

Expression of Interest

The W3C Open Annotation Community Group (OA) is interested in participating in the eBook standardization and interoperability process. Although we recognize that annotations are not strictly necessary for eBook implementation, there is a growing interest and expectation of the functionality in presentation software and devices. There is also a growing social context around reading and interacting with texts, and digital objects in general, which is enabled through annotation. In the spirit of Web 2.0, annotation for eBooks can turn a static consumption model to a rich, interactive and social environment.

As such, we consider that OA is a direct stakeholder in the process to ensure that the resulting eBook platforms are capable of supporting robust, rich and precisely targeted annotations, across formats and devices. Our hope is that these annotations would be shared and consumed using the Open Annotation data model.

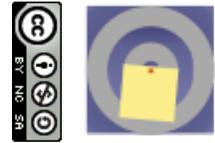
Open Annotation

The Open Annotation Core Data Model specifies an interoperable framework for creating associations between related resources, annotations, using a methodology which conforms to the Architecture of the World Wide Web. Open Annotations can easily be shared between platforms, with sufficient richness of expression to satisfy complex requirements while remaining simple enough to also allow for the most common use cases, such as attaching a piece of text to a single web resource.

An Annotation is considered to be a set of connected resources, including a body and target, and conveys that the body resource is somehow about the target. The full model supports additional functionality, enabling semantic tagging, embedding content, selecting segments of resources, choosing the appropriate representation of a resource and providing styling hints for consuming clients

The data model is expressed in RDF, and uses other W3C recommendations such as CSS for styling, SVG for describing arbitrary areas that cannot be covered with the Media Fragments specification, and of course many W3C recommended ontologies. It originated from many different projects that were extending the W3C Annotea specification in various directions in an attempt to unify them and provide a common and expressive framework.

Our position is that the result of the OA's work must work seamlessly with both the live web and eBooks. We have engaged in ongoing work with the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) and their partners in the Digital Bookmarking and Annotation working group, and are well positioned to help act as a bridge between the emerging communities.



Areas of Concern

OA is primarily concerned with standardization issues in the eBook space, including its own relationship to the eBook recommendations as well as inter-relationships with existing W3C standards and their implementations. The questions as to how eBooks, Web sites, and other applications should be inter-linked is of particular concern and ties directly to the distribution question of how eBooks, texts, versions and individual copies should be uniquely and commonly identified.

The identification of the Work as a whole (Hamlet, in any format or revision), down to an individual copy of eBook (Tom's copy, in Epub, on a particular device) is of fundamental importance to OA as it determines the validity of the annotation in different contexts. For example, does an annotation with a body describing an error apply to the text in general, or only a particular rendering of a single version of the text on a particular device?

Furthermore, the identification of segments of an eBook (at any of the levels on the above continuum) is a shared challenge. Other than the very simple tagging annotations, it is thought that most annotations will be about a particular segment of text within the book rather than the entire book. Descriptions that conform to the web architecture, yet are rich enough to capture all of the essential characteristics needed to reconstruct the selection across platforms are necessary to make interoperable annotation a reality. With rich media eBooks this extends to images, audio and video embedded within the eBook, and segments thereof. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute our experience and solutions in this area.

A further area of interest from those listed is the potential specification for widgets or other micro-applications that exist along side eBooks to assist and expand the user's enjoyment of them. As noted, the annotation functionality is not essential, yet is increasingly expected, and thus one may expect that implementation in the widget space would be appropriate. The discussion as to whether annotation in general is simply another extended widget, or if it is fundamental to the eBook experience and deserves a more privileged place, would be very welcome. Regardless of the outcome of such a discussion, OA is motivated to contribute to such a specification to ensure that implementations can be created that publish Open Annotations. Our fundamental concern is to ensure that widgets produce annotations in a way that is interoperable and escapes the silo mentality where the created or referenced content is locked away and disappears when the platform is no longer supported.

We very much look forwards to contributing to the rich and dynamic discussion in this arena.