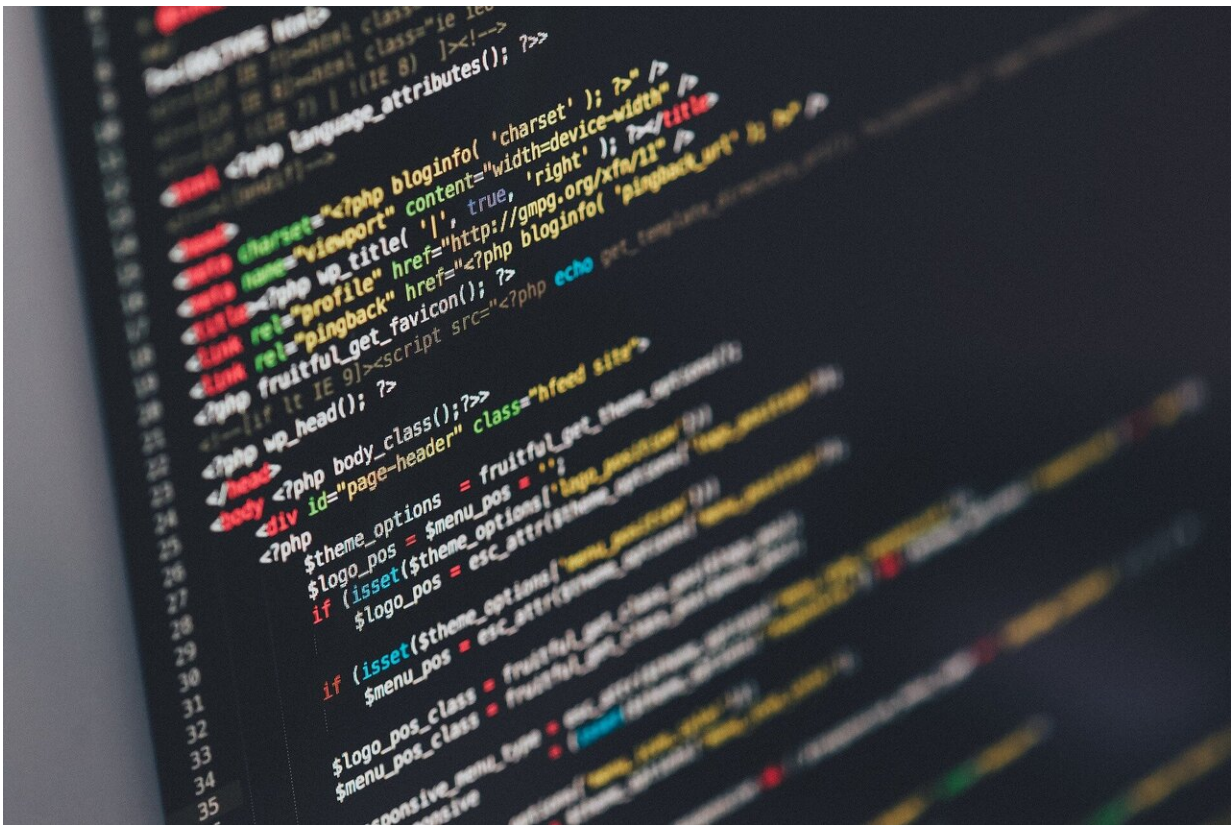


W3C and WHATWG agreement: Single version of HTML, DOM specifications

June 2 2019, by Nancy Cohen



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Having two separate HTML specifications? What's up with that?
 Stephen Shankland's account of the two in CNET: "for nearly a decade, two separate groups have been issuing separate documents to define

Hypertext Markup Language, or HTML, the standard that tells you how to make a web page."

A group of major browser vendors now have agreed to collaborate with the standards body W3C to work together for a single version of the HTML and DOM specifications.

Jakub Lewkowicz, *SD Times*, noted awareness that "diverging the specifications and splitting the community to focus on different documents has been [costly](#) and inefficient."

OK, officially we can call it an alliance or an agreement but some tech watchers have seen it as one side, WHATWG, winning over another, W3C, in a longtime tug of war.

SD Times said most of the developing power went to WHATWG with W3C providing input and endorsements.

A W3C blog noted that "W3C facilitates community work directly in the WHATWG repositories (bridging [communities](#), developing use cases, filing issues, writing tests, mediating issue resolution)."

"The W3C is officially giving up publishing future HTML and DOM standards in favor of the WHATWG, effectively giving full control back to browser vendors," Catalin [Cimpanu](#) said in *ZDNet*.

(The blog said W3C stops independent publishing of a designated list of specifications related to HTML and DOM and instead will work to take WHATWG Review Drafts to W3C Recommendations.)

According to the Memorandum of Understanding, "HTML and DOM shall be developed principally in the WHATWG, following WHATWG Living Standard (LS) specification process. W3C intends to give input to

and endorse WHATWG Review Drafts to become W3C Recommendations, through the W3C Process from Candidate Recommendation (CR) through Proposed Recommendation (PR) to Recommendation (REC). Our Design Goal is that the W3C CR, PR, and REC, and the WHATWG Review Draft are the same document."

The W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) and WHATWG (Web Hypertext Application Technology Working Group) agreement was "Motivated by the belief that having two distinct HTML and DOM specifications claiming to be normative is generally harmful for the community, and the [mutual](#) desire to bring the work back together," said W3C CEO Jeff Jaffe.

What is DOM?

"The WHATWG will maintain the single HTML version of a related technology called the Document Object Model, or [DOM](#), for understanding how [web pages](#) are put together," said Stephen Shankland in CNET.

No matter how or even if you see a power play, other tech watchers considered the real winners developers. Paul Hill, *Neowin*, said the alliance meant "less confusion for developers going forward and work on new standards may [progress](#) more quickly with more community members inputting into the work."

Both parties have agreed to a set of terms as set out in the [Memorandum](#) of Understanding, which addresses a what-if situation of both parties not reaching agreement on a standard through direct negotiations.

"[Finally](#), if W3C management and the WHATWG Steering Group cannot reach agreement on a single HTML or DOM standard through direct negotiations, W3C may (under rights granted by the Creative

Commons Attribution International 4.0 (CC BY 4.0) copyright license, or a successor copyright license that is at least as permissive, as specified in the WHATWG Intellectual Property Rights policy) publish a Recommendation with differences, and WHATWG may terminate this MOU."

More information: www.w3.org/2019/04/WHATWG-W3C-MOU.html

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