

Network Working Group
Internet-Draft
Intended status: Standards Track
Expires: Dec 08, 2007

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Jun 8, 2007

Timezone Information in HTTP
draft-sharhalakis-httpz-01.txt

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Discussion about this document takes place in http-wg mailing list (ietf-http-wg@w3.org).

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Abstract

This document defines a HTTP header for clients to provide timezone information to web servers. An ABNF description of the corresponding header is provided.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

Many web based applications could benefit from knowing the timezone of their visiting clients. Most of the dynamic content provider applications depend on user accounts to display time and date in the client's native timezone. Even this is not always enough since people may travel across timezone boundaries and they currently need to update their web accounts to reflect their actual timezone information.

This document addresses this need by describing a header to be used by HTTP [[RFC2616](#)] so that interested clients may provide their current timezone information to web servers and thus to web based applications.

1.2. Requirements

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC 2119](#).

An implementation is not compliant if it fails to satisfy one or more of the MUST or REQUIRED level requirements. An implementation that satisfies all the MUST or REQUIRED level and all the SHOULD level requirements is said to be "unconditionally compliant"; one that satisfies all the MUST level requirements but not all the SHOULD level requirements is said to be "conditionally compliant".

1.3. Terminology

This document uses the following terms:

HTTP client

Every client of the HTTP protocol. Commonly referred to as a web browser.

timezone

A timezone string as described in [[POSIXTZ](#)].

HTTP header

A HTTP header as described in [[RFC2616](#)].

The HTTP header specification of this document is presented in the augmented Backus-Naur Form that is described in [[RFC2616](#)].

2. Definition

2.1. Client support

Harhalakis

Expires Dec 08, 2007

FORMFEED[Page 2]

HTTP clients MAY provide local timezone information to visiting web sites. This information is send using the client-timezone HTTP header:

```
client-timezone = "Timezone" ":" timezone
```

Where 'timezone' is in the format specified in [[POSIXTZ](#)].

[2.2.](#) Server support

Compliant servers MAY validate the format of the provided information. Timezone strings that are not in a valid format MAY not be accepted. Validity checking MUST NOT be performed on the content of the timezone string by servers. Only the format of the string may be checked. This way outdated servers will not filter out proper information.

[2.3.](#) Proxy considerations

HTTP proxy servers MUST NOT alter this information.

[3.](#) Security Considerations

[3.1.](#) Client Side

Timezone information may consist personal information regarding the location of a person. HTTP clients MUST NOT provide this information without letting the user prevent it. Clients must either ask users or provide an option for enabling/disabling this feature. The later is RECOMMENDED.

[3.2.](#) Server Side

Web based applications MUST treat this information as user input that can be either valid or invalid.

[4.](#) IANA Considerations

This specification requires registration of a Message Header Field for HTTP [[RFC3864](#)].

Header field: Timezone
Applicable protocol: http
Status: experimental
Author/change controller:
 IETF (iesg@ietf.org)
 Internet Engineering Task Force
Specification document(s):

Harhalakis

Expires Dec 08, 2007

FORMFEED[Page 3]

[this document]

5. Acknowledgements

It should be mentioned that the timezone information in HTTP was also proposed by David Robinson in an email at HTTP Working Group back in 1995 but the replies he got were negative. It was believed that timezone information should be handled by CGI scripts and not by the Hypertext Transfer Protocol. The discussion can be found at http-wg mailing list archives:

<http://www.hpl.hp.com/personal/ange/archives/archives-95/http-wg-archive/0521.html>.

This document was properly formed thanks to the remarks of Julian Reschke.

6. References

6.1. Normative References

- [RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", [BCP 14](#), [RFC 2119](#), March 1997.
- [RFC2616] Fielding, R., Gettys, J., Mogul, J., Frystyk, H., Masinter, L., Leach, P., and T. Berners-Lee, "Hypertext Transfer Protocol -- HTTP/1.1", [RFC 2616](#), June 1999.
- [RFC3864] Klyne, G., Nottingham, M., and J. Mogul, "Registration Procedures for Message Header Fields", [BCP 90](#), [RFC 3864](#), September 2004.
- [POSIXTZ] "Standard for Information Technology - Portable Operating System Interface (POSIX) - Base Definitions", IEEE Std 1003.1-2004, December 2004.

6.2. Informative References

- [2223BIS] Reynolds, J. and R. Braden, "Instructions to Request for Comments (RFC) Authors", [draft-rfc-editor-rfc2223bis-08.txt](#), August 2004.
- [RFC4234] Crocker, D. and P. Overell, "Augmented BNF for Syntax Specifications: ABNF", [RFC 4234](#), October 2005.

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Harhalakis

Expires Dec 08, 2007

FORMFEED[Page 4]

Internet Draft Timezone in HTTP Jun 08, 2007

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Harhalakis

Expires Dec 08, 2007

FORMFEED[Page 6]