Java
Community
Process

Introducing the Java Community Process℠ (JCP℠) Program

Version 2.6

Sun
microsystems

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Executive Overview

As an evolutionary step in the Java Community Process℠ (JCP℠) program operations, JCP 2.6 is the result of 10 months of work by an Expert Team of JCP Executive Committee (EC) members dedicated to making the Java™ platform easier to use as well as more powerful and stable for developers, resellers, and users.

The modifications contained in JCP 2.6 are designed to increase the process transparency, information visibility, guideline availability, public inclusion, and operational efficiency of the JCP itself.

Further, the JCP Executive Committee is already seeking community input on ways to improve the next version of the growing JCP program.

The Need for Constant Change and Improvement

The procedural rules of the JCP program have always attracted critics, and their criticism has greatly shaped the current form of the JCP's procedures and requirements.

Last year, in October 2002, the changes specified in JCP 2.5 and the JSPA (Java Specification Participation Agreement) 2 by JSR 99 and JSR 171 revolutionized its approach to open source licensing and support. Those changes made it much easier to implement Java Specification Requests (JSRs), Reference Implementations (RIs), and Technical Compatibility Kits (TCKs) under open source licenses.

Once again, the JCP program is growing in new ways to be more responsive to the Java community's needs, this time through measures that ensure greater process transparency, information sharing, and public participation in the Java Specification Request (JSR) process of the JCP program.

The focus on supporting a broader base of contributors reflects changes in the JCP's membership. As the JCP entered its fifth year in 2003, membership grew to roughly 700 members and represents a healthy increase in the percentage of individual memberships as opposed to company memberships.

Individual members are gradually taking higher profile roles in the community, and JCP 2.6 encourages that evolution further. It is now easier than ever for individuals to provide input and comments during JSR review periods, join JSR Expert Groups and lead them, and even become involved in the JCP's steering boards, the Executive Committees.

Broader inclusion with better communications is the next stage of evolution for the JCP, and the provisions of JCP 2.6, defined in JSR 215, are focused on making the JCP more approachable by all interested parties. JCP 2.6 is also designed to bring new efficiencies to the process, cutting the average approval time for a JSR to be finalized.

The latest update of the specific changes for JCP 2.6 is available at http://jcp.org under JSR 215 scheduled to be implemented in early 2004.

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JCP 2.6: Improved Process Visibility and Participation

JCP 2.6 will make changes in several areas to improve communication efficiencies and invite broader community and public participation, including:

- All draft reviews will be made public, and public feedback will be actively solicited
- Anyone interested will be able to more closely monitor the development stage and status of a JSR throughout its lifecycle, including decisions the EG has made along the way
- Specification Leaders (Spec Leads) will be have a greater responsibility to provide timely, accurate information to the community and to the ECs
- The ECs will have new guidelines to help make each Reference Implementation (RI) and the Technology Compatibility Kit (TCK), easier to understand, implement and administer

As the most prominent change dedicated to encouraging more people to get involved, the former Community Review will be replaced by a publicly available Early Draft Review. This new early-process review opens the input cycle to both the JCP member and non-member world in the earliest stages of development, and can last from 30 to 90 days at the discretion of the Spec Lead and Expert Group.

It is hoped that this change will help Spec Leads get more feedback at a much earlier stage, which accelerates the approval cycle and helps shape the JSR to the needs of the market. Anyone with access to the Internet will be able to download the public draft and comment on it, and the Expert Group will review every comment.

The current EC Community Review ballot will be moved to after the second review period, called the Public Review Ballot. Delaying the balloting until later in the process is designed to allow Expert Groups to enter the Early Draft Review with unresolved issues that would benefit from broad public input.

If the EC does not approve a draft at the time of the Public Review ballot, JCP 2.6 still provides for a "reconsideration ballot" by the EC based on a revised draft submitted within 30 days.

In some cases, a JSR will be targeted at multiple platform editions (J2ME, J2SE, J2EE). Under JCP 2.6 a JSR can be submitted for review by both ECs, however, in those cases, the new ballot process requires that the ballot is passed by both ECs for the JSR to proceed.

Helping Spec Leads Lead the Process

JCP 2.6 will provide new information about the process of being a Spec Lead and offer sample documents for reference. It will more clearly outline the duties and responsibilities of the job to help potential candidates understand what is required and how to work through the process milestones, including:

• Write a JSR and solicit peer input

• Submit the JSR to one or both ECs

• Pass the JSR Approval Ballot (new)

• Form an Expert Group

• Create a JSR web page, announce the JSR to the public, and begin the JSR Review

• Provide an Early Draft Review (replaces the former Community Review)

• Provide a Public Review

• Provide a Proposed Final Draft

• Pass the Final Approval Ballot

• Deliver a Final Release

• Offer a Maintenance Review

• Deliver a Maintenance Release

These guideline materials will be made available for the Expert Group members also.

