



W3C, The World Wide Web Consortium

Reviewed by [Kim Moorman](#)

Just what direction is the Web headed? For the answers to these and other general Internet or markup language specific questions, tune your browser to <http://www.w3.org/> for a vast and varied selection of information. Because the W3C establishes recommendations concerning the Web, this site offers interesting possibilities as to future directions for the Web. While the W3C does not exercise the influence of an official standards setting organization, they have been influential in bringing together industry members and other interested parties to develop solutions and circulate recommendations to the public and members.

The W3C is a consortium hosted by three groups: the [Laboratory for Computer Science](#) at [MIT](#), [INRIA](#), and [Keio University](#). The consortium also receives support from [DARPA](#) and the [European Commission](#). This consortium was founded to provide the means for establishing guidelines as to future web development, and to serve as a forum for members to meet and discuss common problems. Membership is not free, but the website serves as a central location to disseminate the technical specifications written by the consortium, as well as other related information, which is free to all. The website does provide a very comprehensive assortment of information about the Web, and is well-structured and organized. The structure has a good balance between depth and breadth of pages.

The website provides a broad array of information, organized into general categories ranging from a general history of the Web to an archive of released technical reports and specifications. The technical reports are also noted in the press releases that are available at the website. The technical reports include a chronological listing of drafts of

current work and proposed recommendations regarding the Web. Browsing through this section provides a fascinating look at how the working groups of the W3C have influenced the development of the Web. This site does contain fairly technical information, although the general history and timeline of the Web are intended for a broad audience. If you have ever wanted to see what [Tim Berners-Lee](#) *really* looks like, you will find his picture and more in the people section, along with biographical information about all the people involved with the consortium.

W3C's website is organized into sections: User Interface, Technology and Society, Architecture, Web Accessibility, W3C Services, and Historical. There are also links to the technical reports, press releases, more links to open source code (these are also included in the interface section), general information about the Web, general information about the W3C and the members and people involved, and a restricted area for members only. Most of the next level of the website consists of general descriptions and links to more specific information about the topic, both internal to the W3C site and external. There is a search function that is also able to search the W3C's mailings lists.

The website also contains much information about [HTML](#), both historic and the most evolved specifications. There is also a large section on [Cascading Style Sheets Specification \(CSS\)](#) and [Extensible Stylesheet Language \(XSL\)](#), methods of specifying presentation details. There is an explanation of the [Document Object Model \(DOM\)](#), a standardized interface to documents for scripts and programs, and how this relates to currently available HTML, as well as future developments in [Extensible Markup Language \(XML\)](#) and CSS. [Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language \(SMIL\)](#), a language created to allow the production of multimedia documents on the Web, also resides in a section of the website, along with a graphics section describing [Scalable Vector Graphics \(SVG\)](#), current work on a voice browser, internationalization efforts, and preliminary work on mobile access to the Web.

The W3C also has evolved free tools and software, available on the website. [Amaya](#) is a software package with functionality common to browsers and editors as well as added functions such as the ability to view the document structure at the same time as the formatted view. Amaya also offers some support for CSS. The [Libwww](#), a general Web API, is available, and the consortium has a list of items that they are hoping someone will be able to develop. The applications related to the Web are not forgotten.

There is a large section on electronic commerce, privacy, and digital signatures. The W3C has been active in pursuing methods of incorporating digital payments and the use of digital signatures on the Web, among other issues related to electronic commerce.

This site is very comprehensive and organized well. It is also well maintained. Many of the pages are available in languages other than English. There is a wealth of information here, and there are links to many other sites related to the Web. For anyone with the need to find out more about the Web, and for those developing websites, the W3C offers the latest information about the Web.

Other interesting locations at the W3C:

- [**MathML**](#)
 - [**Voice Browser**](#)
 - [**Mobile Access**](#)
 - [**Digital Signature Initiative**](#)
 - [**Privacy: P3P**](#)
 - [**Electronic commerce**](#)
 - [**Web Accessibility Initiative**](#)
 - [**Mailing Lists**](#)
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