

Document Object Model (DOM) Level 3 XPath Specification

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Editor:

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Abstract

This specification defines the Document Object Model Level 3 XPath. It provides simple functionalities to access a DOM tree using [XPath 1.0]. This module builds on top of the Document Object Model Level 3 Core.

Status of this document

This section describes the status of this document at the time of its publication. Other documents may supersede this document. The latest status of this document series is maintained at the W3C.

This document contains the Document Object Model Level 3 XPath specification.

This is a first public Working Draft for review by W3C members and other interested parties.

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Comments on this document are invited and are to be sent to the public mailing list www-dom@w3.org. An archive is available at http://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/www-dom/.

This document has been produced as part of the W3C DOM Activity. The authors of this document are the DOM Working Group members.

A list of current W3C Recommendations and other technical documents can be found at http://www.w3.org/TR.

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1. Document Object Model XPath

Editors

Ray Whitmer, Netscape/AOL

1.1. Introduction

XPath is becoming an important part of a variety of many specifications including XForms, XPointer, XSL, CSS, and so on. It is also a clear advantage for user applications which use DOM to be able to use XPath expressions to locate nodes automatically and declaratively. But liveness issues have plagued each attempt to get a list of DOM nodes matching specific criteria, as would be expected for an XPath API. There have also traditionally been object model mismatches between DOM and XPath. This proposal specifies new interfaces and approaches to resolving these issues.

1.2. General considerations

This section considers the differences between the Document Object Model and the XPath Model as defined by [XPath 1.0] as well as Ranges.

1.2.1. Text Nodes

The XPath model sees a single logical text node where DOM may have multiple fragmented Text nodes due to cdata sections, entity references, etc. Instead of returning multiple nodes where XPath sees a single logical text node, only the first non-empty DOM Text node of any logical XPath text will be returned or entered into Node set. Applications will have to manually gather the text of a single logical text node from multiple nodes beginning with the first Text node identified by the implementation.

Note: DOM Level 3 Core adds the attribute wholeText on the Text interface for retrieving the whole text for logically-adjacent Text nodes.

1.2.2. Namespace Nodes

The XPath model expects namespace nodes for each in-scope namespace attached to each Element. DOM and certain other W3C infoset conformant implementations only maintain the declaration of namespaces instead of replicating them on each Element where they are in-scope. The DOM implementation of XPath will only return Attr nodes of in-scope namespace declarations, which may be attached to the current element or its ancestors.

Issue Namespace-1:

This does not exactly match the description of XPath 1.0. Need input from the XQuery 1.0/XPath 2.0 Data Model.

Issue Namespace-2:

How to represent namespace nodes in the Core?

Issue Namespace-3:

There is no declaration node corresponding to the always-present "xml" prefix declaration. Issue Namespace-4:

The uniqueness and document order of namespace declaration nodes is different from in-scope namespace nodes, producing a different order and number of nodes in the result set where the namespaces nodes of multiple elements are requested.

Issue Namespace-5:

The ownerElement of the namespace declaration is different from the parent of in-scope namespace nodes of XPath.

1.2.2.1. Advantages

- Most common use cases would just work.
- No need to manufacture convenience nodes.
- XPath can be used to find and manipulate namespace declarations that are invisible in the strict XPath model.
- XQuery also models the namespace declaration instead of the in-scope namespace.

Note: The DOM WG should try to ensure compatibility between this approach and XPath 2.0. Removing the parent from XPath 2.0 namespace nodes does not help, because the relationship between the Namespace and Element was maintained, since XPath 2.0 maintains that the namespace nodes of an element still occur before its attribute nodes producing a many-to-one relationship between XPath 2.0 Namespace Nodes and DOM Attr nodes which declare namespaces, making it impossible to sort the results without a separate Namespace node for each occurrence to represent the order correctly. Also, the XQuery 1.0 and XPath 2.0 Data Model specification [XQuery 1.0 and XPath 2.0 Data Model] still maintains that each constructed Namespace node has a unique identity, implying that duplicates would be improperly eliminated in the resultant set. (See XQuery 1.0 and XPath 2.0 Data Model 3.1, 3.2, etc.).

