help us know what to ask for, either through search engines or some manner of recommendation system.

We like giving names to things because we are fundamentally name-oriented beings; we use names to disambiguate "that thing" from "that other thing." One of our earliest communication acts as children is to name and point to the subjects that interest us and to ask for them. In many ways, the Web is the application of this childlike wonder to our collective wisdom and folly. As creatures with insatiable knowledge appetites, we simply decide what we are interested in and begin to ask for it. There is no central coordination, and we are free to document our wandering by republishing our stories, thoughts, and journeys as we go. We think of the Web as a series of one-way links between documents (see Figure 5-1).

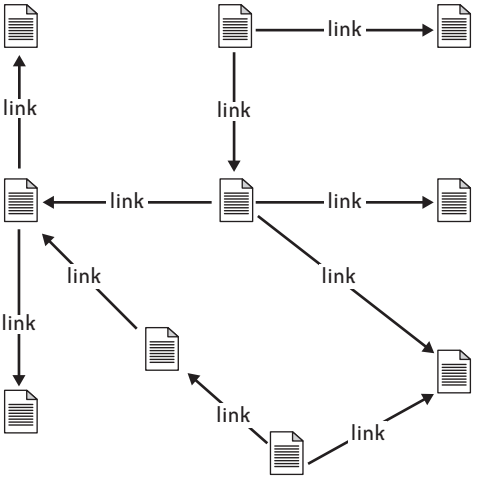

FIGURE 5-1. Conventional notion of the Web

Linked documents are only part of the picture, however. The vision for the Web always included the idea of linked data as well. This content can be consumed through a rendered view or directly referenced and manipulated in preferred forms in different contexts. You can imagine a middle-tier layer asking for information as an XML document while the presentation tier prefers a JSON object via an AJAX call. The same name refers to the same data in different forms. By allowing the data to be addressed like this, it is easy to build layered applications that have consistent views, even if they are asking for different levels of detail or wish to have the data styled in a particular way. Applications and environments that produce and consume data in this loosely linked style are no longer simply "on the Web," they are "in the Web." We are moving toward a Web of Data that connects people, documents, data, services, and concepts, as in Figure 5-2.