

ruby-doc.org: now and the future

ruby-doc.org

There's this Web site ...

rubyconf.new(2004)

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What is it?

- Web site devoted to Ruby documentation
- Edited and administrated by James Britt
- But the important content is provided by many others
 - Blame me for errors and omissions
 - Thank those providing documentation

Some Quick History

- **Ruby Documentation Project**
- Born from a thread on ruby-talk wherein a Python user described attempts use the language and win Ruby converts, but was stymied by a lack of documentation.
- After prolonged ruby-talk thread, Jim Freeze stepped up to help organize a Ruby Document Projecti
- Goals were clarified during the Seattle RubyConf in 2002
- ruby-doc.org launched in December of 2002 to host current core documents and provide pointers to other documentation

Version Zero

- Basic features
 - Links to mailing list
 - Links to on-line Programming Ruby
 - Links to know documentation
 - Periodic news postings
 - Aside from the front page, content was hand-authored

Version Zero Point Something

- Ruby documentation bundle
 - Assembled by Gavin Sinclair
 - Excellent work, though parts of it may be increasingly obsolete
- URL Queries
 - Idea stolen from PHP site
 - Retrieve ri or pickaxe content using simple URLs

Zero Point Something or Other

- Documentation for the Standard Library
 - Thanks again to Gavin Sinclair
 - Wrote docs for standard lib, organized others to pitch in
 - Wrote code to automate documentation creation and upload to ruby-doc.org

Tastes Great, More Filling

- Site has acquired more content over time
 - EuRuKo 2003 videos
 - Translations of Ruby tutorials in French and German
- Take a tour ...

Problems :(

- Some current, um, "issues"
 - ri look-up is broken
 - Need to update the code due to changed in current version of ri
 - Hard to find stuff
 - Google is probably your best bet, but has shortcomings
 - Hard to add stuff
 - Adding a new item often means repeating the data

Biggest Issue



Current Goals

- Help James be lazy
 - Remove need to duplicate information
 - Replace most hand-coded content with automagically generated pages
 - Have new content appear without James having type anything
 - If James has to actually add content, at least reduce the amount of effort involved

Facets and Metadata

- (Most) Web log tools make you think too much
 - Biggest issue: Must pick a category
 - Content gets forced into narrow slots

Automatic Categorization

- Stole ideas from others
 - Jon Udell
 - http://www.infoworld.com/article/04/01/30/05OPstrategic_1.html
 - [http://udell.infoworld.com:8000/?//*\[contains\(@class,'code'\)andcontains\(@class,'python'\)\]](http://udell.infoworld.com:8000/?//*[contains(@class,'code')andcontains(@class,'python')])
 - David Gelernter
 - http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/gelernter/gelernter_p1.html

Basic Idea

- Add smarter data
 - Let software figure out what to do with it
- Markup blog entries with topic and facet metadata
 - I like `Ruby`
 - Works OK, but can tough to pick the right metadata.

