

Docs for public software projects

Ankur Sinha
29/10/2020

2020-10-28

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Docs for public software projects
└ Documentation?

Documentation?

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Docs for different target audiences: dev docs

- In-source comments: help to understand the source code,
- Change log: what changed and when (version control).
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): ensure no single point of contact/failure (SPOC/F):
 - API/ABI versioning and software release SOP,
 - Continuous integration (CI) SOP,
 - Deployment SOP,
 - Contribution guidelines: pull request workflow etc.

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In-source comments: not for users

```
/*  
 * Dear Maintainer  
 *  
 * Once you are done trying to 'optimize' this routine,  
 * and you have realized what a terrible mistake that was,  
 * please increment the following counter as a warning  
 * to the next guy.  
 *  
 * total_hours_wasted_here = 73  
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¹Top 45 Best Comments In Source Code I Ever Encountered

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Change logs/commit logs: not for users either

	COMMENT	DATE
○	CREATED MAIN LOOP & TIMING CONTROL	14 HOURS AGO
○	ENABLED CONFIG FILE PARSING	9 HOURS AGO
○	MISC BUGFIXES	5 HOURS AGO
○	CODE ADDITIONS/EDITS	4 HOURS AGO
○	MORE CODE	4 HOURS AGO
○	HERE HAVE CODE	4 HOURS AGO
○	AAAAAAA	3 HOURS AGO
○	ADKFJSLKDFJSOKLFT	3 HOURS AGO
○	MY HANDS ARE TYPING WORDS	2 HOURS AGO
○	HAAAAAAAAAANDS	2 HOURS AGO

AS A PROJECT DRAGS ON, MY GIT COMMIT MESSAGES GET LESS AND LESS INFORMATIVE.

²xkcd: Git Commit

³How to Write a Git Commit Message

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Docs for different target audiences: user docs

- Tools: how to **use** the tool, options, features, extensions ...
- Libraries: how to **use** the API,
- Example code snippets, guides.

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└ Docs for different target audiences: user docs

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- Tools: how to **use** the tool, options, features, extensions ...
 - Libraries: how to **use** the API,
 - Example code snippets, guides.

Documentation for users: separate from development

- **Must** clearly define what the tool (software) does,
- **Must** define **entry-points** for users to get started with the software,
- **Must** provide a **high level** overview of concepts needed to use the software,
- **Should** provide references to detailed definitions of these concepts,
- **Must** list channels of communication etc. for users,

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└ Publishing documentation: software

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Docs sources → documentation tool → HTML/PDF/...
Today: [Sphinx](#), [Jupyter-book](#).

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└ Publishing documentation: software

└ Documentation tools: translators

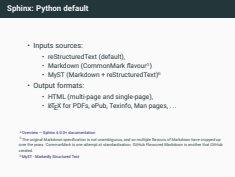
Docs sources → documentation tool → HTML/PDF/...
Today: [Sphinx](#), [Jupyter-book](#).

- Inputs sources:
 - reStructuredText (default),
 - Markdown (CommonMark *flavour*⁵)
 - MyST (Markdown + reStructuredText)⁶
- Output formats:
 - HTML (multi-page and single-page),
 - \LaTeX for PDFs, ePub, Texinfo, Man pages, ...

⁴[Overview — Sphinx 4.0.0+ documentation](#)

⁵The original Markdown specification is not unambiguous, and so multiple flavours of Markdown have cropped up over the years. CommonMark is one attempt at standardisation. GitHub Flavoured Markdown is another that GitHub created.

⁶[MyST - Markedly Structured Text](#)



Demo!

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└ Publishing documentation: software

└ Sphinx example: OCNS Software SIG documentation

Demo!

Jupyter-book: shiny new Jupyter based system

- Input sources:
 - Jupyter Markdown,
 - Jupyter notebooks: Python, Julia, Ruby, Haskell . . . ,
 - MyST,
 - reStructuredText.
- Output formats:
 - HTML (multi-page and single-page),
 - PDF.
- **Interactive pages!**
 - Binder, JupyterHub, Google Colab, ThebeLab⁸.

⁷Books with Jupyter

⁸Embedded: so no need to leave the page.

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└ Publishing documentation: software

└ Jupyter-book example: NeuroML
documentation

Demo!

Lab website updates? Time?

www.silverlab.org

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