

Sir Tim Berners-Lee the founder of the web



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HTML is the foundation of the internet. Anyone with the expertise and time can design a web browser that will display HTML files as information on any computer. We don't have to pay for the use of the HTML format because Sir Tim Berners-Lee gave the standard to the world-wide community without requiring a royalty. Now imagine that you had to pay every time you accessed a web site. Even if it was a very small amount, Sir Tim would have made a lot of money but it could also have prevented the internet from growing so quickly and inexpensively. Can you think why? HTML is now quite old and it has been improved and extended several times. The newest version is HTML 5 which will allow a lot of things like flash animations directly in ordinary web pages without having to worry about copyright and license fees to proprietary companies. Related to HTML is XML, Extensible Markup Language that is the basis of the file format for OpenOffice.org and the new MS Office format docx. Pure XML is an open standard but Microsoft's version has some dependencies on things owned by Microsoft.

HTML and XML are both important open standards. There are no secrets and the formats can be used freely by everyone. These open standards enable a wide range of companies to build products on the internet which can work effectively together sharing information and without any one of them seizing control at the expense of others or the customers.

Further standards can be built on these. For example, the open document format, odf, is built on XML. svg the standard for vector graphics is defined in XML. Quickly establishing open standards has enabled the internet to grow rapidly because many companies can quickly design innovative products that will work together in consistent ways. It makes sense to have as many of the data types on the internet as open standards as possible so we know the maximum diversity of applications can be configured easily to work together.

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