



**freedesktop.org**

# **freedesktop.org specifications are they boring?**

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# What is fd.o?

freedesktop.org is open source / open discussion software projects working on interoperability and shared technology for X Window System desktops.

*<http://freedesktop.org/wiki/>*



# What is fd.o?

- Collaboration forum
  - mailing lists
  - specifications
- Hosting for "on-topic" software
  - did anyone hear of D-Bus, HAL, etc.?
  - oh, and there's also this thing called X.org
- Not a formal organization



# Standards or specifications?

- It has to be standards:
  - <http://freedesktop.org/wiki/Standards>
  - <http://standards.freedesktop.org/>
- But it's not, really.
- I mean, really. We don't do standards at freedesktop.org.
- It's all about ideas, code, proof of concept, and therefore de facto specifications



# Lies, truth...

- Some of the fd.o specifications are being integrated (or are integrated?) in the LSB
- So they're standards.
- But really, for us, they're just specifications:
  - <http://freedesktop.org/wiki/Specifications>
  - <http://specifications.freedesktop.org/>



# What specs do we have?

- Many specifications:
  - desktop entry (.desktop files)
  - desktop base directories (\$XDG\_DATA\_DIRS)
  - EWMH (window management)
  - icon naming
  - trash
  - etc.
- 45 specifications listed at <http://freedesktop.org/wiki/Specifications>
  - are they all really fd.o specs?



# What is the current status?

- Stability
  - ready to be frozen forever?
  - will there be incompatible changes in the future?
- Adoption
  - only adopted by some group or widely adopted?
- Coverage
  - are there still areas that could do with a spec?



# Perfect specifications?

- The desktop entry specification defines a file format (key=value) and the required content
- Most specifications are ambiguous or lack clarity
  - <Menu> can contain <Menu>, <Include>, <Exclude>. But do <Include> and <Exclude> apply only to the current <Menu> or also to sub<Menu>?
- No consistency
  - text files, docbook, nearly never the same structure, not the same terms...



# Missing specifications

- We're still not sharing a common help metadata format
  - first discussion at least in 2003, if not before...
- Shared bookmarks
- Shared URI schemes



# Updating a specification

- Propose a change on the mailing list
- Wait
- Sometimes, there's a debate; discuss
- Wait
- Find the person responsible for this spec (this person might not know she's responsible for it)
- Find where its source is hosted (cvs? nowhere?)
- Have someone commit the change
- Find someone to update the website



# Proposing a new specification

- Send a mail to the mailing list
- Showing code implementing the spec surely helps
- If there's no consensus, try to reach one
- If there's consensus, good
- what to do next?



# How do we move forward?

- Host all specs in one repository
  - easy to find!
- Host the specs in git/bzr/whatever
  - people can easily "hack" on them!
- Document the update process
  - easy to contribute a change!
- Create a release process
  - tarballs! Specs available for packaging and thus viewable in devhelp/whatever!



# How do we move forward?

- Move everything to docbook
  - first step towards consistency!
- Create a template structure and apply it to specs
  - second step towards consistency!
- Proofread again and again
  - third step towards consistency! More clarity!
- Make the specs translatable?



**What do you think?**



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