1.2.3. Ranges

Since XPath returns nodes and strings, but never ranges, there is no use for ranges in this API as had been previously suggested. It is conceivable that in the future data types could be added supporting the notion of DOM ranges, especially if the DOM Working Group decided to do the work, at which time a range could become another return type of an XPath expression supported by the evaluator. This would be supportable by adding appropriate additional methods to XPathEvaluator [p.11] to evaluate XPath expressions returning ranges.

If sets of ranges were introduced, an appropriate interface for sets of ranges would need to be added to DOM (needed anyway for implementation of multiple selection), and this would be another new return type supported by the XPath evaluator.

1.3. Interfaces

A DOM application may use the hasFeature(feature, version) method of the DOMImplementation interface with parameter values "XPath" and "3.0" (respectively) to determine whether or not the event module is supported by the implementation. In order to fully support this module,

an implementation must also support the "Core" feature defined in the DOM Level 3 Core specification [DOM Level 3 Core]. Please, refer to additional information about conformance in the DOM Level 3 Core specification [DOM Level 3 Core].

Note: There is a fair amount of complexity in custom extension functions and variables because variables may be of various types and functions have arguments and return types. There are additional issues such as keeping functions from modifying the DOM, what exceptions to allow, and all the fun of callbacks. If the first draft of the specification ignores custom functions and variables, this should not make it more difficult to later add such a factory to the specification or for implementors to provide alternate evaluators that access extension functions and variables.

Definition group XPathExceptionCode

```
Defined Constants
```

TYPE_ERR

If an attempt is made to convert a XPath result into an imcompatible type.

Exception XPathException IDL Definition

```
exception XPathException {
    unsigned short code;
};
```

Interface XPathEvaluator

The evaluation of XPath expressions is available in XPathEvaluator. A Document which implements the XPath module will be castable using language-specific mechanisms to XPathEvaluator, which will provide evaluation of XPath expressions with no special extension functions or variables. XPathEvaluator implementations may be available from other sources that provide extension functions or variables.

Issue XPathEvaluator-1:

should we return an Object as the result instead and have one general evaluateAs method? **IDL Definition**

interface XPathEvalu	ator {					
boolean evaluateAsBoolean(in DOMString expression,						
	in Node contextNode,					
	in NamespaceResolver resolver)					
	raises(XPathException);					
double	evaluateAsNumber(in DOMString expression,					
	in Node contextNode,					
	in NamespaceResolver resolver)					
	raises(XPathException);					
DOMString	evaluateAsString(in DOMString expression,					
_	in Node contextNode,					
	in NamespaceResolver resolver)					
	raises(XPathException);					
Node	evaluateAsNode(in DOMString expression,					
	in Node contextNode,					
	in NamespaceResolver resolver)					
	raises(XPathException);					
ActiveNodeSet	evaluateAsNodeSet(in DOMString expression,					

```
in Node contextNode,
in NamespaceResolver resolver)
raises(XPathException);
```

};

Methods

evaluateAsBoolean

Evaluates an XPath expression and converts the result to a boolean.

Parameters

expression of type DOMString

The XPath expression to be evaluated.

contextNode of type Node

The context node for the evaluation of the XPath expression.

resolver of type NamespaceResolver [p.17]

The resolver permits translation of prefixes within the XPath expression into appropriate namespaceURIs.

Return Value

boolean The result of the evaluation of the XPath expression.

Exceptions

XPathException	TYPE_ERR: Raised if the result cannot be converted to a
[p.11]	boolean

evaluateAsNode

Evaluates an XPath expression and returns the first node of the resulting set, null if the resulting set is empty.

Parameters

```
expression of type DOMString
```

The XPath expression to be evaluated.

contextNode of type Node

The context node for the evaluation of the XPath expression.

```
resolver of type NamespaceResolver [p.17]
```

The resolver permits translation of prefixes within the XPath expression into appropriate namespaceURIs.

Return Value

Node The result of the evaluation of the XPath expression.

Exceptions

XPathException	TYPE_ERR: Raised if the result cannot be converted to a
[p.11]	node set.

evaluateAsNodeSet

Evaluates an XPath expression and returns the result as a node set.

