

The output might look like the following, if a style sheet is used:

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Or it might appear as follows, if a different style sheet is used:

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Style sheets can be written in various languages, such as CSS2 (cascading style sheets level 2). The other possibility is XSL (extensible stylesheet language).

XSL includes both a transformation language (XSLT) and a formatting language. Each of these is, of course, an XML application. XSLT specifies rules with which an input XML document is transformed to another XML document, an HTML document, or plain text. The output document may use the same DTD or schema as the input document, or it may use a completely different vocabulary.

XSLT (XSL transformations) can be used independently of the formatting language. Its ability to move data and metadata from one XML representation to another makes it a most valuable tool for XML-based applications. Generally XSLT is chosen when applications that use different DTDs or schemas need to communicate. XSLT is a tool that can be used for machine-processing of content without any regard to displaying the information for people to read. Despite this fact, in the following we use XSLT only to display XML documents.

One way of defining the presentation of an XML document is to transform it into an HTML document. Here is an example. We define an XSLT document that will be applied to the author example.