

Introduction

Web Data Management and Distribution

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Web Data Management and Distribution
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Outline

- 1 Preliminaries
- 2 XML, a semi-structured data model
- 3 XML syntax
- 4 Typing
- 5 The XML World
- 6 Use cases

Web data handling

Web data = by far the **largest** information system ever seen, and a fantastic means of sharing information.

- Billions of textual documents, images, PDF, multimedia files, provided and updated by millions of institutions and individuals.
- An anarchical process which results in highly heterogeneous data organization, steadily growing and extending to meet new requirements.
- New usage and applications appear every day: yesterday P2P file sharing, today social networking, tomorrow ?

The challenge, under a data management perspective: master the size and extreme variability of Web information, and make it **usable**.

The role of XML

Web data management has been primarily based on HTML, which describes **presentation**.

- HTML is appropriate for humans: allows sophisticated output and interaction with textual documents and images;
- HTML falls short when it comes to software exploitation of data.

XML describes **content**, and promotes machine-to-machine communication and **data exchange**

- XML is a generic data format, apt to be specialized for a wide range of fields,
⇒ (X)HTML is a specialized XML dialect for data presentation
- XML makes easier **data integration**, since data from different sources now share a common format;
- XML comes equipped with many **software products, APIs and tools**.

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- 2 XML, a semi-structured data model**
 - Semi-structured data
 - XML
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Semi-structured data model

A data model, based on **graphs**, for representing both regular and irregular data.

Basic ideas

Self-describing data. The content comes with its own description;
⇒ contrast with the relational model, where schema and content are represented separately.

Flexible typing. Data may be typed (i.e., “such nodes are integer values” or “this part of the graph complies to this description”); often no typing, or a very flexible one

Serialized form. The graph representation is associated to a serialized form, convenient for exchanges in an heterogeneous environment.

Self-describing data

Starting point: **association lists**, i.e., records of label-value pairs.

```
{name: "Alan", tel: 2157786, email: "agb@abc.com" }
```

Natural extension: values may themselves be other structures:

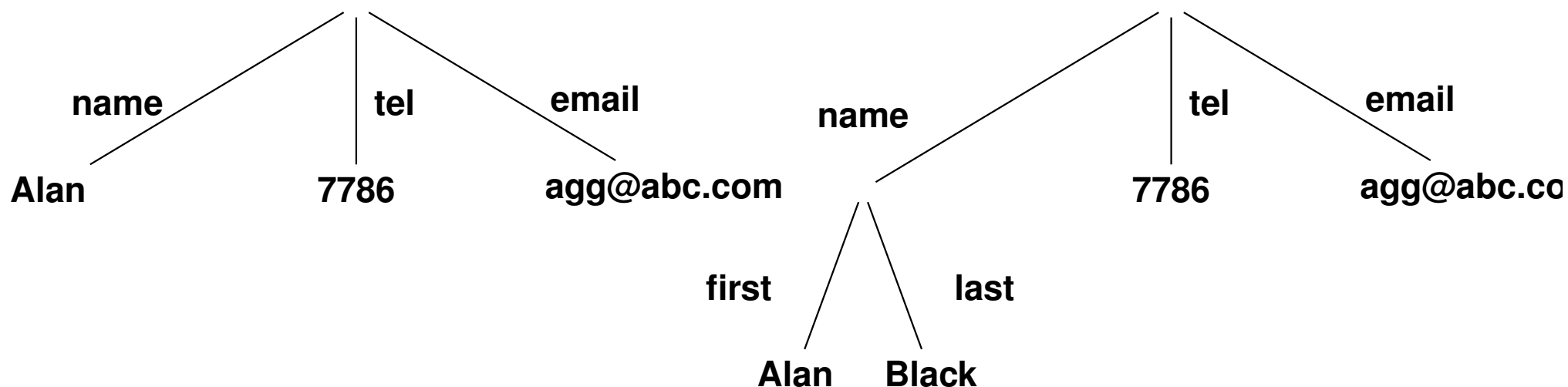
```
{name: {first: "Alan", last: "Black"},  
  tel: 2157786,  
  email: "agb@abc.com" }
```

Further extension: allow duplicate labels.

```
{name: "alan'", tel: 2157786, tel: 2498762 }
```