Parameters

expression of type DOMString

The XPath expression to be evaluated.

contextNode of type Node

The context node for the evaluation of the XPath expression.

resolver of type NamespaceResolver [p.17]

The resolver permits translation of prefixes within the XPath expression into appropriate namespaceURIs.

Return Value

ActiveNodeSet [p.15] The result of the evaluation of the XPath expression.

Exceptions

XPathException	TYPE_ERR: Raised if the result cannot be converted to a
[p.11]	node set.

evaluateAsNumber

Evaluates an XPath expression and converts the result to a number.

Parameters

expression of type DOMString

The XPath expression to be evaluated.

contextNode of type Node

The context node for the evaluation of the XPath expression.

```
resolver of type NamespaceResolver [p.17]
```

The resolver permits translation of prefixes within the XPath expression into appropriate namespaceURIs.

Return Value

double The result of the evaluation of the XPath expression.

Exceptions

XPathException	TYPE_ERR: Raised if the result cannot be converted to a
[p.11]	number (IEEE double precision floating point value)

evaluateAsString

Evaluates an XPath expression and converts the result to a string. **Parameters** expression of type DOMString

The XPath expression to be evaluated.

contextNode	of type Node						
The context	The context node for the evaluation of the XPath expression.						
resolver of typ	resolver of type NamespaceResolver [p.17]						
Theresol	The resolver permits translation of prefixes within the XPath expression into						
appropriate 1	appropriate namespaceURIs.						
Return Value							
DOMString	The result of the evaluation of the XPath expression.						

Exceptions

XPathException	TYPE_ERR: Raised if the result cannot be converted to a
[p.11]	DOMString

An XPath node set is represented by a NodeSet interface which maintains a set of references to nodes. No node is ever duplicated in NodeSet. When ActiveNodeSet [p.15] is returned from an XPath evaluation, it corresponds to the hierarchy that it was requested on until the hierarchy is mutated in any way (anything that could produce a mutation event) at which time the set becomes invalid and any future call raises an exception. This permits the XPath sets to be computed either all at once or incrementally, however the implementation decides to do it. This also guarantees that any valid ActiveNodeSet corresponds to the current hierarchy.

NodeSet is not generally ordered in any way because implementations may be parallelized and compound statements may return nodes out of document order even in the simplest serial implementation. XSL and other processing requires XPath sets to be sorted in document order.

Interface StaticNodeSet

A StaticNodeSet is a collection of Nodes evaluated from an XPath expression. It never becomes invalid and never changes the array of node references even if the nodes are no longer are in the hierarchy or no longer match the expression that created the set. The individual nodes of a StaticNodeSet may be manipulated in the hierarchy and these changes are seen immediately by users referencing the nodes through the set.

IDL Definition

```
interface StaticNodeSet {
   Node item(in unsigned long index);
   readonly attribute unsigned long length;
};
```

Attributes

length of type unsigned long, readonly

The number of nodes in the list. The range of valid child node indices is 0 to length-1 inclusive.

Methods

item

Returns the indexth item in the collection. If index is greater than or equal to the number of nodes in the list, this returns null.

Parameters

index of type unsigned long Index into the collection.

Return Value

Node The node at the indexth position in the NodeList, or null if that is not a valid index.

No Exceptions

Interface ActiveNodeSet

This represents a live node set obtained with the evaluation of an XPath expression.

Issue ActiveNodeSet01:

Do we need a detach() method?

IDL Definition

```
interface ActiveNodeSet {
 Node
                     nextNode()
                                         raises(DOMException);
 void
                     reset()
                                        raises(DOMException);
 ActiveNodeSet
                     cloneSet()
                                        raises(DOMException);
 ActiveNodeSet
                     getDocumentOrderedSet()
                                         raises(DOMException);
 StaticNodeSet
                     getStaticNodeSet()
                                         raises(DOMException);
```

};

Methods

cloneSet

Clones the ActiveNodeSet.

