

A WYSIWYG Framework

by

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Abstract

Browsers do not offer native elements that allow for WYSIWYG text editing. There are third-party libraries that emulate these elements by utilizing the `contenteditable`-attribute. However, the API enabled by `contenteditable` is limited and unstable. Bugs and unwanted behavior can only be worked around and not fixed. The library `ÄTypeÄI` demonstrates that WYSIWYG editing can be achieved without requiring the `contenteditable` attribute, thus solving many problems contemporary WYSIWYG editor libraries have.

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Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

DOM manipulation

In October 1998 the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) published the "Document Object Model (DOM) Level 1 Specification". This specification includes an API on how to alter DOM nodes and the document's tree¹. It provided a standardized way for changing a website's contents. With the implementations of Netscape's JavaScript and Microsoft's JScript this API has been made accessible to web developers.

1.1 HTML Editing APIs

In July 2000, with the release of Internet Explorer 5.5, Microsoft introduced the `contentEditable` and `designMode` IDL attributes along with the `contenteditable` content attribute²³. These attributes were not standardized and not part of the W3C DOM specifications.

By setting `contenteditable` or `contentEditable` to "true" or `designMode` to

¹<http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-DOM-Level-1/level-one-core.html>, last checked on 07/10/2015

²[https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms533720\(v=vs.85\).aspx](https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms533720(v=vs.85).aspx), last checked on 07/10/2015

³[https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms537837\(VS.85\).aspx](https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms537837(VS.85).aspx), last checked on 07/10/2015

Attribute	Type	Can be set to	Possible values
<code>designMode</code>	IDL attribute	Document	"on", "off"
<code>contentEditable</code>	IDL attribute	Specific <code>HTMLElements</code>	boolean, "true", "false", "inherit"
<code>contenteditable</code>	content attribute	Specific <code>HTMLElements</code>	empty string, "true", "false"

Table 1.1: Editing API attributes

”on”, Internet Explorer switches the affected elements and their children to an editing mode. In editing mode it is possible to

1. Let the user interactively click on and type inside text elements
2. Execute ”commands” via JScript and JavaScript

Fetching user inputs (clicking on elements, accepting keyboard input and modifying text nodes) is handled entirely by the browser. No further scripting is necessary other than setting the mentioned attributes on elements. This behavior is inherited by child elements.

In editing mode, calling the method `document.execCommand` will format the currently selected text. Calling `document.execCommand('bold', false, null)` will wrap the currently selected text in `` tags. `document.execCommand('createLink', false, 'http://google.com/')` will wrap the selected text in a link to google.com. However, this command will be ignored, if the current selection is not contained by an element in editing mode.

While `designMode` can only be applied to the entire document, `contentEditable` and `contenteditable` attributes can be applied to a subset of HTML elements as described on Microsoft’s Developer Network (MSDN) online documentation⁴.

With the release of Internet Explorer 5.5 and the introduction of editing capabilities, Microsoft released a sparse documentation⁵ describing only the availability and the before-mentioned element restrictions of these attributes.

According to Mark Pilgrim, author of the ”Dive into” book series and contributor to the the Web Hypertext Application Technology Working Group (WHATWG), Microsoft did not state a specific purpose for its editing API, but, its first use-case has been rich-text editing⁶.

In March 2003, the Mozilla Foundation introduced an implementation of Microsoft’s `designMode`, named Midas, for their release of Mozilla 1.3. Mozilla names

⁴[https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms537837\(VS.85\).aspx](https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms537837(VS.85).aspx), last checked on 07/10/2015

⁵[https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms537837\(VS.85\).aspx](https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms537837(VS.85).aspx), last checked on 07/10/2015

⁶<https://blog.whatwg.org/the-road-to-html-5-contenteditable>, last checked on 07/10/2015

this "rich-text editing support" on the Mozilla Developer Network (MDN)⁷. In June 2008, Mozilla added support for contentEditable IDL and contenteditable content attributes with Firefox 3.

Mozilla's editing API resembles the API implemented for Internet Explorer, however, there are still differences (compare ⁸⁹). Most notably, Microsoft and Mozilla differ in the commands provided to pass to document.execCommand¹⁰¹¹ and the markup generated by invoking commands¹². In fact, Mozilla only provides commands dedicated to text editing while Microsoft offers a way to access lower-level browser components (like the browser's cache) using execCommand. This may show, that even though rich-text editing was its first use case and Mozilla implemented it naming it that, this editing API was not originally intended to be used as such.

In March 2008, Apple released Safari 3.1¹³ including full support for contentEditable and designMode¹⁴, followed by Opera Software in June 2006¹⁵ providing full support in Opera 9¹⁶. MDN lists full support in Google Chrome since version 4¹⁷, released in January 2010¹⁸.

Around the year 2003[*MeineTabelle*] the first JavaScript libraries emerged that made use of Microsoft's and Mozilla's editing mode to offer rich-text editing in the browser. Usually these libraries were released as user interface components (text fields) with inherent rich-text functionality and were only partly customizable.

⁷https://developer.mozilla.org/en/docs/Rich-Text_Editing_in_Mozilla, last checked on 07/10/2015

⁸[https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/hh772123\(v=vs.85\).aspx](https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/hh772123(v=vs.85).aspx), last checked on 07/10/2015

⁹<https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Midas>, last checked on 07/10/2015

¹⁰<https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Midas>, last checked on 07/10/2015

¹¹[https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms533049\(v=vs.85\).aspx](https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms533049(v=vs.85).aspx), last checked on 07/10/2015

¹²https://developer.mozilla.org/en/docs/Rich-Text_Editing_in_MozillaInternet_Explorer_Differences, last checked on 07/10/2015

¹³<https://www.apple.com/pr/library/2008/03/18Apple-Releases-Safari-3-1.html>, last checked on 07/10/2015

¹⁴<http://caniuse.com/feat=contenteditable>, last checked on 07/10/2015

¹⁵<http://www.opera.com/docs/changelogs/windows/>, last checked on 07/10/2015

¹⁶<http://www.opera.com/docs/changelogs/windows/900/>, last checked on 07/10/2015

¹⁷https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/Guide/HTML/Content_Editable, last checked on 07/10/2015

¹⁸http://googlechromereleases.blogspot.de/2010/01/stable-channel-update_25.html, last checked on 07/10/2015

In May 2003 and March 2004 versions 1.0 of "FCKEditor" and "TinyMCE" have been released as open source projects. These projects are still being maintained and remain among the most popular choices for incorporating rich-text editing in web-based projects. // *Technik, wie diese Editoren funktionieren erklären.*

Appendix A

Tables

Table A.1: Armadillos

Armadillos	are
our	friends

Appendix B

Figures

Figure B-1: Armadillo slaying lawyer.

Figure B-2: Armadillo eradicating national debt.

Bibliography