Published based on Ever Wonder About XML?

Ever Wonder About XML?

If you've spent any time among web programmers, you've likely heard them mention XML as a component of current web technology. XML stands for Extensible Markup Language, which is similar in many ways to HTML, or Hypertext Markup Language. HTML should be familiar to most web savvy folks, even those who haven't made a career in web development. HTML language works by communicating to the browser how information should be displayed. XML is different in that the information encoded can be processed as data or be displayed like HTML.

Let's look at an example to make this definition clearer. Say you put the word "zip" in tags, meaning the following data is a zip code. Put the word "zip" in tags, meaning the data in the tags is a zip code. The XML file can then be processed as data by another program or identified to be stored with data on another computer, or even be displayed on a web page.

XML and HTML are used together often in web pages, with XML markup often appearing within an HTML page. The "extensible" part of XML means that markup symbols are self-defined and unlimited. The result is great flexibility, a good reason why it is a preferred language among web programmers.

For those with an interest in web development, it is well worth the time investment to learn XML. Even as the language is still being continually developed, it is currently commonly used for blog newsfeeds, weather services, and e-commerce sites. The XML is used to manage and transmit data, and the browser is used to display that data as needed. XML is a useful conduit for transmitting data between systems that otherwise cannot communicate. Think of it as a virtual "envelope," used to transmit data identity and structure. If web development is in your future, the benefits of learning XML should be pretty clear!