The Harmonious Path to HTML

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ABSTRACT

Web technology evolves organically, rarely taking the straightest path to new places. The story of its dominant syntaxes is one example. Starting from very loosely defined SGML-inspired markup, it then went through a period of XML austerity that intended to curtail the race to the bottom between browsers in tag soup processing. Such a draconian approach failed, but out of the melee came HTML5 which, warts and all, benefits from a strictly defined — and therefore interoperable — syntax.

Many innovative languages were produced during the XML era, they therefore require some syntactical tweaking in order to integrate properly into the HTML5 universe — as well perhaps as with JSON. Such modifications can seem daunting: will we get tag soup? Will our scripts still work? Will we have to re-architect our entire language?

SVG is a good example of a language that was staunchly raised in the XML world and that nevertheless made the jump over to HTML. A few years later, it is now time to look back and see if it was a good idea, and what lessons can be learned from that transition.

BIO

Robin Berjon has been contributing to W3C standards for over a decade, working on Javascript APIs, XML technologies, SVG, and a few other things. He is currently chairing the Device APIs Working Group which is developing interfaces between the Web and the real world as well as the Core Mobile Platform Community Group which is attempting to make the mobile Web applications ecosystem easier on developers. He tinkers Javascript for fun and profit, and has contributed to multiple open source projects. He was recently elected to the W3C Technical Architecture Group.

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