

SmofML™

Open Standards Design Meeting #1

The first nearly-organised*, semi-chaotic meeting of the SmofML™ development group occurred on 6 October 2002 in Albany, New York. Although a number of individuals of the smoffish persuasion were present at the meeting, it was felt that taking attendance and reporting the names could destroy the delicate elegance of a truly open standards group. While some wandered by and quickly back-pedaled in dismay at terms like “attribute” and “sub-element” and “definition language,” still others were magnetically attracted to the meeting through the mystical power of FoMS.†

Individuals at the meeting included an XML^{NTM} expert consultant and trainer, and one member of the international standards board of MDDL^{ANTM}. Neither, we are delighted to report, permitted their background to interfere with their ragged determination to make SmofML™ a fitting offspring of SGML^{DHATME}.

The standards design group determined that SmofML™ should, if it is to be widely adopted in fandom, must answer certain essential questions: What, Where, Who, and When. (The question “why” was not, it was felt, within the purview of this standards group.)

What – Elemental, my dear

The following elements/actions were initially proposed and discussed‡:

- Pontificate
- Espouse
- Bemoan
- Obscure
- Niggle
- Rant
- Intercourse (see below)
- Ingest (see below)
- Sleep <does not apply to N. Fisher or G. Sullivan/may be an empty element>
- I Don't Know <rarely used>

To show how some elements would develop subsidiary mark-up structures, two principal elements (“Intercourse” and “Ingest”) were broken down to sub-elements:

Intercourse[§]

- Official
- Social
- Physical/interactive

Ingest

- Eat
- Drink
- Inhale

Several style attributes were also identified as belonging to the top level of attributes:

- Sarcasm
- Walsh <altname=Wiseass>
- Deadpan
- Sardonic

Where – Location in ~~aether ether~~ cyberspace

The “where” division identifies “where did this action take place?” and may include various indications of location. Included are the following:

- URL (universal resource locator – in cyberspace)
- UCL (universal con locator – in fanspace)
- Telephone number
- Physical location excluding a UCL designation
- Fanzine control (identified by Fanzine Control Numbers)
- GestSpace (located to the “Ingest” attribute above)

“Wheres” would be URIs <Universal Resource Indicators> to be developed by appropriate standards committees to filter the conventions of that location <as opposed to the locations of that convention>.

Who – Naming conventions (not to be confused with naming Conventions)

Several notes were made about “who” as it would relate to SmofML™, including discussions of naming conventions, ancillary portions of naming conventions, and the nature of tags within the general parameter of who-ness. <If all of the “who”s are in “Whoville,” the RealName tag = “Theodore Geisel.”>

Who may take the form of:

- Real name <appropriate format: Olson, Mark L.>
- Fannish name <appropriate format: X, Animal or Montoya, Flamingo>
- Titles <which may be fannish or real world; titles are hierarchically arranged; the most prestigious title is “ex-chairman.” Titles are a separate field/element from standard naming conventions; they may be repeated. Words are typically given their common ~~English~~ American usage>.

“Authority” in relation to “Who” is identified as a deprecated tag. <All ID specifications should have a deprecated tag.> In this case, tag=authority is deprecated because no SMOFs have authority without taint of bluster.

Therefore, **claims of possessing authority** belong in “Pontificate” attribute, supra.

When – What happens when you pass the speed of light?

Two options for standards of chronological paradigms were identified by the standards group in so far as temporal indications within the mark-up language were required:

- The first option would put date and time in ISO format in the time zone either where the action occurred, or UTC or Newfoundland time, as that is on the half-hour and will screw everyone up.
- The second <preferred> option would indicate relative time. This format is preferred because most SMOFs have only a faint connection to clock time to begin with. Rather than “0945 GMT Saturday Sept. 4, 2002,” the preferred time for the genesis of the Australia in 2010 bid would be “four hours into the Noreascon Four party on Saturday” (with the “where” taking the form of ConJose in the UCL format).

Definitions

We believe that SmofML™ will have much of its value as a definition language, providing archetypal explanations for essential knowledge that must be shared within the core smoffish development community. We therefore began the definitional process by identifying several element definitions (these are non-binding, of course; otherwise, we would need to disband after SmofML™ 1.0.)

1. Pontificate: Make claims that X is or must be.
2. Espouse: Present a point of view...at length...and then some more.
3. Bemoan: Complain loudly, loudly, and with vigour. May have the following style attributes:
 - a. whinge
 - b. kvetch**
 - c. reminisce
 - d. angst††
4. Obscure: Conceal through excessive explanation (also to distract or misdirect.)
5. Niggle: To make minor, annoying, and tediously accurate corrections of no true importance, usually in someone else’s stories.
6. Rant: Bathos‡‡ undirected; cheaper than learning anger management techniques.
7. Flame: To set (or attempt to set) fire to another SMOF’s metaphoric hair.
8. I Don’t Know: We don’t know.

* Please note that English spellings are used in all cases where they will make us appear suave (that’s French) and sophisticated (from the Greek).

† See? That ribbon didn’t mean what you thought it meant.

‡ Ad nauseum. (That’s Latin.)

§ Remember that the “X” in “XML^{NTM}” stands for “eXtensible” – not what you’re thinking.

** Yiddish. You know from Yiddish?

†† That’s German. Well, perhaps our Freudian slip is showing. Oh. He was Austrian. Never mind.

‡‡ More Greek...the recording secretary had a classical education.