

Welcome to Apache Forrest

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1. Introduction

Apache Forrest is an XML standards-oriented documentation framework based upon Apache Cocoon, providing XSLT stylesheets and schemas, images and other resources. Forrest uses these to render the source content into a website via command-line, robot, or dynamic application.

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.

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 one of the world's leading XML application frameworks, [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, Forrest is platform-independent, making for a documentation system that is just as portable as the XML data 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 the [latest release](#) and for the [current development](#) version from the source repository. All versions of Forrest include their own copy of the documentation. To view it, do 'forrest run' and go to <http://127.0.0.1:8888/> (for versions after 0.6, do 'cd docs-author' first). The [Apache Forrest website](#) is updated manually as needed, while we develop the [forrestbot](#) deployment facility.

6. News and events

- Apache Forrest 0.6 was released on 2004-10-15. Uses all resources in-place so no more copying; workflow and productivity improvements; project sitemaps get first chance processing then pass-through to core sitemaps; new skins use CSS rather than tables and are configurable; enhanced forrestbot.
- The Forrest project has evolved to become a "top-level" Apache project.

7. Help Wanted!

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.