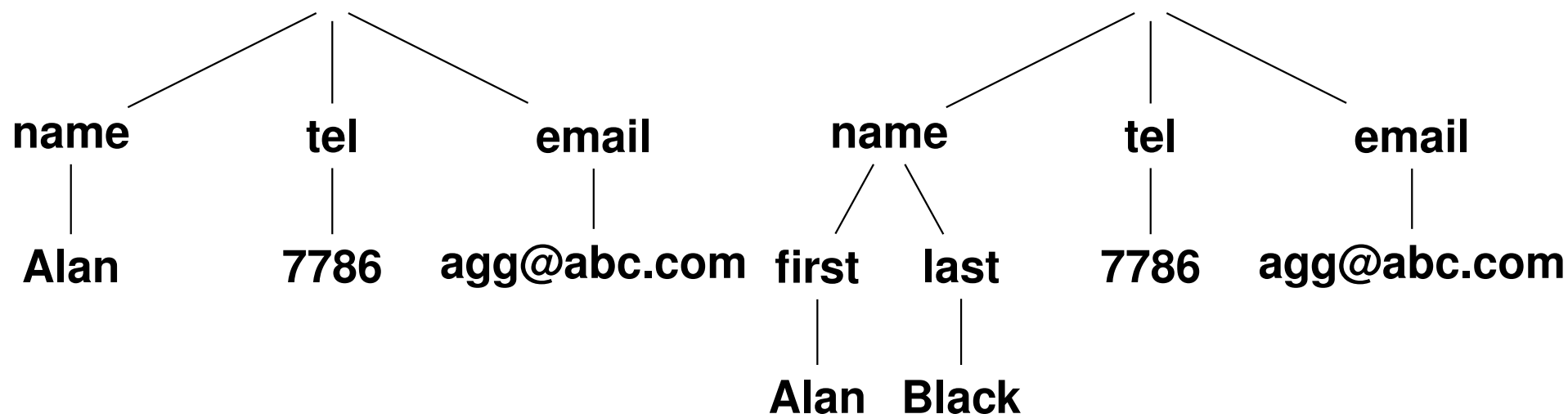
Tree-based representation

Data can be graphically represented as trees: label structure can be captured by tree edges, and values reside at leaves.



Tree-based representation: labels as nodes

Another choice is to represent **both** labels and values as vertices.



Remark

The XML data model adopts this latter representation.

Representation of regular data

The syntax makes it easy to describe sets of tuples as in:

```
{ person: {name: "alan", phone: 3127786, email: "alan@abc.com"},  
  person: {name: "sara", phone: 2136877, email: "sara@xyz.edu"},  
  person: {name: "fred", phone: 7786312, email: "fd@ac.uk"} }
```

Remark

1. relational data can be represented
2. for regular data, the semi-structure representation is highly redundant.

Representation of irregular data

Many possible variations in the structure: missing values, duplicates, changes, etc.

```
{person: {name: "alan", phone: 3127786, email: "agg@abc.com"},
  person: &314
    {name: {first: "Sara", last: "Green"           },
      phone: 2136877,
      email: "sara@math.xyz.edu",
      spouse: &443                                },
  person: &443
    {name: "fred", Phone: 7786312, Height: 183,
      spouse: &314                                }}}
```

Node identity

Nodes can be **identified**, and referred to by their identity. Cycles and objects models can be described as well.

XML in brief

XML is the World-Wide-Web Consortium (W3C) standard for Web data exchange.

- XML documents can be serialized in a normalized encoding (typically iso-8859-1, or utf-8), and safely transmitted on the Internet.
- XML is a generic format, which can be specialized in “**dialects**” for specific domain (e.g., XHTML, see further)
- The W3C promotes companion standards: DOM (object model), XSchema (typing), XPath (path expression), XSLT (restructuring), XQuery (query language), and many others.

Remark

1. XML is a simplified version of **SGML**, a long-term used language for technical documents.
2. HTML, up to version 4.0, is **also** a variant of SGML. The successor of HTML 4.0, is **XHTML**, an XML dialect.

XML documents

An XML document is a labeled, unranked, ordered tree:

Labeled means that some annotation, the label, is attached to each node.

Unranked means that there is no a priori bound on the number of children of a node.

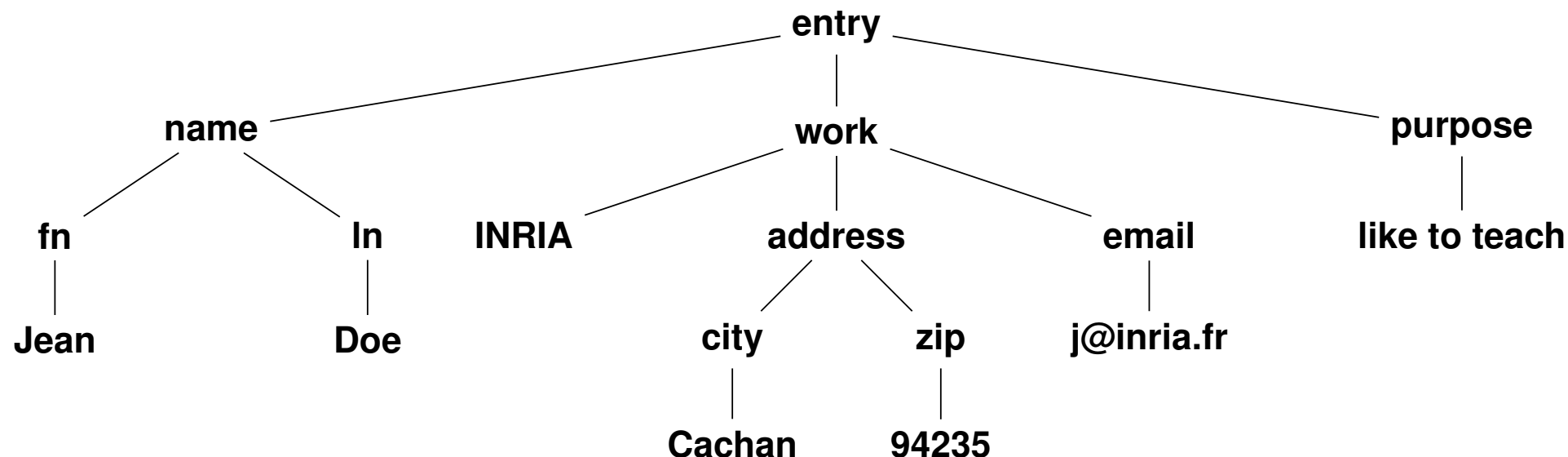
Ordered means that there is an order between the children of each node.