Issue cloneSet-1:

It was suggested that cloneSet should copy only the remaining set, which might favor incremental implementations and also make it possible to non-destructively pass on the current position. Clones must then be constructed at the appropriate position within the set and complete clones may only be constructed before processing any nodes.

Return Value

ActiveNodeSet [p.15] The new ActiveNodeSet.

Exceptions

DOMException INVALID_STATE_ERR: The ActiveNodeSet is no longer valid.

No Parameters

getDocumentOrderedSet

This method may be called as long as the set is not invalid to get a set that is sorted into document order. Nodes which have no defined order with respect to each other (such as Attr nodes attached to an Element) will not be ordered in any particular order with respect to each other by this method.

Issue getDocumentOrdered-1:

Here are significant differences between DOM's currently proposed document order and the XPath model's document order expected by XSL and other callers of getDocumentOrderedSet. Some of the differences, we could just adopt. Others are unclear.

For example, in the fragment <foo bar1="abc"/><foo bar2="def" bar3="ghi">, DOM currently says that attribute nodes bar1 and bar2 are unordered with respect to each other, since they each have no parent. XPath and DOM both agree that bar2 and bar3 have no order with respect to each other, but XPath gives them an order with respect to their parent, giving them a definate position in the resulting sorted node set, whereas DOM does not acknowledge the ownerElement as part of the ordering relationship and makes it impossible to meaningfully sort attributes nodes of an element with elements or the attributes of other elements. I think we should adjust DOM's proposed comparison APIs and the result will help, rather than hurting, the DOM specification.

It will be much more difficult to make Attr nodes masquerading as XPath namespace nodes XPath-compatible with respect to their sort order. If it is a requirement to make this work, we have to use real Namespace nodes, IMO.

Return Value

ActiveNodeSet [p.15]

Exceptions

DOMException INVALID_STATE_ERR: The ActiveNodeSet is no longer valid.

No Parameters

getStaticNodeSet

This method may be called as long as the set is not invalid to force complete evaluation and return StaticNodeSet [p.14], which never becomes invalid and never changes the array of node references even if the nodes are no longer are in the hierarchy or no longer match the expression that created the set. **Return Value**

StaticNodeSet [p.14] The complete evaluation of the XPath expression.

Exceptions

DOMException INVALID_STATE_ERR: The ActiveNodeSet is no longer valid.

No Parameters nextNode Returns the next node from the XPath expression evaluation. Return Value

Node Returns the next node.

Exceptions

DOMException	INVALID_STATE_ERR: The ActiveNodeSet is no longer valid.
T. D. (

No Parameters

reset

Exceptions

DOMException INVALID_STATE_ERR: The ActiveNodeSet is no longer valid.

No Parameters No Return Value Interface *NamespaceResolver*

The NamespaceResolver interface permit prefix strings in the expression to be properly bound to namespaceURI strings. The expectation is that an instance of the NamespaceResolver interface can be obtained by using binding-specific casting methods on an instance of the Element interface. This interface may also be user implemented instead of obtaining the implementation from an Element.

Issue NamespaceResolver-1:

This interface should be reconciled with the core method for namespace resolution so that it is automatically implemented by any Element

Resolution: The current proposal matches the definition in the Node interface.

IDL Definition

```
interface NamespaceResolver {
   DOMString lookupNamespaceURI(in DOMString prefix);
};
```

Methods

lookupNamespaceURI

Look up the namespace URI associated to the given prefix, starting from this node. **Parameters** prefix of type DOMString The prefix to look for. **Return Value**

DOMString Returns the associated namespace URI or null if none is found.

No Exceptions

Appendix A: IDL Definitions

This appendix contains the complete OMG IDL [OMGIDL] for the Level 3 Document Object Model XPath definitions.

