

W3C to Develop New HTML Spec

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The World Wide Web Consortium has announced plans to create a new HTML standard and to enhance the XHTML specification.

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The move to update HTML comes as a nod to the developer and design communities as well as the browser manufacturers. The W3C is issuing a call for participation in the working group that will oversee the new standard, and although the list of participants has yet to be made, browser vendors who are members of the W3C include Apple, Mozilla, Opera and Microsoft. In fact, Chris Wilson, platform architect of the Internet Explorer platform at Microsoft, is the co-chair of the new working group.

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And the W3C is inviting not only the browser vendors, but also [application developers](#) and content designers to help design the next version of HTML by participating in the new W3C HTML Working Group. The W3C announced its plans on March 7.

"HTML started simply, with structured markup, no licensing requirements, and the ability to link to anything," said Tim Berners-Lee, W3C director and inventor of HTML, in a statement. More than anything, this simplicity and openness has led to its tremendous and continued success. It's time to revisit the standard and see what we can do to meet the current community needs, and to do so effectively with commitments from browser manufacturers in a visible and open way."

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According to W3C officials, after the publication of HTML 4 in late 1997, and following a 1998 Workshop, W3C intended to turn HTML into an XML-based format, called XHTML (Extensible HTML), because of the benefits of XML formats. But traditional browser vendors were slow to adopt XHTML because of the vast amount of legacy Web content that featured some variant of HTML. And content developers were less inclined to support XHTML as well.

However, the Web developer and design communities have called for the W3C to renew its commitment to HTML by adding new features, officials with the organization said. So the W3C is relaunching the effort.

Tim Berners-Lee created the original HTML—and many associated protocols such as HTTP—on a Nextcube workstation using the NextStep development environment. Since the publication of HTML 4.0, the W3C's HTML Working Group has had a focus on XHTML. And last November, the HTML Working Group indicated its intent to resume development of HTML in a manner that unifies HTML 4 and XHTML 1. However, the newly announced working group will take up the effort to advance the technology.

W3C officials said XHTML has proved valuable in markets such as mobile devices, in [enterprise applications](#), on the server-side, and in an increasing number of Web applications such as blogging software. And with the market for XML content growing, the W3C is working on XHTML 2.0, which will define an XML syntax for the new HTML in addition to the classic HTML syntax, W3C officials said

One of the design aims for XHTML 2.0 has been to keep it as generic as possible, reusing applicable XML standards, including XForms, XML Base and XML Events, instead of HTML features that served similar purposes, W3C officials said.

Meanwhile, in addition to the new HTML and XHTML 2 Working Groups, W3C is also planning to re-charter the HTML Coordination Group and charter the Forms Working Group. The Forms Working Group will continue work on the XForms architecture, which has seen significant adoption in a variety of platforms, W3C officials said.

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