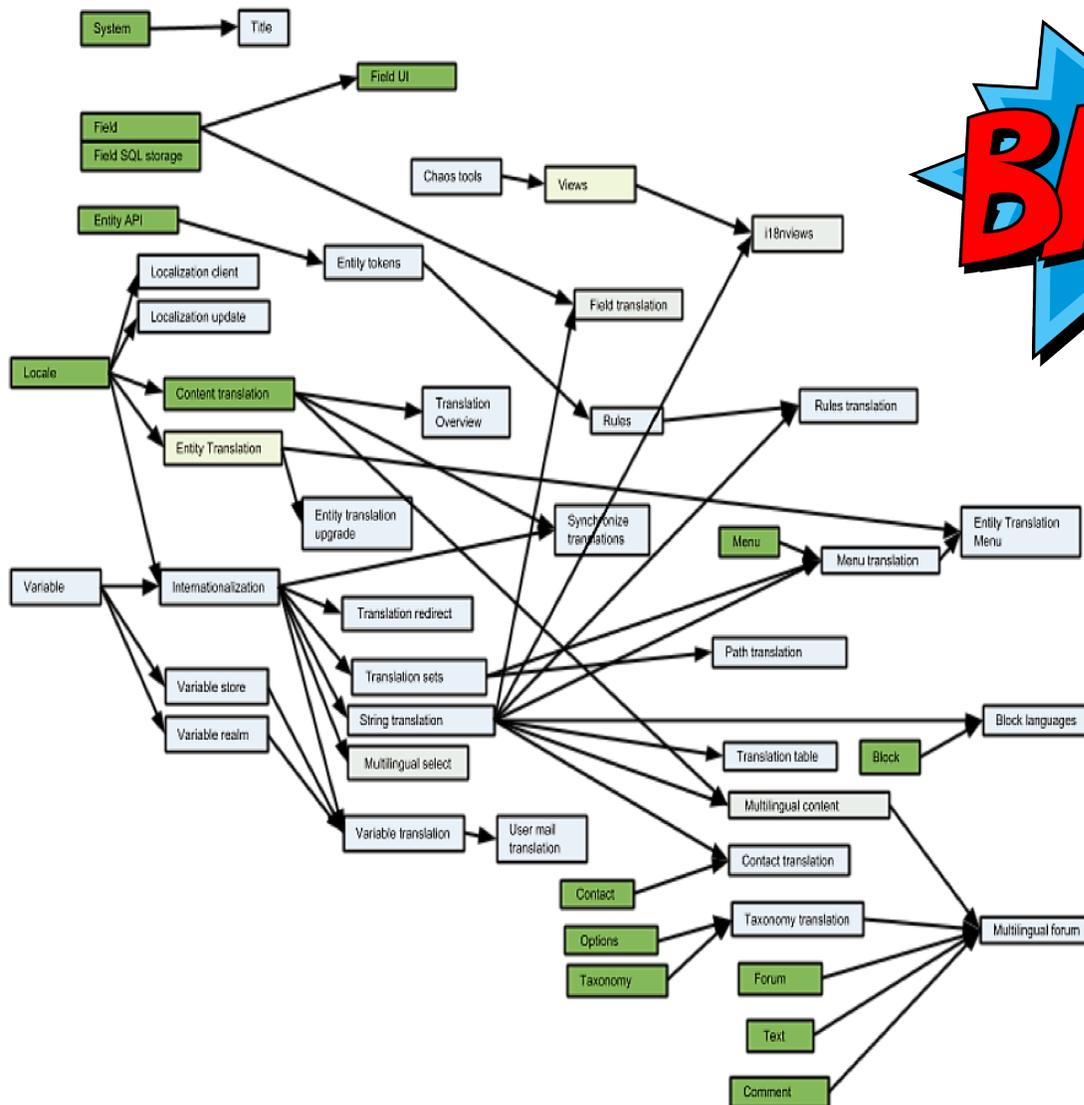
Drupal 7 is a very stable and well-used platform and it supports a wide array of use cases, but it wasn’t built with multilingual in mind. Drupal 7 has earned a reputation for being complex when creating multilingual sites.

The core has limited support for localization, so you need a lot of contributed modules to make a site multilingual ready. Locale is in core, and you can translate your interface with it, but soon you need other contributed modules like localization update (l10n_update), the internationalization suite (i18n), the variable module, or entity translation, to name a few.

Creating a truly multilingual site in Drupal 7 has been a real challenge for Drupal developers. It requires navigating several options and building a strategy for rollout that is extremely time-intensive. Its weakness is the maze of its multilingual workflow (see diagram below).