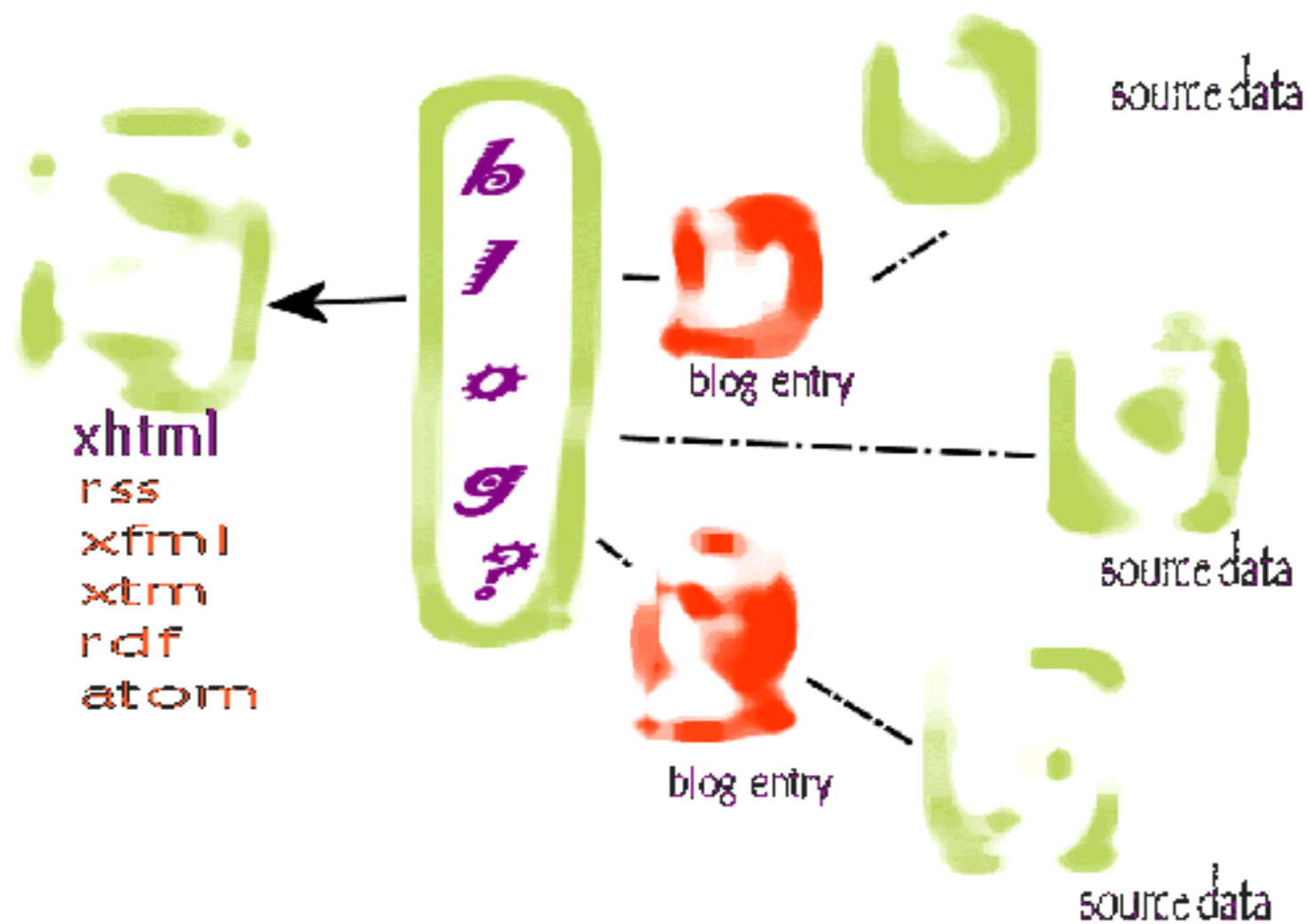
Post-modern Blogging



Annotated View

- Short log entries point to (possibly) external data
- Entries (typically) provide metadata rather than content
- Provides fodder for aggregated results

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What we can get

- Metadata allows site code to emit XFML
 - Exchangeable Faceted Metadata Language
 - <http://xfml.org/>
 - Simple format for defining classification and indexing data
 - Example facets: Date, programming language, application type, operating system
 - Example ...

What this buys us

- Documentation may be located by navigating over various qualities or aspects
- Same metadata can feed multiple applications or output formats
- Even minimal faceted classification helps guide users better than a Big List O' Docs

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Where this may lead

- Still hosting documents, but actual location of a document should matter less
 - Expand on the idea of URL queries, XFML feeds, and broader view of requests and responses and focus more on offering multiple document formats based on known data and metadata
- An HTML page is just one type document service

Services

- Plain old Web page
- RSS (and related) feeds
- Topic maps
- Broader URL queries

Future Goals

- Make it easier to add content
 - Extract data from feeds from other sites
 - Should not have to retype anything
 - Too much work!
- Allow people to annotate content
 - Phrogz Pickaxe
 - PHP Manual

Future Goals

- Allow people to add features
 - Others are doing similar work
 - Plug-ins, filters, libraries should be portable across multiple Ruby apps
 - Easier said than done
 - Build lightweight frameworks of interacting services rather than tightly coupled classes

Questions for you folks

- Practical
 - What do you want from ruby-doc.org?
- Semi-rhetorical
 - How do you build applications that encourage community input (code, content) without the project getting big, bloated, and hard to manage?

Thank you!

- And thanks to all those providing Ruby documentation!
- A request: If you are blogging the conference, send the URL for your site to
 - jbritt@ruby-doc.org
 - I'll post an item about them