INF3330 - Projectdescription - OpenBox Config

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Abstract

This is the first draft of my suggested project in INF3330 - Problem solving with high level languages - fall 2008. The idea behind the project is a proper configuration utility for the wonderful OpenBox window manager. All configuration of OpenBox is done in XML and sh files. As of now the graphical configuration utility is extremely limited, and only supports the very basic possibilities.
Short description

As of today the only graphical configuration utility that exists for OpenBox is ObConf. ObConf is very limited and the only configuration options that can be edited are the theme, window appearance, general behaviour, number and names of desktops and dock options. None of the really powerful settings like keyboard shortcuts, key chains, auto start-up, window-management, menus, etc can be configured graphically. If you don’t configure these options OpenBox doesn’t really offer anything other than even the most primitive window manager offers.

The only way you can configure OpenBox properly is “hacking” XML-files. OpenBox is definitely a window manager for people who long for “the good old days, when men were men, and wrote their own drivers”. No matter how much we fight it these days are coming to an end, and today’s new *nix users want fancy graphical click and point configuration.

OpenBox is a very powerful window manager and at the same time extremely sleek and lightweight. Not many people use it though. I think there are two reasons for this. First of all new users (who have heard how great OpenBox is from people like me) might take a look at the configuration utility first. Their first thought is most likely something in the order of “What?? Is this really all there is??? Screw this”. Or perhaps they think “This is a typical old school kind of things for dinosaurs who hate everything that has anything to do with graphics”.

A good graphical configuration utility might change the first impression of OpenBox and help “trap” more new users. And more users means more people contributing. And more people contributing means a (if possible) even better window manager. Hence this project.

Project overview

- **Part 0 - Foundation** The first thing that must be done is create a foundation for the program. This should include a good system for parsing and writing the XML and sh files. We also need a system for testing if the config file(s) exist, and generating default config files if not due to the fact that OpenBox doesn’t actually generate any config files before you actually want to change a setting.

- **Part 1 - Graphics** Now we need to make a main graphical interface for the application. In the first version QT bindings will be used, later on I hope to include the choice of using GTK+ bindings instead.

- **Part 2 - Window management** This will add the first real configuration possibility. Here I will enable configuration of single windows and also groups of windows. This part of the program should also allow the user to easily grab window identification by clicking on a window.

- **Part 3 - Keyboard shortcuts and key chains** Here I will add support for configuring keyboard shortcuts and key chains.

- **Part 4 - Auto-load script** This part will enable graphical configuration of the auto-load script used by OpenBox.
• **Part 5 - Configuring menus** This is probably the most demanding part of the project as OpenBox allows the use of multiple menus in addition to menu pipes. Menu pipes are menus that are generated run-time by a script written in the users language of choice.

• **Part 6 - Other stuff** Include support for themes, window appearance, general behaviour, desktops and docks. This step has the lowest priority seeing as ObConf already supports configuring these options.

• **Part 7 - GTK+ bindings** To make the program more portable we should include the choice of using GTK+ bindings instead of QT bindings. Perhaps even TK support should be included for those who have an extremely minimal system.

**Time use and the reality of things**

This is a quite large project. It’s impossible for one person to complete this in only one week. In one week it should be possible to complete at least part 0 to part 3 or 4, possibly even a little bit more. Part 6 is probably almost as large as all of the preceding parts. I decided to include the whole list in the project description because I will complete the project at a later point, even if the whole project isn’t finished in the one project week.