Web Annotations

… and Elephants

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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.
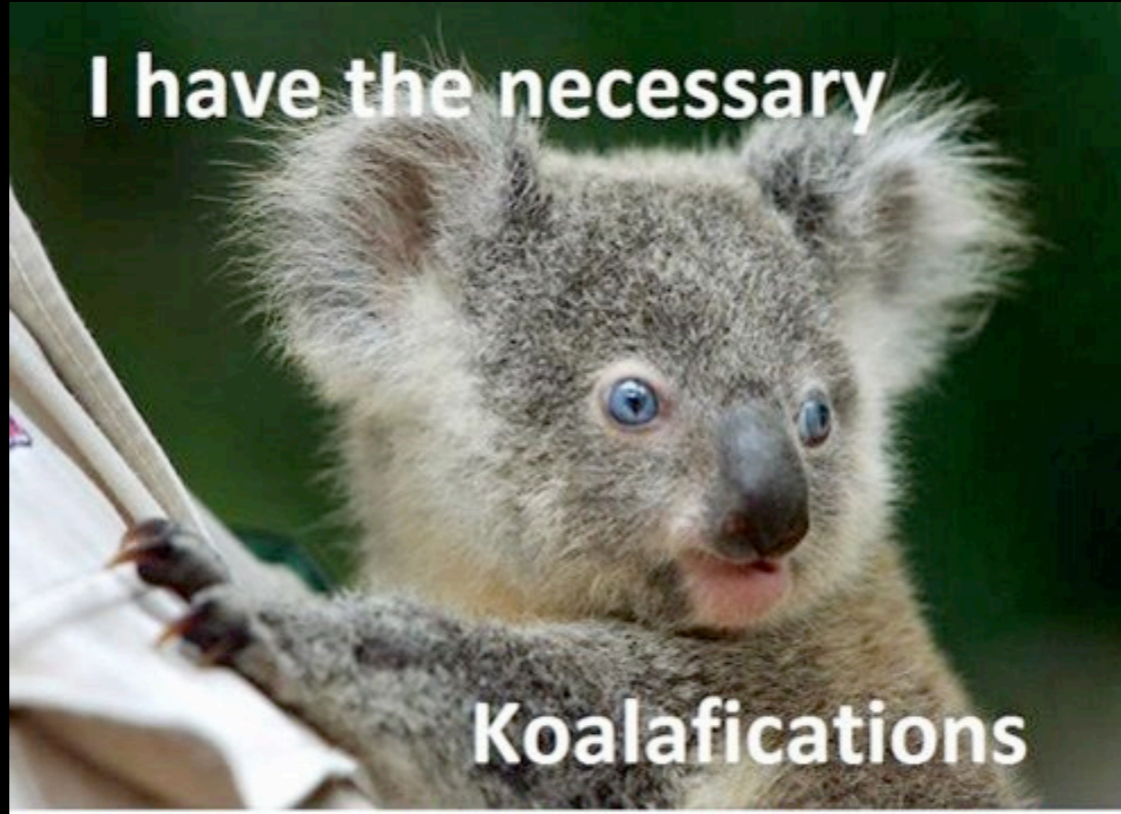
Workshop Goals

- 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
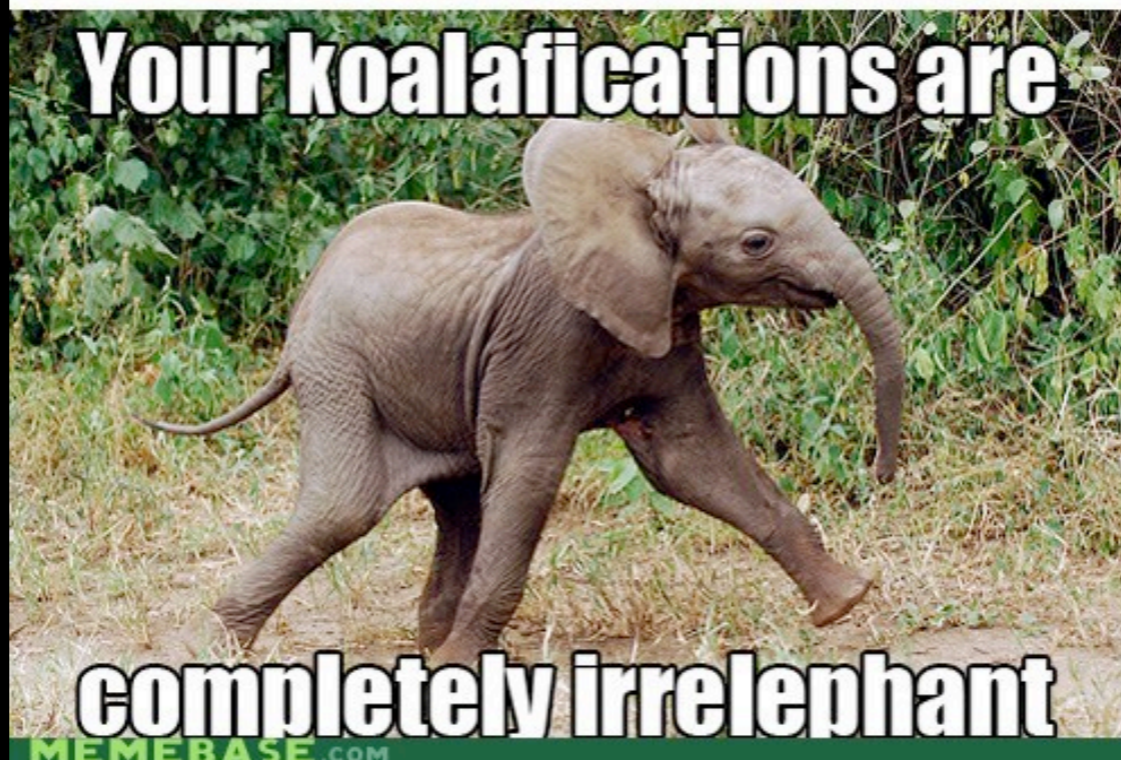
- I Annotate summit starts tomorrow

"It isn't where you came from, its where you're going that counts."
— Elephants Gerald, jazz singer