Comparing Identifiers

Markus Demleitner
msdemlei@ari.uni-heidelberg.de

• The Problem
• The Answer
• So...?
The Problem

A program that wants to speak datalink encounters this:

```xml
<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/dlmdata"/>
</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!
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:
```python
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 the 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.