In the early days of the World Wide Web, it was common for web pages to contain “frames”, which were essentially windows within a web page that had their own scrollbars. These elements allowed web page designers to display content “in multiple views” (W3C, n.d.). These HTML features allowed developers to utilize multiple documents in a single view*.* The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has obsoleted the frame element in HTML5 for a number of reasons (WebAIM, n.d.).

One of the reasons for this obsolescence is that their implementation has negative effects on ease of use (Anderson, 2008). Activity in one frame, followed by clicking the back-button produces unexpected results. From what I recall, the URL shown in the address bar may not represent the actual page being viewed after undertaking this action. Perhaps another factor that negatively affects usability is that frames occupy more space (Anderson, 2008). Yet another reason from a usability standpoint is that bookmarking of content in specific frames is nearly impossible (Anderson, 2008).

Another reason for obsoleting frames is that they present problems when web pages that implement them are viewed with mobile devices; the behavior exhibited may not be consistent cross-platform. Mobile devices do not implement the same standards. Frames in a mobile space do not have the same screen real estate as the desktop. Since nearly one-third of all traffic on the web occurs on mobile devices (Dusto, 2014), implementing frames within web pages is not a sensible option.

Most importantly, the implementation of frames violates the web’s “unified model” by allowing data to be displayed in inconsistent manners (Nielsen, 1996). In other words, each web page does not have a unique URL assigned to it.

The only viable reason to allow the implementation of frames in web pages is if doing so can facilitate business requirements*.* For example, you can actually produce very specific design elements without affecting the elements outside of the frame you are producing. Even though I am not, nor have I ever been a web developer, I have been told by colleagues of mine that business requirements are sometimes at odds with standards requirements.

In conclusion, the obsolescence of frames in HTML5 has been overall a good thing because new standards have emerged that allow better usability and more portability on the web. Their absence from most web pages currently designed has resulted in cleaner and less confusing displays of content.

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