programs harder because the system will not point them out to you.

This flexibility also has its advantages, though. It leaves space for a lot of techniques that are impossible in more rigid languages, and as you will see (for example in Chapter 10) it can be used to overcome some of JavaScript's shortcomings. After learning the language properly and working with it for a while, I have learned to actually *like* JavaScript.

There have been several versions of JavaScript. ECMAScript version 3 was the widely supported version in the time of JavaScript's ascent to dominance, roughly between 2000 and 2010. During this time, work was underway on an ambitious version 4, which planned a number of radical improvements and extensions to the language. Changing a living, widely used language in such a radical way turned out to be politically difficult, and work on the version 4 was abandoned in 2008, leading to the much less ambitious version 5 coming out in 2009. We're now at the point where all major browsers support version 5, which is the language version that this book will be focusing on. A version 6 is in the process of being finalized, and some browsers are starting to support new features from this version.

Web browsers are not the only platforms on which JavaScript is used. Some databases, such as MongoDB and CouchDB, use JavaScript as their scripting and query language. Several platforms for desktop and server programming, most notably the Node.js project (the subject of Chapter 20) are providing a powerful environment for programming JavaScript outside of the browser.

Code, and what to do with it