

Volume

1

NETSPECTIVE CORPORATION

Corporate Publications and Documentation





Getting Started With Sparx

Getting Started With Sparx

Target Audience

This document is targeted at individuals, such as yourself, who have come to know of Sparx and are curious to see its capabilities in practical terms. This document is a map showing you where to look for information related to Sparx. It is also a guide that helps you get started on the road to making sparks of your own. This includes information about downloading, installing and using the free 30 day Sparx evaluation kit available from the Netspective Corp. web site as well as pointers to Sparx reference documentation available online.




ICON KEY

-  Preparing The Evaluation
 -  Installing The Evaluation Kit
 -  Starting The Fire
 -  Quenching The Thirst
-

Discovering Sparx

The main source of information about Sparx is the Netspective Corp. web site. There you will find both technical and non-technical descriptions of how Sparx can help you achieve higher productivity by spending more time developing your application and less time developing a framework.

A few of the more important items on the Netspective web site are listed and described below. The URL at the end of each item's description will lead you to its location on the Netspective web site.

-  **The Sparx Architecture.** Learn more about the design of Sparx and how it helps developers do more in less time. Find out what makes the Sparx Application Platform so different from mere "forms builders". <http://www.netspective.com/web-netspective/products>
-  **Sparx Services.** An overview of what Sparx offers you as a developer or technical manager. <http://www.netspective.com/web-netspective/services>
-  **Sparx Support** These are online resources for developers who use Sparx for enterprise development or who are interested in evaluating Sparx for themselves. <http://www.netspective.com/web-netspective/support>

Playing With Fire

Once you have discovered what Sparx can do for you, it is time to see it in action. Netspective Corp. provides a free 30 day evaluation kit for this purpose. It contains everything you need to start getting familiar with Sparx and learning how to develop applications powered by it. However, before downloading and installing the Sparx evaluation kit, you need to ensure that your development environment satisfies all the pre-requisites for using the kit.

Preparing for an Evaluation

Since Sparx is an application framework for J2EE application servers, a fundamental requirement to develop applications with it (and with a J2EE application server) is a Java SDK. You can obtain Sun's official Java SDK for Windows from Sun's Java web site at <http://java.sun.com/j2se/1.3/download.html>. This is a link to the Java 1.3.1_03 SDK.

Alternative Java SDK packages include IBM's Java SDK. The Jikes compiler (also developed at IBM) complements a standard Java SDK with rapid compile speeds and much more informative error messages than the default compilers. You can find IBM's Java SDK at <http://www7b.boulder.ibm.com/wsdd/wspvtdevkit-info.html>. Jikes is available at <http://oss.software.ibm.com/developerworks/opensource/jikes/>.

Easy to use development environments are available in the form of various free IDEs such as IBM's VisualAge for Java and JBuilder Community Edition. These greatly enhance the development experience by providing numerous small aids ranging from simple syntax highlighted editors to complex class browsers. The use of such an IDE is not needed but is highly recommended. VisualAge for Java can be found at <http://www7.software.ibm.com/vad.nsf> while JBuilder CE is available at <http://www.borland.com/jbuilder/offers/>.

Installing the Evaluation Kit

Having made sure your development environment is capable of running a J2EE application server and having installed a Java SDK of your choice, you are now ready to download and install the Sparx evaluation kit.

Navigate to the Sparx Support page on Netspective Corp's web site and download the evaluation kit. The evaluation kit comes in the form of a Java JAR file. Save this JAR file into a directory of your choice. Now drop to a command prompt and navigate to the directory containing this JAR file. From here, installation is a matter of executing the command `java -jar sparx-eval.jar` and following the instructions in the automated installer.

The automated installer will prompt you twice: once to get the path where you want to install the evaluation kit and the second time to get the port you want to use for the application server that comes as part of the evaluation kit. The path you give in the first answer will contain the Resin application server, the Sparx framework, and two sample applications. This path will also be known throughout all Sparx documentation as your Sparx Home. It is highly recommended that you set the environment variable SPARX_HOME to point to this path so that the tools supplied with Sparx do not have to make intelligent (and possibly wrong) guesses at the value of your Sparx Home.

