

SOFTWARE AND WORLD WIDE WEB NEWS

Pīnyīnput - the easy way to type pīnyīn with tone marks

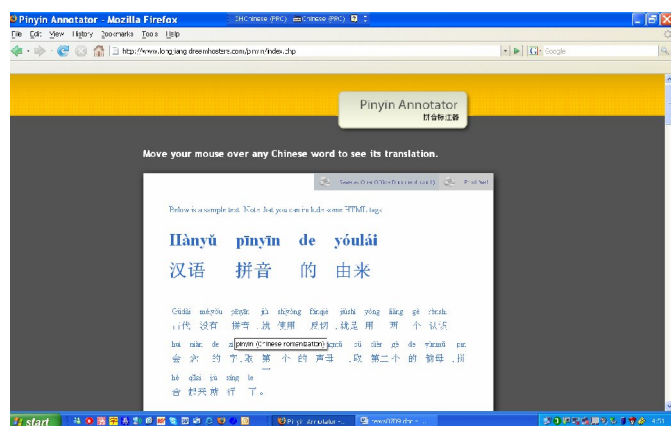
Although Chinese input methods have been around for a long time (and in recent years have seen rapid improvements in both functionality and usability), one aspect of Chinese input that has remained relatively neglected is the ability to input Hanyu pinyin with tone-marks in an easy and convenient manner. Granted, this functionality is really only needed by a fairly niche group of users (mostly consisting of Chinese teachers and learners), so it's easy to understand why this aspect of Chinese input has been overlooked, especially as existing methods to input tone-marks allow these users to "make do". However these existing methods are really quite cumbersome to use, and you could say that Pinyininput was born out of my frustration in dealing with these methods. What I wanted was an input method that would work in all programs, and be as simple to use as a regular character input method, the only difference being that instead of writing characters, it would write pinyin with tone-marks. With a background in software engineering, I was always telling myself that I could write a program to solve this problem, and so one day I finally sat down and did just that. The result was Pinyininput, and it's the program that I, as a learner of Chinese, wanted to use. I figured there would be others who would find it useful too, and so not having a webpage of my own, I posted it online at the excellent Chinese-forums.com, as my small contribution to Chinese learning/computing. If you're interested, you can read more about Pinyininput and download it at the following address: <http://www.chinese-forums.com/showthread.php?t=13005> (by *Imron Alston pinyininput@gmail.com*)

Pinyin Annotator

<http://www.longjiang.dreamhosters.com/pinyin/index.php>

This application puts phonetic symbols (pinyin) on top of Chinese text. It supports most browsers. If you have the Mozilla Firefox browser, this application will put pinyin on *top* of the characters (rather than beside it).

Users can also download a copy of the annotated text and view it in OpenOffice (<http://www.openoffice.org/>) - a free office suite. The following is the screenshot.



SKRBL – a whiteboard to share

<http://www.skrbl.com> is a new whiteboard for free use. It is a web program that allows several users to share one screen to conduct a collaborative work or use it as a blackboard for an online class. Users don't have to register. The first user is the host who can send email to invite his/her friends to share the same screen. It supports unicode so both simplified and traditional Chinese characters are accepted and displayed. Users can also draw pictures, write characters on this whiteboard. Currently, it is a beta version for free use.

