

Comparing Identifiers



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The Problem

A program that wants to speak datalink encounters this:

```
<RESOURCE name="links" type="meta" utype="adhoc:service">
  <GROUP name="inputParams">
    <PARAM name="ID" ref="ssa_pubDID"/>
  </GROUP>
  <PARAM arraysize="*" datatype="char" name="standardID"
    value="ivo://ivoa.net/std/DataLink#links-1.0"/>
  <PARAM name="accessURL" value="http://example.org/foo/dlmeta"/>
</RESOURCE>
```

To see if that's a datalink links service, it compares:

```
standardID=='ivo://ivoa.net/std/DataLink#links-1.0'
```

Unfortunately, that's

WRONG!

The Answer

When comparing standards identifiers, you have to do two things:

1. Normalise the URIs involved.
2. Make sure you don't compare pieces that can vary with the minor version.

Python example:

```
DL_STANDARD_ID = 'ivo://ivoa.net/std/datalink#links-1.'  
  
if standard_id.lower().startswith(DL_STANDARD_ID):  
    ...
```

And Now?

I believe many implementors get this wrong – currently, for datalink.

In principle, they could read IVOA Identifiers and learn how to do it right.

In practice, few of them will.

Should we have a note on this? Should there be a more general VO Implementation Advice note?

In Hindsight

Should we change our policy to recommend only major-versioning the standard keys?

Since new versions of standards will have different IVOIDs, this would mean having no versions at all in the keys. Cool?

Either would require a small update to IVOA Identifiers. I'd volunteer after the next interop.