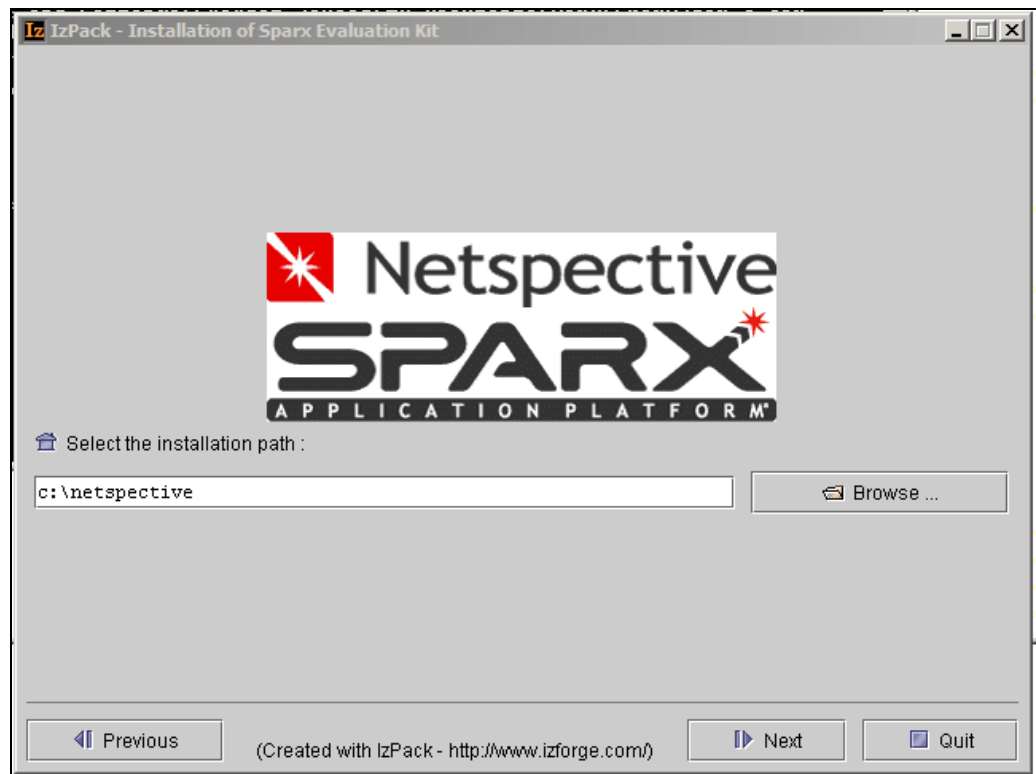


Figure 1: Choosing A Directory

¹ The Resin Application Server (<http://www.caucho.com>) is not a part of Sparx. It is free for non-commercial use. You must license Resin for commercial use if you wish to deploy it in a production environment. For a free alternative to Resin, please visit <http://jakarta.apache.org/tomcat/index.html> for the Tomcat Application Server.

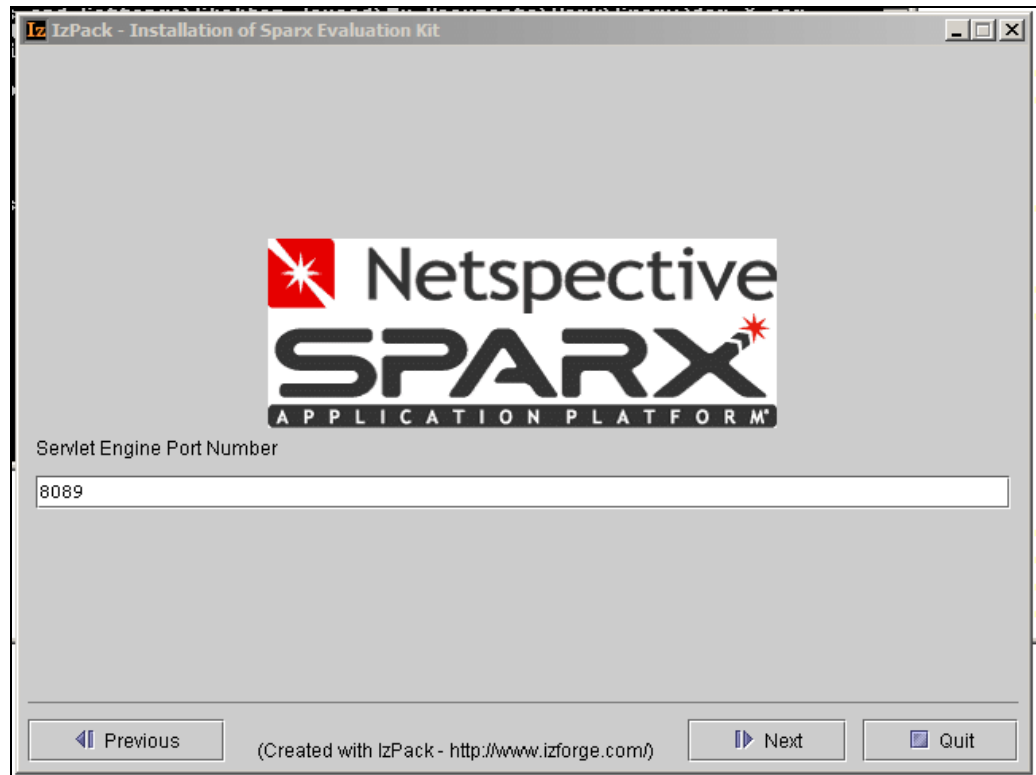


Figure 2: Choosing A Port

The port number you gave in the second answer will be the port you will use whenever you want to use or test an application running on that installation of the Sparx evaluation kit. Thus, if you leave the port number as the default 8089, you can test that the application server is up and running by opening up a web browser and accessing the URL <http://localhost:8089/>.

Starting the Fire

With a successful installation of the evaluation kit under your belt, you can move on to more important matters such as playing with Sparx. You can get an idea of the kind of applications that can be developed with Sparx by taking a look at the sample applications that come with the evaluation kit.

You should be able to access the first application – a very simple Hello World application – by opening a web browser to the location <http://localhost:8089/hello>. This is, of course, assuming you chose 8089 as the port number for your application server. If this is not the case, you should substitute 8089 with the port number you chose while installing the evaluation kit.

The second application, the Sparx Collection, is a more extensive one and is a model of a library of books from which you can add, edit or delete any number of books. This can be accessed at the URL <http://localhost:8089/library>.

Once you have seen these very elementary examples of Sparx's capabilities, you can proceed to the Sparx Tutorial. This tutorial not only shows you the basics of application development with Sparx but also takes you, step by step, through the creation of both the Hello World and the Sparx Collection applications. This includes application design, implementation and elaborate explanations. You can find the Sparx Tutorial in the `documentation` directory immediately under your Sparx Home.

You should go through the tutorial and continue to experiment with Sparx by developing your own applications and observing the development time go from days to hours for small applications and from months to weeks for even enterprise level applications.

Quenching the Thirst

After your evaluation period is over, you can contact Netspective Corp regarding licensing prices for commercial application development.