

Untangling the Web

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Abstract

Internet is growing faster than ever, strongly attracting commercial companies and non-technical people. Thanks to the Web's wide scope and ease of use, for many of those newcomers, the Web **IS** the Internet.

Unfortunately, the Internet is still a jungle : explorers don't have to learn the hacker's jargon any more, but they can too easily get lost in the black holes of hyperspace. For many reasons, the Web is still far from living up to its promises.

In this paper, we try to summarize today's most stringent limitations and their expected solutions.

We argue that the Web can only be untangled if the commercial and academic communities bring together their requirements and their expertise.

Issues to be addressed in today's Web

- Too easy to get lost
- Attractive links don't guarantee quality of information.
- Service providers are still too dependent on the reader's browser.
- Features lack stability and homogeneity.
- Web standards are not consistently reflected in the available tools.

Expected solutions

- Distributed Virtual Library
- Reliable White and Yellow Pages
- Classification of services following well-defined criteria, including quality assessment with user feedback
- URNs
- Style guides must evolve from recommendations into widely accepted rules in order to improve consistency and user satisfaction.

All this coordination requires a consortium, where the academic and commercial contributions can stabilise and further improve the Web.

However, a standards-setting body is not enough. The Web community needs partners committed to implement those standards, and stick to them.

How can commercial activities help ?

- Create dependable services
- Add marketing, documentation and support to research tools
- Bring requirements which were not needed in academic settings.
- Educate a new class of users to come on the Web, so they are not frightened, and they don't wreak havoc on the existing community.
- Extend and optimize usage of Internet resources (both contents and infrastructures)
- All this also benefits to academic users !