A short history of Ajax: an introduction to XMLHttpRequest level 2 (XHR2)

Wikipedia definition: *"Ajax, short for Asynchronous JavaScript and XML), is a group of interrelated Web development techniques used on the client-side to create asynchronous Web applications. With Ajax, Web applications can send data to and retrieve from a server asynchronously (in the background) without interfering with the display and behavior of the existing page. Data can be retrieved using the* `XMLHttpRequest` *object. Despite the name, the use of XML is not required (JSON is often used), and the requests do not need to be asynchronous."*

Ajax appeared around 2005 with Google Maps, and is now widely used. We are not going to teach you Ajax programming, instead focusing on the relationships between "the new version of Ajax", known as XHR2 (for XmlHttpRequest level 2) and the File API (seen in the HTML5 Part 1). Also, you will discover that the HTML5 `<progress>` element is of great use for monitoring the progression of file uploads (or downloads).

We recommend reading this article from HTML5Rocks.com that presents the main features of XHR2 and describes how it improves upon "the old way".

Briefly, these improvements include:

- New, easier to use syntax,
- Encoding/decoding of binary files is done directly by the browser,
- Progress monitoring for uploads and downloads.

The following sections of this course present a few examples of file downloads/uploads together with the file API and show how to monitor progress.

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