

Trackback in Xaraya

Status of this Memo

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Abstract

This RFC documents the trackback functionality in xaraya. Trackback has had lots of attention by the growth of blogging lately. The principle of trackback can however be applied to other content than just weblogs pretty easily. A thorough understanding of what trackback is and how it should be used is necessary though. This RFC serves two goals:

- explain trackback in practical terms, not directly related to xaraya
- document the specification for implementation of a trackback module for xaraya

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1. Introduction

As blogging has become very popular (quick search for estimate: between 2.4 and 2.9 million bloggers), it's time to give Xaraya a good backend for blogging.

An important part of blogging is the so-called TrackBack facility. In short it can be described as linking the weblogs together in a special way to create an *interlinked* space of the weblog entries. It appears that the concept of trackback creates some confusion, so we do an attempt to explain it here in simple terms and describe how the concept applies to Xaraya.

This document is largely based on the specification located here [1]. MT is one of the most widely used blogging systems and their implementation is leading for most client developers.

1.1 What is trackback?

From the MT website:

```
In a nutshell, TrackBack was designed to provide a method of notification between websites: it is a method of person A saying to person B, "This is something you may be interested in." To do that, person A sends a TrackBack ping to person B.
```

How does this work in real life? It's convenient to view it from two distinct goals:

1. content aggregation: having one place to read about one topic
2. remote comments: comments on something published elsewhere

The first can be translated into sending a notification to the *one place* that something is published on a certain topic. The central place functions as the place where this type of content is aggregated. The publisher sends a notification to the central place, stating that something was published. The central place records enough information about the publication so it can be "tracked back"

The second is more pro-active. Someone reads an interesting publication and wants to write a comment about it, or just write something related. Instead of commenting on the site where the publication is, he comments on his own weblog (because it *fits* his own list of subjects for example). After publishing the comment or the related publication a ping is sent to the original location, so the comment can be "tracked back" from that location to the location where the remote comment is.

2. Requirements List

The main objective of this API is to allow a TrackBack enabled site to send TrackBack pings and receive them. Then the system must route them to the appropriate Xaraya content item.

3. Sending a TrackBack ping

```
POST
http://www.foo.com/index.php?module=trackback&type=user&func=ping&tbid=1
Content-Type: application/x-www-form-urlencoded
title=Foo+Bar&url=http://www.bar.com/&excerpt=My+Excerpt&blog_name=Foo
```

Successful Response:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
<response>
  <error>0</error>
</response>
```

Failed Response:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
<response>
  <error>1</error>
  <message>The error message</message>
</response>
```

4. Receiving a TrackBack ping

Example TrackBack ping receive

To retrieve the list of pings sent to a particular Xaraya TrackBack Ping URL, send an HTTP GET request to the TrackBack Ping URL with the query string `?__mode=rss`

A sample GET request might look like this:

```
GET http://www.foo.com/ws.php?type=trackback&tbid=3?__mode=rss
```

The response to this request will either be an error in the same format as returned from the above request, or the list of TrackBack pings for that item in RSS markup, wrapped in `<response>` tags.

For example:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
  <response>
    <error>0</error>
    <rss version="0.91">
      <channel>
        <title>TrackBack Test</title>
        <link>http://this.is/the/trackback/item/link/</link>
        <description>Description of the TrackBack
item</description>
        <language>en-us</language>
        <item>
          <title>TrackBack Demo</title>
          <link>http://this.is/the/permalink/</link>
          <description>Excerpt</description>
        </item>
      </channel>
    </rss>
  </response>
```

The portions between `<rss>` and `</rss>` are the actual RSS data; the rest is simply the response wrapper, and can be discarded.

5. TrackBack Auto-Discovery

TrackBack clients need a method of determining the TrackBack Ping URL for a particular URL or weblog entry. Server implementations should include embedded RDF in the pages they produce; the RDF represents metadata about an entry, allowing clients to auto-discover the TrackBack Ping URL.

Sample RDF looks like this:

```
<rdf:RDF xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#"
  xmlns:dc="http://purl.org/dc/elements/1.1/"
  xmlns:trackback="http://madskills.com/public/xml/rss/module/trackback/">

  <rdf:Description
    rdf:about="http://www.foo.com/archive.html#foo"
    dc:identifier="http://www.foo.com/archive.html#foo"
    dc:title="Foo Bar"
    trackback:ping="http://www.foo.com/tb.cgi/5" />
</rdf:RDF>
```

The dc: elements are standard Dublin Core elements; the trackback:ping element comes from the TrackBack Module for RSS 1.0/2.0 at <http://madskills.com/public/xml/rss/module/trackback/>.

Given a URL `my_url`, clients should follow these steps:

1. Send an HTTP GET request to retrieve the contents of the page at `my_url`.
2. Scan the page contents for embedded RDF. Pages can contain multiple instances of embedded RDF--clients should pick the block whose dc:identifier matches `my_url`.
3. Extract the trackback:ping value from the block of RDF. This is the TrackBack Ping URL.

Once the client has determined the TrackBack Ping URL, it can send a TrackBack ping see [Sending a TrackBack Ping](#).

Example Auto-Discovery

```
example in javascript:
window.open('http://your.xaraya.com/ws.php?type=trackback&url=currenturl');
```

6. Solution proposals - database tables

xar_trackback_pings:

```
CREATE TABLE xar_trackback_pings (  
  pingid INT(11) NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT,  
  modid INT(11) NOT NULL DEFAULT 0,  
  itemid INT(11) NOT NULL DEFAULT 0,  
  url INT(255) NOT NULL DEFAULT '',  
  blog_name VARCHAR(255) NOT NULL DEFAULT '',  
  title VARCHAR(255) NOT NULL DEFAULT '',  
  excerpt TEXT,  
  created_by INT(11) NOT NULL DEFAULT 0,  
  created_on INT(11) UNSIGNED NOT NULL DEFAULT 0,  
  modified_by INT(11) NOT NULL DEFAULT 0,  
  modified_on INT(11) UNSIGNED NOT NULL DEFAULT 0,  
  PRIMARY KEY(pingid),  
  INDEX(xar_trackback_pings_modid),  
  INDEX(xar_trackback_pings_itemid),  
  INDEX(xar_trackback_pings_url)  
}
```

7. Solution proposals - functions

user:

```
trackback_user_display();
```

userapi:

```
trackback_userapi_getpings();
```

admin:

adminapi:

```
trackback_adminapi_sendping();  
trackback_adminapi_  
trackback_adminapi_create();  
trackback_adminapi_delete();  
trackback_adminapi_deleteall();
```

8. Code that will need to be rewritten

9. Tools that need to be written from scratch

10. Current Issues

11. What is a Permalink?

permalink (pĀrma-link) n.
A permanent marker or reference point to a certain document on the world wide web.
Most commonly used for weblogs, news sites and newspapers.
A permalink is denoted through the use of a symbol (pound sign, arrow, dot),
date of content creation, the word permalink or image.

12. Revision history

2003-08-04: Johnny: added info from trackback spec

2003-07-25: MrB: added TrackBack explanation

2003-07-24: MrB: created

13 Reference title

- [1] MovableType, "<http://www.movabletype.org/docs/mttrackback.html>", 2002.

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A. Example appendix

Any section which is present after the references will become an appendix

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