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S. Moonesamy, Ed.

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The "about" URI Scheme
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Abstract

This document describes the "about" URI scheme, which is widely used by web browsers and some other applications to designate access to their internal resources, such as settings, application information, hidden built-in functionality, and so on.

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1. Introduction

This document describes the "about" Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) scheme. The "about" URI scheme is currently widely used by Web browsers to designate access to their internal resources such as settings, application information, so called "Easter eggs" (i.e. hidden feature or joke in an application).

2. URI Scheme Specification

2.1. URI Scheme Syntax

The "about" URI syntactically conforms to the <about-uri> rule below, expressed using Augmented Backus-Naur Form (ABNF) [RFC5234]:

```
about-uri = "about:" about-token [ about-query ] [ about-fragment ]
about-token = *pchar
about-query = "?" query
about-fragment = "#" fragment
pchar     = <as specified in RFC 3986, Appendix A>
query     = <as specified in RFC 3986, Appendix A>
fragment  = <as specified in RFC 3986, Appendix A>
```

In terms of RFC 3986, <about-token> part corresponds to <hier-part>, <about-query> to the query component and <about-fragment> to the

fragment component of the URI.

2.2. URI Scheme Semantics

The resource which a particular "about" URI references is denoted by <about-token> part of the URI. The <about-query> specifies additional information about its handling and/or the information that should be returned by the resource which the URI references.

It is impossible to specify a binding between all the possible tokens and the semantics of "about" URIs that would contain such tokens. Therefore the resource referenced by the URI is generally considered as specific to a Web browser implementation.

2.2.1. Well-known "about" URIs

Some <about-token>s have been reserved as the behavior when the resource is referenced is well-known. (Well-known tokens).

A well-known "about" URI is a URI that has a well-known token as its <about-token> part. It is recommended that such URIs be handled in accordance with the specification referenced in the Well-known token registry (see Section 5.2).

Well-known "about" URIs are intended to be registered when there is a need to codify the behavior of particular <about-token>.

2.3. Encoding Considerations

"about" URIs are subject to encoding rules defined in RFC 3986 [RFC3986].

3. "about:blank"

This document defines one well-known token: "blank". The URI "about:blank" refers to a resource represented in the browser by a blank page.

4. Security Considerations

Security considerations for URIs are discussed in Section 7 of RFC 3986 [RFC3986]. However, most of those provisions do not apply to the "about" URI scheme as they are mainly scoped to schemes used in the Internet.

"about" URIs can sometimes refer to sensitive information, such as

user passwords stored in a cache, or parameters that, if changed, could affect user's data. The application therefore needs to ensure that the user's data is secured and no threats are imposed by "about" URIs.

5. IANA Considerations

5.1. URI Scheme Registration

The registration of the "about" URI scheme in the "URI Schemes" registry is requested. The information below is provided according to the guidelines from RFC 4395 [RFC4395]:

URI scheme name: about

Status: Permanent

URI scheme syntax: see Section 2.1 of RFC xxxx

URI scheme semantics: see Section 2.2 of RFC xxxx

URI scheme encoding considerations: see Section 2.3 of RFC xxxx

Applications that use the scheme: "about" URIs are predominantly used by Web browsers.

Security considerations: see Section 4 of RFC xxxx

Contact: IETF Applications Area Directors <app-ads@tools.ietf.org>

Author/Change controller: IESG <iesg@ietf.org> (on behalf of the IETF)

References: see Section 5 of RFC xxxx

[RFC Editor: Please replace xxxx with assigned RFC number]

5.2. A Registry for Well-known Tokens

This document creates the '"about" URI Well-known Tokens' registry.

The registry entries consist of three fields: Well-known Token, Description and Reference. The Well-known Token field has to conform to <about-token> production defined in Section 2.1. The initial set of assignments is as follows:

Well-known	Description	Reference

Token		
blank	Used in "about" URIs to refer to blank page	RFC xxxx

5.2.1. Registration procedure

The registration policy for this registry is "First Come First Served" as described in RFC 5226 [RFC5226]. The registrant of the token should provide the information mentioned in the following registration template:

- Registered Token: The desired Well-known token to be used in "about" URIs.
- Intended usage: A short description of how "about" URIs with the registered token is handled including information about the referenced resource.
- Contact/Change controller: Person (including contact information) authorized to change this registration.
- Specification: A stable reference to a document which specifies the registered "about" URI. The question of interoperability does not arise. The key motivation is to have a reference to a specification documenting well-known behavior of the "about" URI in Web browsers. As a rule of thumb if the behavior is common to two or more Web browser implementations it can be considered as well-known.

The following is a template for "blank" token:

- Registered Token: blank
- Intended usage: The <about:blank> URI references a blank page.
- Contact/Change controller: IESG <iesg@ietf.org> (on behalf of IETF).
- Specification: RFC xxxx. [RFC Editor: Please replace xxxx with assigned RFC number]

6. References

6.1. Normative References

[RFC3986] Berners-Lee, T., Fielding, R., and L. Masinter, "Uniform Resource Identifier (URI): Generic Syntax", STD 66, RFC 3986, January 2005.

[RFC5226] Narten, T. and H. Alvestrand, "Guidelines for Writing an IANA Considerations Section in RFCs", BCP 26, RFC 5226, May 2008.

[RFC5234] Crocker, D., Ed., and P. Overell, "Augmented BNF for Syntax Specifications: ABNF", STD 68, RFC 5234, January 2008.

6.2. Informative References

[RFC4395] Hansen, T., Hardie, T., and L. Masinter, "Guidelines and Registration Procedures for New URI Schemes", BCP 35, RFC 4395, February 2006.

Appendix A. Acknowledgments

This document has been formed from the draft initially authored by Lachlan Hunt and Joseph Holsten. Additionally, the contributions of Frank Ellermann and Alexey Melnikov are gratefully acknowledged. Barry Leiba and Murray Kucherawy deserve a special credit for providing a great amount of text which has been used in this document.

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Authors' Addresses

S. Moonesamy (editor)
76, Ylang Ylang Avenue
Quatre Bornes
Mauritius

EMail: sm+ietf@elandsys.com