Sudden Deterioration of Facebook User Interface Less and less Liking and Editing with Mozilla Engine

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`http://a2e.de/dok/phm_pub_facebook1207`

July 25, 2012

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1 System Configuration

Until CW27, everything went well. I regularly viewed and edited Facebook pages with Conkeror in version 0.9.3 which I have packaged for OpenSuSE Linux 11.3. I regularly did this on 3 different computers on which I have installed said system and package. The system has been in use for a year and it was not changed in any way during the week in which the Facebook problems arose. The configuration of Conkeror has stayed the same ever since. I developped some Perl programs during that timespan, but these are text files installed in directories that are not relevant to the operating system or to the Mozilla system on which Conkeror is based. The irrelevance of this development work was also corroborated by the fact that the misbehaviour of Facebook on Conkeror occurred also on computers on which I had not depolyed any of the new programs. Also, none of the issues occurred on any websites other than Facebook. E.g. on Google Plus and Youtube, everything works fine.

2 Problems with Conkeror, Firefox et al

Starting on one day of CW27, the Facebook user interface (UI) no longer reacted when I pressed (with our without mouse) the Like button or when I tried to post an edited comment. Sometimes the edited comments were not posted at all. Sometimes it was not even possible to view the editing field while editing. At other times the comments were in fact posted each time when I pressed the posting button, but no success feedback was given, leading to repetitious postings. Sometimes even when using Firefox I failed to get a reaction when posting a link to my wall.

I suspect that Facebook must have adopted some non-standard elements of Ecmascript/Javascript or other bleeding edge programming means. But on the Firefox instances that came with OpenSuSE 11.3 Facebook seems to work, although I noticed some apparently new minor irregularities there too. For example, when clicking on a the highlighted name of someone who sent me a message, the browser shows a blank page with an icon that is dissolved and rebuilt about once per second, suggesting that it has fallen into an eternal loading loop.

When I press the link indicating the number of persons who liked what I posted on a friend's wall, I now, as of CW28/4, only get a Facebook/browse/likes/?id=123456789 type URL. Until yesterday, I still got the names of the liking Facebook users. Until early July, I got those names on Conkeror as well. During CW27 the function deteriorated under Conkeror, and now the deterioration has reached Firefox.

I get problems with non-mozilla-based browsers like Konqueror and Opera as well. E.g. in some cases where in Firefox I can't even open a page, in Opera I can open it but then it takes an eternity to build up and posting comments produces no feedback but only a similar boundless waiting loop, from which I could escape only by backing off to the previous page. When trying to view this multicomment page (150 small comments) with Opera a second time, it built up quickly, but I wasn't able to navigate through comment list nor invoke any other function: the forum was simply dead. On the whole however Opera works well, almost as well as Conkeror still worked a month ago.

3 References on the Web

So far I have not been able to find reports of other users on the web, nor have I tried to contact anyone about it.

People have reported that Facebook reacts irrationally if the user-agent string sent via http is not set to Firefox. This can hardly be the cause of the problem because I never changed this string.

There is a Facebook page on Conkeror, but it only repeats excerpts from Wikipedia and provides neither interaction nor information about issues with regard to the use of Conkeror on Facebook.