Too Many Modules

Drupal 7 Multilingual Workflow



You need to install multiple contributed modules for fields, built-in web services, drag and drop file upload, and have to install various modules for authoring functionality. The multilingual modules for Drupal 7 turn into a huge maze of different modules that interact with each other:

- If you want to translate your blocks, you need to involve the entity module.
- If you want to translate emails that are sent out to users, you need to involve the variable modules.
- If you want to translate your views, that's a separate module.
- If you want to translate content, there's a core solution.

If you want to make a multilingual website in Drupal 7, you end up with a maze of different modules. You can make a lot of things multilingual with these modules, but the complexity of how the modules work together takes a lot of work to figure it out.



- *Multilingual Ready*
- *Mobile Ready*
- *Responsive*
- *Simplified Integration*
- *Intuitive Architecture*
- *Built-in Fields & Configs*
- *Improved Editing*
- *User Interface*

Drupal 8

Drupal 8: Born with Superpowers

Batman has to rely on several state-of-the-art crime-fighting tools, but Superman was born with superpowers, and so was Drupal 8. It has several new superpowers that are available right out of the box: multilingual readiness, it's mobile friendly, it has the benefits of HTML 5, and simplified integration. It also offers Twig architecture, built-in fields and configs, improved editing (CKEditor, quick edit, image editor), and an easy to navigate User Interface (UI).

Multilingual Ready

The Drupal 8 Multilingual Initiative made multilingual features a priority for this release, improving the ability to assign languages to any content or configuration, along with the improvements in the APIs and user interfaces for localizing and translating sites. It has language, interface, content, and config support. Language support is built in across the system and includes a specific area for interface. There is one solution that applies to everything in content and in config, one solution that applies to everything in core and also whatever contributed module that you add on top.

Mobile Ready & Responsive

Drupal 8 is designed so that its themes are mobile ready. It is responsive and can adjust to any screen size. Drupal 7 views and themes are non-responsive, while Drupal 8's REST API is responsive on any device and the themes that ship with core are responsive.³

Simplified Integration



HTML5

Drupal 8 has the advantage of HTML 5, which is available natively and offers a number of APIs that help create web applications. It is better for SEO, because you can add more metadata to tags and it is easier to code. HTML 5 also allows for more semantic markup.

Robust APIs

Drupal 8 has some of the 7/6 APIs, but also adds many news ones. The APIs are more robust and make it easier to integrate with existing technologies, like email, CRM, and more.

Architecture

Drupal 8 is built on Twig, a new PHP-based theming engine. It's fast, intuitive, and makes it easier to create beautiful websites. Because Twig is built on top of PHP, it is more robust and offers more opportunity for cross sharing.

Symfony

Drupal has adopted some Symfony components for version 8: HttpFoundation, HttpKernel, Routing, EventDispatcher, DependencyInjection, and ClassLoader. This will make it more interoperable and Drupal 8 will get the benefits of any enhancements to Symfony. Because it is built on Symfony using PHP components and a PHP framework for web projects, it makes it easier and quicker to build modules in Drupal 8.

Built-In Fields & Configs

Drupal 8 comes with five completely new field types: Email, Date, Link, Reference, Telephone. Simplified configuration management lets you easily migrate information from a test environment to a live site. These new fields and configurations make website development simpler and easier.

Pages that load faster than a speeding bullet

In the Batman versus Superman movie, the Batmobile gets a serious upgrade. It uses top civilian and prototype military technology to reach speeds of up to 205 MPH. Superman is faster! He travels faster than a speeding bullet, which tops out at 1,700 MPH.



In this Drupal match up, Drupal 8 wins with greater page loading speed. The new caching feature in Drupal 8 caches all entities and loads Java scripts only when needed. When a web page is loaded, you don't have to load the content again, so you get page speeds that are superhero fast.

Improved Editing

In Drupal 8, it is easy to create and edit a basic page. It requires at least six modules to do that in Drupal 7. It has CKEditor for easier text edits and more visibility to create and display content. A WYSIWYG editor and in-place editing help you to quickly create formatted content and make changes on the fly.⁴

Easy Access User Interface

Batman's good looks are hidden behind a mask, but like Superman, Drupal 8 has nothing to hide. Its user interface (UI) features a beautiful display that is more intuitive and easy to navigate. New UI elements include modal dialogs and drop buttons.

