Crossroads
The ACM Student Magazine

Introduction to Markup Languages Issue

by ***Jason Bedunah***

When you picked up this issue of Crossroads, you may not have fully realized what you were getting yourself into. Let me explain. This issue of Crossroads discusses markup languages. While you are holding this issue in your hands, you may be on a plane, at your desk, or in bed. You can get the feeling that you are on the verge of something new, something spectacular because markup languages solve huge problems for companies. The application of markup languages to a company's data and technology infrastructure solves problems that companies are willing to pay for handsomely. As a computer science student or professional that places you in a rather nice position. This issue could prove to be a gold mine for you. You will never look at data and problem solving the same way again.

Markup languages are still in their infancy, meaning you are on the ground floor of learning something that is going to prove useful to organizations in the very near future. The basics of markup languages offer solutions to several problems plaguing today's businesses. Markup languages are human readable and separate structure from presentation.

The human readability of markup languages provides us with a way to keep data free from proprietary binary formats. Instead of some esoteric binary blob, we have plain text that we can read and build around without depending on proprietary technologies. With this freedom we can limit the need for re-engineering if we decide to move to another tool or technology. By the same token, it frees us from the upgrade path many vendors push on us to squeeze money out of our IT budgets. Therefore, the human readability of markup languages provide us with freedom and flexibility.

Markup languages give us a way to separate a document's structure from its

presentation. This allows us as developers to keep the data in one source and create as many different views as we deem necessary. Some of you may recognize this as the Model-View-Controller pattern, and it is MVC in its grandest form.

This issue of Crossroads magazine provides the distinctions that provide you with a strong foundation for beginning your own personal and professional investigation of markup languages.

Biography

Jason Bedunah is a Sun-Certified Java Programmer. He has worked for IBM's Java Security Development Team as a contract Java Programmer and for Addison-Wesley as a technical editor for Java and XML. He currently resides in Houston, Texas where he has begun work as a Senior Software Engineer for a start-up company called TLG Media, Inc. He hopes to retire in 12 years at the ripe old age of 35.