XEP-0395: Atomically Compare-And-Publish PubSub Items

Florian Schmaus
mailto:flo@geekplace.eu
xmpp:flo@geekplace.eu

2018-12-06
Version 0.2.0

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This specification provides a mechanism to atomically Compare-And-Publish items to a PubSub node.
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1 Introduction

This specification provides a mechanism to atomically publish items to a PubSub node depending on the item ID of the node's latest item. This allows to prevent race conditions and avoids data loss in certain situations.

2 Discovering Support

If an entity supports the Compared-And-Publish feature it MUST advertise the fact by returning a `<feature/>` with the 'var' attribute set to 'urn:xmpp:pubsub:cap:0' in response to a Service Discovery (XEP-0030) query for information.

3 Compare-And-Publish PubSub Items

3.1 PubSub Item Compare-And-Publish Value (CAP-V)

PubSub services supporting the Compare-And-Publish PubSub extension MUST include a Compare-and-Publish value (CAP-V) for every item in every response. The CAP-V value MUST change if the content of the item changed and different item content under the same node MUST NOT yield the same CAP-V. A simple computation of the CAP-ID would be to hash the String representation of the item’s content.

CAP-Vs are associated with PubSub node's items via the item ID. The mapping information is placed by the PubSub service in a `<cap-v-map/>` extension element, qualified by the 'urn:xmpp:pubsub:cap:0' namespace, as child element of the `<items/>` element. The `<cap-v-map/>` element contains one or more `<cap-v-map-entry/>` elements, of which each MUST have a 'item-id' and a 'cap-value' attribute. The former contains the PubSub item ID value and the later contains the according CAP-V of the item.

Listing 1: Service returns some items and their according CAP-Vs

```
<iq type='result' from='pubsub.shakespeare.lit'
to='francisco@denmark.lit/barracks'
id='items1'>
  <pubsub xmlns='http://jabber.org/protocol/pubsub'>
    <items node='princely_musings'>
      <item id='368866411b877c30064a5f62b917cffe'>
        <entry xmlns='http://www.w3.org/2005/Atom'>
          <title>The Uses of This World</title>
          <summary>
            O, that this too too solid flesh would melt
          </summary>
        </entry>
      </item>
    </items>
  </pubsub>
</iq>
```

3.2 PubSub publishing using Compare-And-Publish

In order to atomically compare-and-publish an item, a client sends a XEP-0060 <publish/> IQ with a ‘pubsub#prev_item_cap_value’ precondition publishing option, set to the value of the currently assumed CAP-V of the latest item of the node.

The PubSub service MUST only publish the item if the node’s latest item CAP-V is equal to the CAP-V found in the ‘pubsub#prev_item_cap_value’ field.
3.3 Could not publish because newest item ID did not match

In case the Compare-And-Publish operation failed because the latest node id is not the same as given in the 'previd' attribute in the request, the server returns an <conflict/> error of type 'modify' which a pubsub-specific condition of <precondition-not-met/> and a <compare-and-publish-failed/> element qualified by the 'urn:xmpp:pubsub:cap:0' namespace. The element MUST have a 'cap-id' attribute with the CAP-V of the lastest item.
4 Rationale

Unfortunately it was not possible to re-use the PubSub item ID for the "Atomically Compare-And-Publish" purpose. This is mostly due XEP-0060 § 12.8 stating that: "If a publisher publishes an item and the ItemID matches that of an existing item, the pubsub service MUST overwrite the existing item and generate a new event notification."

Which means that the content of an item could change without its ID, rendering the item ID unusable for CAP.

Injecting a "cap"-namespaced attribute carrying the item's CAP-V into PubSub's <item/> would be a very elegant approach to assign CAP-Vs to PubSub items (and the favored one of the XEP's author). But the usage of namespaces attributes within XMPP is controversial. Therefore this XEP resorts to using the <cap-v-map/> approach for now.

5 Security Considerations

This extension protocol does not add any further security considerations to the ones mentioned in XEP-0060 § 14..

6 IANA Considerations

This document requires no interaction with the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA).

7 XMPP Registrar Considerations

This specification defines the following XML namespaces:

- urn:xmpp:pubsub:cap:0
This specification defines the following <publish-options/> fields:

- pubsub#prev_item_cap_value

8 XML Schema

TODO: Add after the XEP leaves the ‘experimental’ state.

9 Acknowledgements

Thanks to Kim Alvefur and Dave Cridland for their feedback.