

Muzzled : A graphical theme builder for Mozilla

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1 Introduction

This project has been started by Dipankar Sarkar , 3rd year student of IITD (Indian Institute of Technology , New Delhi , India) under the Summer of Code challenge organized by Google. The idea behind starting this project is to make the process of theme creation for mozilla based applications easier. I am an avid follower of the Open Source world and the it is very easily seen that the mozilla based firefox browser is one of it greatest products. The problem which i faced was when i wanted to customize the looks of my browser, i had to depend on already created themes. It seemed like rocket science to create one on my own. This had lead me believe that there is a great necessity of a graphical theme builder for mozilla application. In this document, i will try to look at the various challenges and possible solutions in implementing this application.

The reason for choosing the name Muzzled is a very simple one. If someone attempted to paint the mozilla lizard then we would muzzle it, because we would not want anyone to get bitten. In more abstract terms, we are attempting to harness the unlimited power of the mozilla engine to give it a better, possibly more colourful look.

2 Features

In this section, it will be my attempt to clearly outline the vision i have seen for the application. It is very much possible that i may not be able to get across everything.

2.1 Basic features

This section will outline the very basic features necessary to get a **”proof of concept”** application running.

1. The user interface must be non-challenging, in the sense that the user should not feel over-awed by the amount of settings that can be changed. The more advanced options should be behind the scenes.
2. The application must be easy to install
3. The application should be flexible enough to handle modifications, if and when deemed necessary.

I must agree with anyone who says that these features cover hardly any ground, which i had initially projected. It can primarily attributed to my inexperience of managing such projects and currently, the lack of time (SoC deadline of 1st September) .

2.2 Chameleon : A dead project

There already exists a graphical theme builder for mozilla called chameleon. This project has been unactive for quite a long time. Brian King had asked me to contact the owner of the project, which should prove helpful in my quest. This project is similar to mine except that my goal is to make it for complete newbies, all the extra advanced settings shown in the chameleon application

will not appear in mine. The application does not create themes for all mozilla browsers, this is another problem which i will attempt to solve.

2.3 New features

If the project had allowed me more time then, i would have liked to implement the following features.

1. The ability to take any XUL application and then create a theme for it.
2. Automating the distribution of the created theme, by uploading to various pre-determined locations. Thus allowing the creation of a vast repository of skins.
3. A flexible enough architecture to handle plugins which may extend the power of the application.

3 Implementation

This section will address the various real-life issues of implementing an application. We have seen no matter how much a piece of software is planned, it all is no good unless an implementation seems feasible. In these subsections, we will look at the various challenges, i am facing and how am i attempting to solve them in this relatively short amount of time.

3.1 Challenges

The primary challenge, i face even now is the knowledge assimilation part. I know that the application has to be created using XUL and XPCOM, but the relative scarcity of documentation and the non-availability of books on them, makes my job that much more tougher. The safari account given by google is proving to be of great help to me, even if it comes at such a late stage. I had practically lost all hope, as the documentation was not detailed enough at times or out of date. The more technical challenges were raised at a very early stage in my submitted document. In the current scenario, i can say that with the reduced amount of features, all the issues have been resolved.

3.2 Solutions

The solutions for the above problems have been outlined in the earlier section itself. It can be more or less said that the "proof of concept" application can be completed before the deadline of 1st september. But according to me, the idea is not to kill it off once the SoC deadline is over, my attempt is to make sure the ideas i have thought of get implemented at some point of time. Especially the idea of making a generic graphical theme builder for any mozilla based application should be attempted, i believe that this is possible. Though my initial application will not cover that feature.

4 Screenshots

The screenshots shown below are the tentative looks of muzzled

5 Conclusion

6 Links

1. muzzled.mozdev.org - The muzzled home page
2. chameleon.mozdev.org - The chameleon home page (A dead project)
3. www.desinerd.com - My home page
4. www.google.com