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Orca (assistive technology)

Orca is a free and open-source, flexible, extensible screen reader from the GNOME project for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Using various combinations of speech synthesis and braille, Orca helps provide access to applications and toolkits that support the AT-SPI (e.g., the GNOME desktop, Mozilla Firefox/Thunderbird, OpenOffice.org/LibreOffice and GTK, Qt and Java Swing/SWT applications).

The name **Orca**, which is another term for a killer whale, is a nod to the long-standing tradition of naming screen readers after aquatic creatures, including the Assistive Technology product on Windows called JAWS (which stands for Job Access With Speech), the early DOS screen reader called Flipper,^[3] and the UK vision impairment company Dolphin Computer Access.^[4]

As of GNOME 2.16, Orca is the default screen reader of the GNOME platform, replacing Gnopernicus.^[5] As a result, Orca follows the GNOME stable release cycles of approximately six-months.^[6] Orca is provided by default on a number of operating system distributions, including Solaris,^[7] Fedora,^[8] openSUSE^[9] and Ubuntu.^[10]

Linux Screen Reader (LSR) was an alternative screen reader to Orca led by IBM and started in 2006. However, it was ceased the following year because IBM focused their resources in other projects.^[11]

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Initial release	September 3, 2006
Stable release	3.38.2 / 22 December 2020 ^[1]
Preview release	n/a (n/a) ^[±] (https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Latest_preview_software_release/Orca&action=edit)
Repository	gitlab.gnome.org/GNOME/orca.git (https://gitlab.gnome.org/GNOME/orca.git)

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History

The development of Orca was started by the Accessibility Program Office (APO) of Sun Microsystems, Inc. (now Oracle) with contributions from many community members. The original idea and the first working prototype for Orca was started in May 2004 by Mark Mulcahy, a blind programmer who worked for Sun Microsystems. When Mark left Sun Microsystems and ventured out to start his own company, the Accessibility Program Office took Mark's work, continued with it and released the first official version on September 3, 2006.^{[12][13][14]} When Oracle acquired Sun Microsystems in 2010 they cut developer jobs of full-time developers working on GNOME accessibility components, including Orca main maintainer Willie Walker. Since then, Orca is run by volunteers, led by Joanmarie Diggs.^{[15][16]} On September 7, 2011, Igalia, a company specialized in Free Software, hired Joanmarie Diggs and is supporting her work in Orca.^[17]

Features

Orca's profiles allow users to save and load multiple configurations and the users can quickly access to different profiles, making it far easier to access multilingual text and environments.

Maintainer list

Orca development has been led by their maintainers with the help of its community. The maintainers so far are:^[18]

Current:

- Joanmarie Diggs

Previous:

- Alejandro Leiva

	<u>ome.org/GNO</u> <u>ME/orca.git)</u> <div></div>
Written in	<u>Python</u>
Operating system	<u>Unix-like</u>
Type	<u>Screen</u> <u>reader</u> <u>Accessibility</u>
License	<u>GNU LGPL</u> (version 2.1) ^[2]
Website	<u>projects</u> <u>.gnome.org</u> <u>/orca/ (http://</u> <u>projects.gno</u> <u>me.org/orca/)</u>

- Willie Walker
- Mike Pedersen
- Eitan Isaacson
- Mesar Hameed

Other developers who made great contributions to the project are Krishnakant Mane, Marc Mulcahy, Rich Burrridge and Scott Haeger.^[19]

See also

- Festival Speech Synthesis System
- Speech-generating device

References

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18. "Doap file log" (<https://git.gnome.org/browse/orca/log/orca.doap>). Retrieved 16 August 2013.
19. "AUTHORS file" (<https://git.gnome.org/browse/orca/tree/AUTHORS>). Retrieved 17 August 2013.

External links

- Official website (<http://projects.gnome.org/orca/>)
 - Orca's first programmer/inventor (https://web.archive.org/web/20131216012926/https://blogs.oracle.com/richb/entry/my_first_blind_email)
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