Drupal 8 Know Weaknesses

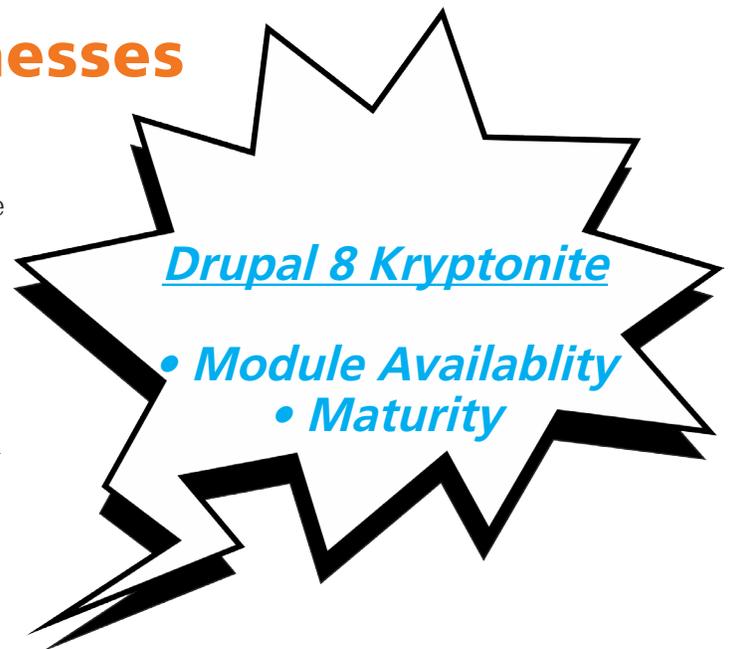
Module Availability

It is going to take some time, probably a year before Drupal 8 will achieve feature parity with Drupal 7. There may be a lack of availability of many contrib modules for Drupal 8 now, but that will change. Luckily, this known weakness is only temporary and will improve as Drupal 8 matures. The key to improving the number of modules that work in Drupal 7 to work in Drupal 8, will involve porting to improve functionality and presentation.

Maturity

Comic book experts estimate⁵ that Superman is about 2-4 years younger than Batman. Drupal 7 was released in 2011 and Drupal 8 was released in 2015, so like Superman, Drupal 8 is also a few years younger!

While Drupal 8 may be less mature, it will continue to acquire sizable advances at a new, faster cadence. The Drupal community is committed to a continuous innovation model. Instead of having to wait for years to get new features, every six months there will be a release. Drupal 8.1.0 and 8.2.0 were released in 2016, and release 8.3.0 came out in April 2017. The next is expected later this year.



Conclusion

Same Goal, Different Methods

When asked to describe the conflict between Batman and Superman, the actor who played Superman, Henry Cavill said this: Superman and Batman are “two sides of the same coin. They have the same goal, but use very different methods to achieve it. Understandably, that leads them to clash with one another....” Drupal 7 and Drupal 8 are both part of the world’s most popular content management system for managing large scale digital experiences. They share the same goal--helping “launch, manage, and scale ambitious digital experiences” -- but the difference is the tools and methods they offer to achieve it.



Migrating from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8

Like the debate over Batman versus Superman, many Drupal users have strong opinions about which is better--Drupal 7 or Drupal 8. But one thing is clear: Drupal 8 is the future. Batman is a mere mortal after all. The level of innovation and improved functionality available in each new release will be hard to ignore.

It’s time to upgrade to Drupal 8. Drupal 6 has already migrated to Drupal 8. The community is close to migrating Drupal 7 to Drupal 8. If you have an existing Drupal 7 site, consider migrating to Drupal 8 before Drupal 9 is released, it will be a lot easier.

The Future is Global

Multilingual web content is critical to engage a global audience that wants to search, shop, and buy in their own language. If you want your site to resonate with consumers around the world, it’s time to go multilingual, and with the superpowers of the Drupal 8 version, it’s easier than ever.

In the Batman versus Superman movie, there’s a quote on Superman’s chest. It says (in Krypton): “Where we had thought to stand alone, we will be with all the world.” The Drupal 8 version, with its built-in multilingual superpower, makes it easier than ever to “be with all the world” when creating content for a global audience. To conclude the battle of Drupal 7 versus Drupal 8, there is one more Superman quote that offers a relevant summary: “There is a superhero in all of us, we just need the courage to put on the cape.” For your Drupal site, it could be changed just a little:

***“There is a superhero in all of us,
we just need the courage to upgrade to 8.”***

– DrupalSup

1. Drupal.org About page. <https://www.drupal.org/about>.
2. Batman. Who’s older Batman or Superman (age). Comic Vine. <https://comicvine.gamespot.com/batman/4005-1699/forums/whos-older-batman-or-superman-age-587872/>
3. When is Drupal 7 End-of-Life? Steve Burge. OSTraining. 2017. <https://www.ostraining.com/blog/drupal/drupal-7-end-of-life/>.
4. Drupal 7 vs Drupal 8 Infographic. Alpha. 2016. <https://alphawebgroup.com>