My P4 Exploration of Xtext
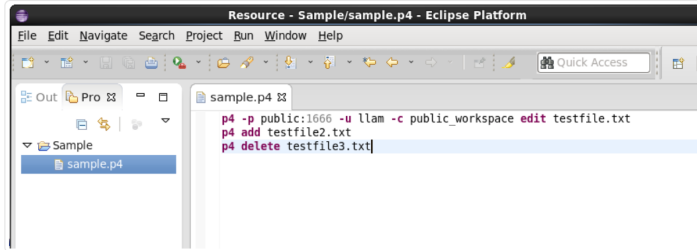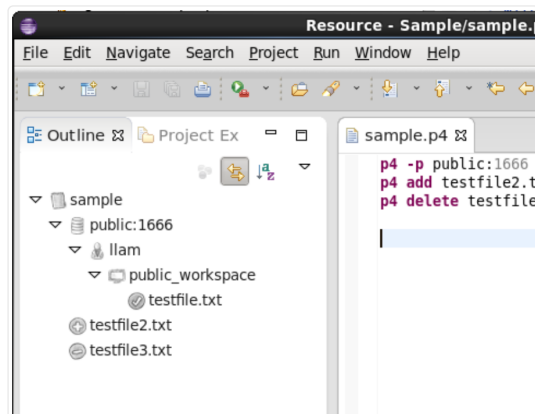
April 02, 2013

by Liz Lam (@p4liz)

Back in 2011, I attended an Eclipse DemoCamp hosted by eBay. I saw an interesting talk on how to create your own language using the Xtext framework. The presenter gave a great overview of this tool and walked the audience through a couple of examples. I was fascinated by the creation of domain-specific languages and Xtext's utilization of features that Eclipse users know and love.
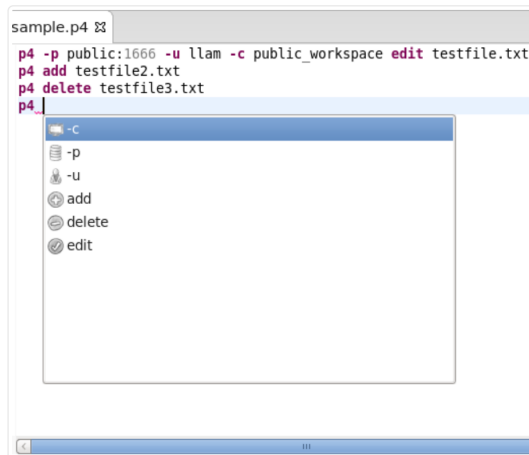
With this in mind, I had an idea to explore some of the features of Xtext using the p4 command line as an example. After going through the online tutorial, I was able to define keywords in a grammar and view p4 commands in Eclipse with the appropriate syntax coloring.

One sleepless night, I discovered an awesome set of hand drawn icons. I decided to introduce some of these icons into the Outline view. (Yes, this is what I do when I can't sleep at night.)

In addition to the Outline view, I thought these icons would also be a great companion to content assist.

There is still much more to learn but I found this to be a great starting point. I encourage anyone that's interested to go through the Xtext tutorials and give it a try. I've submitted what I've done so far into the public depot at //depot/guest/liz_lam/p4dsl.

Feel free to check it out and I hope it helps in your own explorations.

POSTED IN: **GENERAL GEEKERY**

About the author

Liz Lam plays on Team QA at Perforce Software. She loves breaking software, contributing ideas to new features and apparently writing blogs while consuming large amounts of coffee.

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