The IDL files are also available as: http://www.w3.org/TR/2001/WD-DOM-Level-3-XPath-20010618/idl.zip

xpath.idl:

```
// File: xpath.idl
#ifndef _XPATH_IDL_
#define _XPATH_IDL_
#include "dom.idl"
#pragma prefix "dom.w3c.org"
module xpath
{
  typedef dom::DOMString DOMString;
  typedef dom::Node Node;
  interface NamespaceResolver;
  interface ActiveNodeSet;
  exception XPathException {
    unsigned short code;
  };
  interface XPathEvaluator {
    boolean
                       evaluateAsBoolean(in DOMString expression,
                                          in Node contextNode,
                                          in NamespaceResolver resolver)
                                         raises(XPathException);
    double
                       evaluateAsNumber(in DOMString expression,
                                         in Node contextNode,
                                         in NamespaceResolver resolver)
                                         raises(XPathException);
    DOMString
                       evaluateAsString(in DOMString expression,
                                         in Node contextNode,
                                         in NamespaceResolver resolver)
                                         raises(XPathException);
                       evaluateAsNode(in DOMString expression,
    Node
                                      in Node contextNode,
                                       in NamespaceResolver resolver)
                                        raises(XPathException);
    ActiveNodeSet
                       evaluateAsNodeSet(in DOMString expression,
                                          in Node contextNode,
                                          in NamespaceResolver resolver)
                                         raises(XPathException);
  };
```

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xpath.idl:

```
interface StaticNodeSet {
   Node item(in unsigned long index);
   readonly attribute unsigned long
                                      length;
 };
 interface ActiveNodeSet {
   Node
                      nextNode()
                                       raises(dom::DOMException);
   void
                      reset()
                                       raises(dom::DOMException);
   ActiveNodeSet
                      cloneSet()
                                       raises(dom::DOMException);
                      getDocumentOrderedSet()
   ActiveNodeSet
                                       raises(dom::DOMException);
   StaticNodeSet
                      getStaticNodeSet()
                                       raises(dom::DOMException);
 };
 interface NamespaceResolver {
                      lookupNamespaceURI(in DOMString prefix);
   DOMString
 };
};
#endif // _XPATH_IDL_
```

Appendix B: Java Language Binding

This appendix contains the complete Java [Java] bindings for the Level 3 Document Object Model XPath.

```
The Java files are also available as 
http://www.w3.org/TR/2001/WD-DOM-Level-3-XPath-20010618/java-binding.zip
```

B.1: Other XPath interfaces

org/w3c/dom/xpath/XPathException.java:

```
package org.w3c.dom.xpath;
public class XPathException extends RuntimeException {
    public XPathException(short code, String message) {
        super(message);
        this.code = code;
    }
    public short code;
};
```

org/w3c/dom/xpath/XPathEvaluator.java:

```
package org.w3c.dom.xpath;
import org.w3c.dom.Node;
public interface XPathEvaluator {
    public boolean evaluateAsBoolean(String expression,
                                     Node contextNode,
                                     NamespaceResolver resolver)
                                     throws XPathException;
    public double evaluateAsNumber(String expression,
                                   Node contextNode,
                                   NamespaceResolver resolver)
                                   throws XPathException;
    public String evaluateAsString(String expression,
                                   Node contextNode,
                                   NamespaceResolver resolver)
                                   throws XPathException;
    public Node evaluateAsNode(String expression,
                               Node contextNode,
                               NamespaceResolver resolver)
                               throws XPathException;
    public ActiveNodeSet evaluateAsNodeSet(String expression,
                                           Node contextNode,
```

NamespaceResolver resolver) throws XPathException;

}

org/w3c/dom/xpath/StaticNodeSet.java:

```
package org.w3c.dom.xpath;
import org.w3c.dom.Node;
public interface StaticNodeSet {
    public Node item(int index);
    public int getLength();
}
```

org/w3c/dom/xpath/ActiveNodeSet.java:

}

org/w3c/dom/xpath/NamespaceResolver.java:

```
package org.w3c.dom.xpath;
public interface NamespaceResolver {
    public String lookupNamespaceURI(String prefix);
}
```

