

(near term) Roadmap of the Spring project

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Introduction

Spring is a relatively new project with the goal to create the best (open source) RTS game engine.

But Spring is more, within our community we have many talented "modders", "mappers", people that specialise in Artificial Intelligence "AI programmers", people writing documentation "writers" and other creative people.

There are also many players that like to experience the content and help build a good atmosphere in which people like to play and be creative.

So you could add "and foster a creative and friendly community." to the project goal.

At the time of writing the Spring engine is at version 0.70b3.

From the first public version there has been a remarkable amount of development.

The engine has changed to allow different mods, made stable, Linux compatible and whole subsystems like DirectX have been replaced in the process.

This document tries to describe what seems to be the consensus among the key people within the project on how to evolve the project in the more immediate future.

For a part it's technically oriented but it touches more aspects of the project.

The Project

The near term goal would be to have hundreds of Windows, Linux and possibly Mac users play Spring with each other without needing to legally own the original Total Annihilation.

I have split up the project in several different aspects that need work to achieve this goal.

- Engine (Developers) -

The Spring engine is the main propellant of the project.

Technically for the engine to reach the near term goal it would need to allow cross-platform multiplayer gaming.

That means the code needs to run on different computer architectures.

(32/64 bit, x86, PowerPC, byte order)

Most of the porting is done and a developer will have to maintain these architectures.

Besides the architectures, the Windows, Linux and Mac operating systems need to be capable of running the Spring binary.

Windows and Linux are more or less done.

The Mac port needs work.

Another problem is the loss of sync across different computer architectures due to floating point calculations.

A working fix is partially implemented and once completed it would allow people to play Spring cross-platform.

Besides the above goal there are many requests from the community that can be implemented in the engine.

See the Monthly Topic Rotation, Mantis the bug tracker and feedback on the Spring forum.

Other than that there are some personal projects from the developers:

SJ is working on a new water renderer.

Jelmer is working on a new map format.

Greenail tries to implement CEGUI into Spring but had some setbacks as he had to wait for version 0.5 of CEGUI and did not get any help with the look and feel.

He also moved to a new place so he had little time to spare.

- Lobby / Client (Developers) -

Windows users have good lobby software but the code is not portable so Linux and Mac players can't set up or join multiplayer games at this moment.

The "Omni" multi-platform lobby is in the works for some time but still lacks key functionality.

It's written in wxPython a blending of the wxWidgets C++ class library with the Python programming language.

Josh (Ace07) is the Omni developer but lacks time at the moment to add the last needed code to be functional.

For the coming months the two lobby's will probably have to be maintained side by side.

A disadvantage of the Omni lobby is that it has dependencies on library's which are normally not found on a Windows system.

A rewrite in C++ is needed to resolve this issue.

This rewrite could use wxWidgets, Qt 4.0, Project Portland? or the lobby could be integrated into the Spring engine.

Still as long as there is no functional cross-platform lobby the focus is on getting Omni working.

- Mods (Modders) -

More mods that are free to use need to be made.

"World Domination" and "Mynn v/s Xect" are mods that with work could make the game to be free to use and actually fun to play.

Other mods like "Star Wars Total Annihilation", "eXtended Total Annihilation" and "Absolute Annihilation" make heavy use of the original Total Annihilation content or in the case of SWTA use the "Intellectual Property" of another party what makes it impossible to legally distribute the mod.

World Domination needs work on sounds, textures and new cursors to be free but its main creator is not as active as he used to be (he recently moved from Europe to the USA). He also likes to keep artistic control over his project.

Mynn v/s Xect is a GNU GPL project with (as far as we know) no content that is not available under this license.

The Xect race lacks a navy (but this might be fixed in the next release). All models could be reworked with more detail and better animation.

The mod also needs more play testing to improve the balance. There are some (2) people working on this mod but not highly active.

- Maps (Mappers) -

Spring has many maps so not much has to be done here.

Point to improve would be to have people release maps under an open license.

- Documentation (Writers) -

Documentation needs to be written (preferably in the Wiki) on how to get Spring to run on different operating systems.

A incomplete list is written below, the operating systems with a "?" behind it might need some more work then just writing it down.

Windows:

Win 2K, Win XP, Win XP 64 Bit, Win 2k3 ?, Win 2k3 64 Bit ?, Win Vista ?

Linux:

FC5, Debain Sid, Debain Etch, Debain Sarge ?, Ubuntu 6.06, Gentoo 2006.0, Suse 10

Apple Mac:

Mac OS X v10.0 "Cheetah" ?, Mac OS X v10.1 "Puma" ?, Mac OS X v10.2 "Jaguar" ?, Mac OS X v10.3 "Panther" ?, Mac OS X v10.4 "Tiger" ?, Mac OS X v10.5 "Leopard" ?

For the operating systems that are not supported there needs to be an explanation why not and what needs to be done to have it supported.

Another documentation project would be to identify system requirements. As Spring is constantly evolving so will the requirements to run it. Therefore some thought needs to be put in the way the requirements are presented.

Furthermore it would be good to identify what video card chipsets / drivers work with Spring.

And what cards won't work with Spring and why.

That way development can be focused and users know why they can't run Spring.

An constant documentation project is updating and expanding the wiki. Removing outdated information form the wiki is a thing that needs work.

If there is enough demand the wiki can be localised in different languages.

The Mynn v/s Xect mod and possibly others like to have a more in-depth background story.

Please contact the mod maintainer(s) if you like to help out here.

- Marketing and Atmosphere (Players) -

More people need to be made aware of the project.

But don't slam the project on /. or digg as it will put a strain on our server and human resources.

But we can use more people to work on the stuff described in this document.

If you can find people that would possibly contribute to the project please ask them to do so.

Old TA community members would be a safe bet.

As the things described above are being fixed more and more people will join in and start playing Spring.

We have a friendly community and this is a high requirement for the continued success of the project.

There are "Community Guidelines" but there has been to little feedback to declare it a Spring policy.

They are attached below.

It gives a idea about how to keep us all happily nuking each other. :-)

Community guidelines

You can be ...

to the point, confronting, opinionated, ignorant and a lot more.
That is all fine, we love you, still "we" think that two things are not acceptable. *Bitching* and/or *irritating* others.

I have two examples here:

1. Saying someone has to "STFU" is to the point, confronting, opinionated, ignorant and it's bitching someone.
2. Saying "I think you have very little experience with this and therefore I don't think it's a good idea to do X" is to the point, confronting, opinionated and possibly ignorant but you are not bitching him or her.

People that do 1 need to be told that "we" like them to do the 2 thing. (By using 2 not doing 1 to! :-))

Moderators can't be everywhere at the same time so you our community member will have to do this.

For those that think bitching and/or irritating others can actually be freely exercised within the Spring community we have a second system. When you come across someone like this you can notify a moderator, you tell where this person has been bitching or irritating others and depending on the severity this person will be officially warned/kicked/temp banned/banned from the community.