modules@contextgarden.net update
Taco Hoekwater

The third-party ConT$_E$Xt module list has been rewritten and is now once again functional. The original Ruby on Rails application written by Patrick Gundlach had not worked properly for at least a year due to using a now obsolete version of Rails, and now a complete rewrite has been done based on the `TLContrib` perl source code.

1. The old version

For years, we have had a Ruby on Rails web application running at http://modules.contextgarden.net that allowed authors to publish third-party modules for ConT$_E$Xt. The 'current' version of that application has timestamps at the beginning of 2009, and unfortunately (but typical for Ruby on Rails applications) it stopped working after a software update on the server. The original author and maintainer Patrick Gundlach had already indicated early that he would like to remain retired from his work on the contextgarden server, so for more than a year it was not possible to add or edit any new modules.

2. The new version

At the 2015 ConT$_E$Xt Group meeting, we agreed that the `TLContrib` application structure (see http://tlcontrib.metatex.org) would be used as a frontend for the ConT$_E$Xt modules database, but it took a long time and lots of prodding by Mojca Miklavec for me to finally free up enough time to work on the application.

After some consideration, I decided not to use `TLContrib` as the actual frontend but instead copy and tweak only some portions of the `TLContrib` perl code as the basis for the new application. A big argument in favour of this approach was that this meant that URLs of the downloadable modules can remain backward compatible. But also, the resulting smaller code base makes it easier to concentrate on the things that are important and specific for ConT$_E$Xt modules.

In the end, there is a fairly small amount of perl code left which is stored in a subversion repos-

itory on the Dutch contextgarden server. The website itself is in fact an automated checkout of that repository (a similar trick is used for group.contextgarden.net and meeting.contextgarden.net). The new application is accessible only via `https`, except for the download section (which is aliased as http://dl.contextgarden.net, as before)

Nearly all of the data from Patrick's application has been imported into the new database.

The new application uses a combination of server-side includes and template snippets to present information to the user.

3. Features missing

- The new software does not have a direct link with the wiki user database. All the existing authors have been imported into the new database, but they now have their own passwords. All new module authors have to register via a form with e-mail confirmation.

- There is currently no support for separate documentation files belonging to a module. Perhaps this should be added in the future. For now, it was the one part of the old database that was very hard to import cleanly, so I decided to skip it completely.

- At the moment of writing, 'Sync with CTAN' and 'In distribution' are not implemented.

- There is only a tiny bit of CSS to make the site look usable, but it really needs a redesign and some javascript to make the form input nicer.

- There is no search facility. There are extra checkboxes added for mkii and/or mkiv modules, but nothing is done with those yet.

4. Features added

- From `TLContrib` comes the possibility to create new modules versions based on subversion or git checkouts (instead of just uploaded zip files).

- The file upload feature additionally supports `tar.gz` as well as `tar.xz` files.

- Also from `TLContrib` comes some code that checks the filenames and locations of the module content. This may need some more tweaking, but it offers a way to ensure that third-party modules behave properly with respect to the T$_E$X Directory Structure conventions used by the ConT$_E$Xt distribution.

- It is possible to transfer modules to a different author, or to allow a co-author to add revisions and make edits.