

# Welcome to Apache Forrest

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## 1. Introduction

Apache Forrest is a publishing framework that transforms input from various sources into a unified presentation in one or more output formats. The modular and extensible plugin architecture is based on Apache Cocoon and relevant standards, which separates presentation from content. Forrest can generate static documents, or be used as a dynamic server, or be deployed by its automated facility.

### Note:

Please realise that Forrest is still pre-1.0 release version. It is certainly usable for those who are prepared to move with it. See more notes about [status](#) below.

## 2. User-friendly

Forrest is designed with the new user in mind. Much effort has gone into making the process of generating a new site **easy** and **simple**:

- **Step 1:** Do 'forrest seed' to populate the directory with template site structure and contents.
- **Step 2:** Add content by editing docs in task-specific, presentation-neutral XML.
- **Step 3:** Do 'forrest run' then use the web browser to immediately review changes at <http://localhost:8888/>
- **Step 4:** Do 'forrest' to generate the complete website from the XML sources. Various styles (known as skins) are available. Custom skins can be developed.
- **Step 5:** For more information about installation and use, see the [Using Forrest](#) guide.

### Note:

The first time you run Forrest it may attempt to retrieve some plugins from the Internet (it depends on which distribution of Forrest you have installed). In some cases this will happen whenever a new plugin is specified, in other cases, for example when you have installed all plugins locally or have checked out the full source tree, the plugins will be retrieved from your local installation. In all cases once a plugin has been installed locally there is no need for Forrest to access the Internet. For more information see the [plugins documentation](#).

Forrest's focus on low "startup cost" makes it ideal for rapid development of small sites, where time and budget constraints do not allow time-wasting HTML experiments. Of course, that same methodology can scale up to large projects. Your development team does not need Java experience, or even XML skills, to use Forrest. The framework lets you concentrate on content and design.

By **separating content from presentation**, providing **content templates** and **pre-written skins**, Forrest is unequalled at enabling content producers to get their message out fast. This separation of concerns makes Forrest excellent to publish **project documentation** (notably software projects), **intranets**, and **home pages**, and anything else you can think of.

## 3. Powerful

Forrest is far from a quick and dirty solution however. Forrest is built on the world's leading XML application framework, [Apache Cocoon](#), which provides advanced users with extremely powerful publishing capabilities.

- Multiple task-specific source XML formats can be used ([How-To](#), [FAQ](#), [changelogs](#) and [todo lists](#) supported natively). Source formats include: Apache xdocs xml format, plain html documents, some Wiki formats, a subset of DocBook, ...
- Multiple output formats supported, for example HTML and PDF (using [Apache FOP](#)).

- SVG to PNG rendering (using [Apache Batik](#)). Simply drop the SVG in the appropriate directory and it will be rendered as PNG.
- Transparent inclusion and aggregation of external content, like [RSS feeds](#).
- Anything else possible with the [Cocoon sitemap](#). Using database queries, [charting](#), web services integration; the possibilities are constantly growing as Cocoon grows. See the [Cocoon Features](#) list for the full suite of capabilities.
- Based on Java and XML standards, Forrest is platform-independent, making for a documentation system that is just as portable as the XML data that it processes.

### 3.1. Static or Dynamic

Unique amongst comparable documentation tools, Forrest generates sites that can run both **interactively** as a dynamic web application, or as statically rendered pages.

This provides a path for site growth: start off small and static, and if dynamic features (user login, forms processing, runtime data, site search etc) are one day needed, these can be accommodated by switching to webapp mode.

Running as a webapp has a major advantage during development: content can be written, and then the rendered output viewed almost instantly in a web browser. This [webapp technique](#) enables Forrest's edit/review cycle to be faster than command-line transformation tools.

## 4. History

Apache Forrest was started in January 2002, with the major use-case being to create a consistent and efficient [xml.apache.org](#) group of project websites with a uniform, lightweight, easy-to-navigate layout and structure. In addition, Forrest was to be a Sourceforge-like project management tool, complementing [Apache Gump](#) (hence the name 'Forrest').

The focus shifted for Apache Forrest to primarily be a generic documentation tool capable of meeting many needs. Certain relevant project management facilities are being added.

## 5. Project status and website status

Apache Forrest is currently progressing rapidly through a series of 0.x releases. It is certainly usable now (despite not yet being version 1.x). See the growing list of [example sites](#) including many Apache sites.

In general, prior to 1.0, ensuring quality of design will be considered more important than retaining backwards-compatibility. Users (particularly those with custom sitemaps and skins) should be aware that this is evolving software, and read the release notes carefully before upgrading. That said, we appreciate the commitment in time that adopters make, and will not make capricious or undocumented backwards-incompatible changes.

Documentation on the Apache Forrest website exists for various versions including the latest release, the current development, and past releases. All versions of Forrest include their own copy of the documentation. To view it, do 'cd site-author; forrest run' and visit <http://localhost:8888/> in your browser. The [Apache Forrest website](#) is updated manually as needed, while we develop the [forrestbot](#) deployment facility.

## 6. News and events

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See the [events](#) list for more detail.

- Apache Forrest 0.7 was released on 2005-06-23. An architecture for Plugins which enables a smaller Forrest core and the ability to add new features in a modular way.

## 7. Help Wanted!

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Apache Forrest is fairly new, and is in need of developers. If you know (or want to learn) any of XML, Ant, HTML, XSLT, or CSS, then you are qualified to help.

As with all Apache projects, Forrest is a meritocracy; the more you put in, the more you get to define the project's future. See the "[contributing](#)" page for more information.