

XML Based Blog Engines Compared

Trying out various blog engines

I set out two weeks ago to try and to find a blog engine I could host myself. I did not, at that point, realize what an endeavor it would be. Having never really used any blogging platform, I wasn't entirely sure what kind of features were available or even what I was looking for. I had a few constraints in that I wanted to leverage technology that I was already using on my server - that pretty much meant XQuery, .NET or Java. I wanted it to use XML as data-store. It needed to be mature and full-featured enough that I wasn't forced to tinker too much. Finally, it had to be able to live happily on the server where I was deploying it. Here are some notes on what it took to deploy, and my general impressions of various blog engines...

Let's begin with the operating environment, which is a bit convoluted to say the least. The first wrinkle is that the server runs Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Standard x64 Edition. Anybody who's ever run any 64-bit OS will understand that everything in 64-bit land is a bit more painful. The next hurdle is that I run Apache HTTP Server on port 80 and reverse-proxy to local instances of IIS and Tomcat. This means that the blog engine needed to be configurable to handle this proxy hop.

BlogEngine.NET:

<http://dotnetblogengine.net>

This was the first blog engine I tried, and perhaps my favorite, but ultimately did not meet all my needs. Overall it's a nice, full-featured, .NET based blog engine. If I was using only IIS, this is the one I'd go with. What I like most was its integrated syndication tools, and the fact that it uses TinyMCE as its rich text editor. Not only does it generate the standard RSS & Atom feeds, but also generated links for Digg, Del.icio.us as well as a few other social networking sites. It came with several pre-loaded themes and it looks as if there is a community helping to create additional themes and plugins.

The downside was that it could not handle being behind the Apache reverse-proxy. URLs were being generated incorrectly, so it was of no use.

dasBlog:

<http://www.dasblog.info/>

I had been hearing about dasBlog as a good .NET based blog engine for a couple of years, so I thought this might be a good fit... I thought wrong! It was trouble out of the box and I never did get it running. The installation was easy enough - xcopy to an IIS web folder. The issue here was that it would not run in a x64 environment. One of its dependencies is compiled for 32-bit Windows only. Apparently there is a work around that involves obtaining the 64-bit version of the component and recompiling dasBlog - I didn't get that far, remember I don't want to tinker.

ThinkJot:

<http://code.google.com/p/thinkjot/>

This is another option from the .NET side. Frankly, this project seems a bit immature. It ran well enough, but I could not figure out how to configure it.

Pebble:

<http://pebble.sourceforge.net/>

This the blog engine where I am writing this. Pebble is Java based, and was able to configure a proxy using mod_jk to talk to Tomcat.

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<http://blog.wylovan.com/pebble/wyatt/2007/10/23/1193164380000.html>