Web Annotations

… and Elephants

Doug Schepers, W3C @shepazu
Ivan Herman, W3C @ivan_herman
The Elephant’s Child

“I Keep six honest serving-men:
(They taught me all I knew)
Their names are What and Where and When
And How and Why and Who.
I send them over land and sea,
I send them east and west;
But after they have worked for me,
I give them all a rest.”

– Rudyard Kipling
Who?

Who needs Web Annotations?

teachers, students, researchers, readers, web users, data publishers, publishers, data distributors, journalists, peer reviewers, lawyers, activists, librarians, policy makers, captioners, translators, ...
Who?

Who is needed to provide the capability?

- Us!
- Content publishers
- Annotation service providers
- Software developers
- The elephants that aren't in the room:
  - Browser vendors
Who?

- data modelers
- publishers
- implementers
- browser vendors
- reading systems
- web app developers
- standards bodies
Where?
Where are annotations needed?

- web sites that don’t have open comment systems
- web sites that do have open comment systems (e.g. private notes, personal or shared with select group)
- ebook readers
- schools
- collaboration and peer review systems
- across formats (PDF, data repositories)
When?

- 25 years ago.
- Standardization timeline:
  - 2-3 months: finalize charter, launch working group
  - 3-4 months: finalize use cases and requirements, publish working draft
  - 6-12 months: last call for 1 or more specs
  - 12-14 months: finish unit tests
  - 8-18 months: implementations
  - 18-24 months: finalization as a standard
Why?

• increasingly common in education
• schools moving to digital books, tablets, etc.
• convergence of annotation models
• publication industry moving to web tech (Web, EPUB)
• need a better publication and backend workflow
What?

- Annotations are Metadata
- content about content
- connective tissue
- Web Annotations
  - distributed
  - decentralized
What?

• Lots of moving parts!
What?
Services / Interchange

- publishing
- storage
- sharing
- data model
- REST API
What?
Front End / Client-side / Browser

- robust anchoring (privacy & security)
- related to parsing, find dialog, selection?
- anchoring on other forms of document (images, videos, data)
- events and notification (trackback / WebMention)
- styling
- `<note>` element
- JavaScript API
How?

• draft a charter
• standardize the critical parts
• get implementations
  • first JS libs
  • then browsers
• work together
“... after they have worked for me, I give them all a rest.”

- Initial round of standardization
- Industry innovation and differentiation
- Later standardization as needed
Traditional Comments

- First started in the late 1990s
- Most activity that most people do on the Web (reading and writing comments)
- Notoriously full of spam, trolling, flaming, and irrelevance
- White elephant: a possession that is more trouble than it's worth, but hard to get rid of.
Decentralization

• The elephant test (legal term): an idea or thing which “is difficult to describe, but you know it when you see it.”

• There were once 4 blind elephants who felt a human. The first reported that humans are flat, and the other three agreed.
Workshop Goals

• Learn different approaches and concerns
• Prioritize use cases and features for standardization
• Productive conversation
• End of Day: Confidence on charter details
Workshop Format

• Several topics
• Lightning talks
• Topic conversation
• Conclusions and charter discussion
• Scribed and recorded
  • elephants never forget, but we do
  • IRC, state your name
• I Annotate summit starts tomorrow
“It isn't where you came from, its where you're going that counts.”
— Elephants Gerald, jazz singer
I have the necessary Koalafications

Your koalafications are completely irrelephant