Appendix C: ECMA Script Language Binding

This appendix contains the complete ECMA Script [ECMAScript] binding for the Level 3 Document Object Model XPath definitions.

```
Prototype Object XPathExceptionCode
    The XPathExceptionCode class has the following constants:
         XPathExceptionCode.TYPE ERR
              This constant is of type Number and its value is 1.
Object XPathExceptionCode
Object XPathException
    The XPathException object has the following properties:
         code
              This property is of type Number.
Object XPathEvaluator
    The XPathEvaluator object has the following methods:
         evaluateAsBoolean(expression, contextNode, resolver)
              This method returns a Boolean.
              The expression parameter is of type String.
              The contextNode parameter is a Node object.
              The resolver parameter is a NamespaceResolver object.
              This method can raise a XPathException object.
         evaluateAsNumber(expression, contextNode, resolver)
              This method returns a double object.
              The expression parameter is of type String.
              The contextNode parameter is a Node object.
              The resolver parameter is a NamespaceResolver object.
              This method can raise a XPathException object.
         evaluateAsString(expression, contextNode, resolver)
              This method returns a String.
              The expression parameter is of type String.
              The contextNode parameter is a Node object.
              The resolver parameter is a NamespaceResolver object.
              This method can raise a XPathException object.
         evaluateAsNode(expression, contextNode, resolver)
              This method returns a Node object.
              The expression parameter is of type String.
              The contextNode parameter is a Node object.
              The resolver parameter is a NamespaceResolver object.
              This method can raise a XPathException object.
         evaluateAsNodeSet(expression, contextNode, resolver)
             This method returns a ActiveNodeSet object.
              The expression parameter is of type String.
              The contextNode parameter is a Node object.
              The resolver parameter is a NamespaceResolver object.
              This method can raise a XPathException object.
```

Object StaticNodeSet

The **StaticNodeSet** object has the following properties:

length

This read-only property is of type Number.

The **StaticNodeSet** object has the following methods:

item(index)

This method returns a Node object.

The index parameter is of type Number.

Note: This object can also be dereferenced using square bracket notation (e.g. obj[1]). Dereferencing with an integer **index** is equivalent to invoking the **item** method with that index.

Object ActiveNodeSet

The ActiveNodeSet object has the following methods:

nextNode()

This method returns a Node object.

This method can raise a **DOMException** object.

reset()

This method has no return value.

This method can raise a **DOMException** object.

cloneSet()

This method returns a ActiveNodeSet object.

This method can raise a **DOMException** object.

getDocumentOrderedSet()

This method returns a ActiveNodeSet object.

This method can raise a **DOMException** object.

getStaticNodeSet()

This method returns a **StaticNodeSet** object.

This method can raise a **DOMException** object.

Object NamespaceResolver

The NamespaceResolver object has the following methods:

lookupNamespaceURI(prefix)

This method returns a **String**.

The **prefix** parameter is of type **String**.

Appendix D: Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to this specification, including members of the DOM Working Group and the DOM Interest Group. We especially thank the following:

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D.1: Production Systems

This specification was written in XML. The HTML, OMG IDL, Java and ECMA Script bindings were all produced automatically.

Thanks to Joe English, author of cost, which was used as the basis for producing DOM Level 1. Thanks also to Gavin Nicol, who wrote the scripts which run on top of cost. Arnaud Le Hors and Philippe Le Hégaret maintained the scripts.

After DOM Level 1, we used Xerces as the basis DOM implementation and wish to thank the authors. Philippe Le Hégaret and Arnaud Le Hors wrote the Java programs which are the DOM application.

Thanks also to Jan Kärrman, author of html2ps, which we use in creating the PostScript version of the specification.

D.1: Production Systems

Glossary

Editors

Arnaud Le Hors, W3C Robert S. Sutor, IBM Research (for DOM Level 1)

Several of the following term definitions have been borrowed or modified from similar definitions in other W3C or standards documents. See the links within the definitions for more information.

tokenized

The description given to various information items (for example, attribute values of various types, but not including the StringType CDATA) after having been processed by the XML processor. The process includes stripping leading and trailing white space, and replacing multiple space characters by one. See the definition of tokenized type.

well-formed document

A document is *well-formed* if it is tag valid and entities are limited to single elements (i.e., single sub-trees).

Glossary

References

For the latest version of any W3C specification please consult the list of W3C Technical Reports available at http://www.w3.org/TR.

F.1: Normative references

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XPath 1.0

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F.2: Informative references

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F.2: Informative references

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