Improving the JSR Process

The changes for JCP 2.6 include ways to make the JSR process more visible and available to the entire Java community. One way this will be accomplished is by improving the way Spec Leads manage both input and open access to information about the Expert Group's work in progress.

By making Expert Group activities more visible to JCP members and the non-member public, it is hoped that the final spec will emerge with stronger industry support.

As a first step in building support, Spec Leads will be encouraged to circulate the initial JSR proposal among peers to gain input before submitting it as an actual JSR.

As part of the JSR submission, Spec Leads will be required to document a "transparency plan" describing how the work of their JSR will be made available to the community and the public. The Executive Committees can reject a JSR if the Spec Lead's transparency plan doesn't provide for frequent updates on open issues and decisions it has made, with a specific means of making them public.

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Some of the tools to enable this new level of transparency and inclusion are now available through third-party collaboration sites like java.net. This software development web site, operated by Sun Microsystems, is helpful for maintaining a public tree of source code and opening the code development to multiple participants. In addition, SourceForge [http://sourceforge.net/] and other open source software development web sites provide valuable tools to provide process transparency and group participation.

Spec Leads are also encouraged to proactively include Spec Leads and Expert Group members from other JSRs in the review to improve communication between JSRs and Java platform editions (J2ME™, J2SE™, J2EE™).

When it comes to selecting nominated members for an Expert Group, the Spec Lead will be required to document reasons for accepting or rejecting each nominee and provide these reasons if asked by the nominee or the Executive Committees.

Improvements for RIs and TCKs

JCP 2.6 will clarify the requirements for RIs and TCKs, offer specific guidelines for developing a TCK, and provide an early binary review of the TCK.

For example, Spec Leads will need to provide RI and TCK licensing terms by the start of the JSR Review (instead of the former Community Review). Later in the process, they will have to provide documented substantiation of the TCK's quality and sufficiency, including test results.

Also, there will be an emphasis on providing usage guidelines for the TCK, including:
- Configuration and execution
- First-level TCK appeals process
- Tools documentation
- Methods to automate test execution and recording results, such as a test harness or execution scripts

The combination of these measures should result in higher quality, easier to implement, RIs and TCKs, accelerating developers' time to market while reducing costs.

What It Means for You

JCP 2.6 is another step in an evolutionary process to bring you a more stable, higher-performing, more secure Java platform, whether you are a developer, IT manager, reseller, or user.

The specifics of this proposed JSR are the results of 10 months of work by an Expert Team of JCP Executive Committee members, dedicated Java technology specialists, all pursuing the goal of making the Java platform easier to use and more powerful at the same time.

And even before this new version is approved, the JCP Executive Committee members are seeking input on ways to improve the next version of the JCP program. Please let us know how we can make your work with the Java platform better by sending your comments to Aaron Williams (aaron@jcp.org).

The JCP 2.6 Expert Group

The JSR 215 Expert Group is one of the JCP's largest groups, with 28 participants including Apache Software Foundation, Apple Computer, BEA Systems, Borland Software Corporation, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, IONA Technologies, Insignia Solutions, Doug Lea, Macromedia, Matsushita Electric Industrial, Motorola, Nokia, Oracle, PalmSource, Philips, Research In Motion (RIM), SAP, Siemens, SONY, Sony-Ericsson Mobile, Sun Microsystems, Symbian, Texas Instruments, The SCO Group.

JCP 2.6 has been reviewed and approved by the ECs through the standard JCP review process. Approval of the final draft was received in November 2003. The JCP program office plans to implement the new version of the JCP in the first part of 2004.

For the latest update on JSR 215 and its timeline, visit http://jcp.org/en/jsr/detail?id=215

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Additional Resources

Java Community Process
http://jcp.org/en/home/index

Java Community Process – What's New
http://jcp.org/en/whatsnew/jcp

Java Community Process (JCP) 2.6
More Ways to Get Involved
August 2003
http://developer.java.sun.com/developer/technicalArticles/jcp/

About the Java Community Process

Since its introduction as the open, inclusive process to develop and revise Java technology specifications, reference implementations, and technology compatibility kits, the Java Community Process program has fostered the evolution of the Java platform in cooperation with the international Java developer community. The JCP has over 680 company and individual participants; more than 200 Java technology specifications are in development in the JCP program out of which 46% are in final stages. For more information on the JCP program, please visit http://jcp.org.