XML specifies nothing more than a syntax: no meaning is attached to the labels.

A dialect, on the other hand, associates a meaning to labels (e.g., `title` in XHTML).

XML documents are trees

Applications view an XML document as a labeled, unranked, ordered tree:



Remark

Some low-level software works on the serialized representation of XML documents, notably SAX (a parser and an API).

Serialized representation of XML document

Documents can be serialized, such as, for instance:

```
<entry><name><fn>Jean</fn><ln>Doe</ln></name><work>INRIA<adress><city>Cachan</city><zip>94235</zip></adress><email>j@inria.fr</email></work><purpose>like to teach</purpose></entry>
```

or with some beautification as:

```
<entry>
  <name>
    <fn>Jean</fn>
    <ln>Doe</ln> </name>
  <work>
    INRIA
    <adress>
      <city>Cachan</city>
      <zip>94235</zip> </adress>
    <email>j@inria.fr</email> </work>
  <purpose>like to teach</purpose>
</entry>
```

XML describes structured content

Applications cannot interpret unstructured content:

The book ``Foundations of Databases'', written by Serge Abiteboul, Rick Hull and Victor Vianu, published in 1995 by Addison-Wesley

XML provides a means to structure this content:

```
<bibliography>
  <book>
    <title> Foundations of Databases </title>
    <author> Abiteboul </author>
    <author> Hull </author>
    <author> Vianu </author>
    <publisher> Addison Wesley </publisher>
    <year> 1995 </year> </book>
  <book>...</book>
</bibliography>
```

Now, an application can access the XML tree, extract some parts, rename the labels, reorganize the content into another structure, etc.

Applications associate semantics to XML docs

The description of a letter

Letter document

```
<letter>
  <header>
    <author>...</author>
    <date>...</date>
    <recipient>...</recipient>
    <cc>...<cc>
  </header>
  <body>
    <text>...</text>
    <signature>...</signature>
  </body>
</letter>
```

Applications associate semantics to XML docs (2)

Letter style sheet

if *letter* then ...

if *header* then ...

if *author* then ...

if *date* then ...

if *recipient* then ...

if *cc* then ...

if *body* then ...

if *text* then ...

if *signature* then ...

Some software then produces the actual letter to mail or email.

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- 3 XML syntax**
 - Essential XML Syntax
 - XML Syntax: Complements
- 4 Typing
- 5 The XML World
- 6 Use cases

Serialized form, tree form

Typically, an application gets a document in *serialized form*, parse it in *tree form*, and *serializes* it back at the end.



- The serialized form is a textual, linear representation of the tree; it complies to a (sometimes complicated) syntax;
- There exist an object-oriented model for the tree form: the *Document Object Model* (W3C).

Remark

We present here the most significant aspects of both the syntax and the DOM. Details can be found in the W3C documents.

The syntax for serialized document, in brief

Four examples of XML documents (separated by blank lines) are:

```
<document />
```

```
<document> Hello World! </document>
```

```
<document>  
  <salutation> Hello World! </salutation>  
</document>
```

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8" ?>  
<document>  
  <salutation color="blue"> Hello World! </salutation>  
</document>
```

Last example shows the *prologue*, useful for XML parsers (it gives in particular the document encoding).

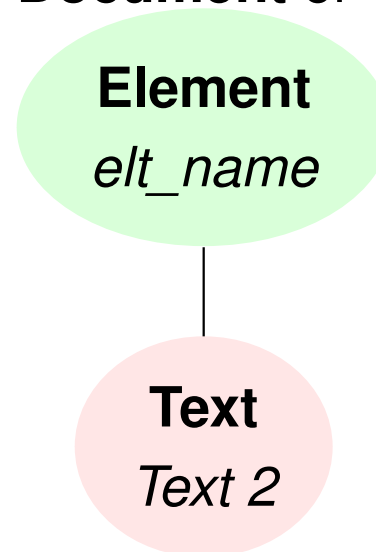
From serialized to tree form: text and elements

The basic components of an XML document are *element* and *text*.

Here is an *element*, whose content is a *text*.

```
<elt_name>  
  Textual content  
</elt_name>
```

The tree form of the document, modeled in DOM: each node has a **type**, either **Document** or **Text**.



From serialized to tree form: nesting elements

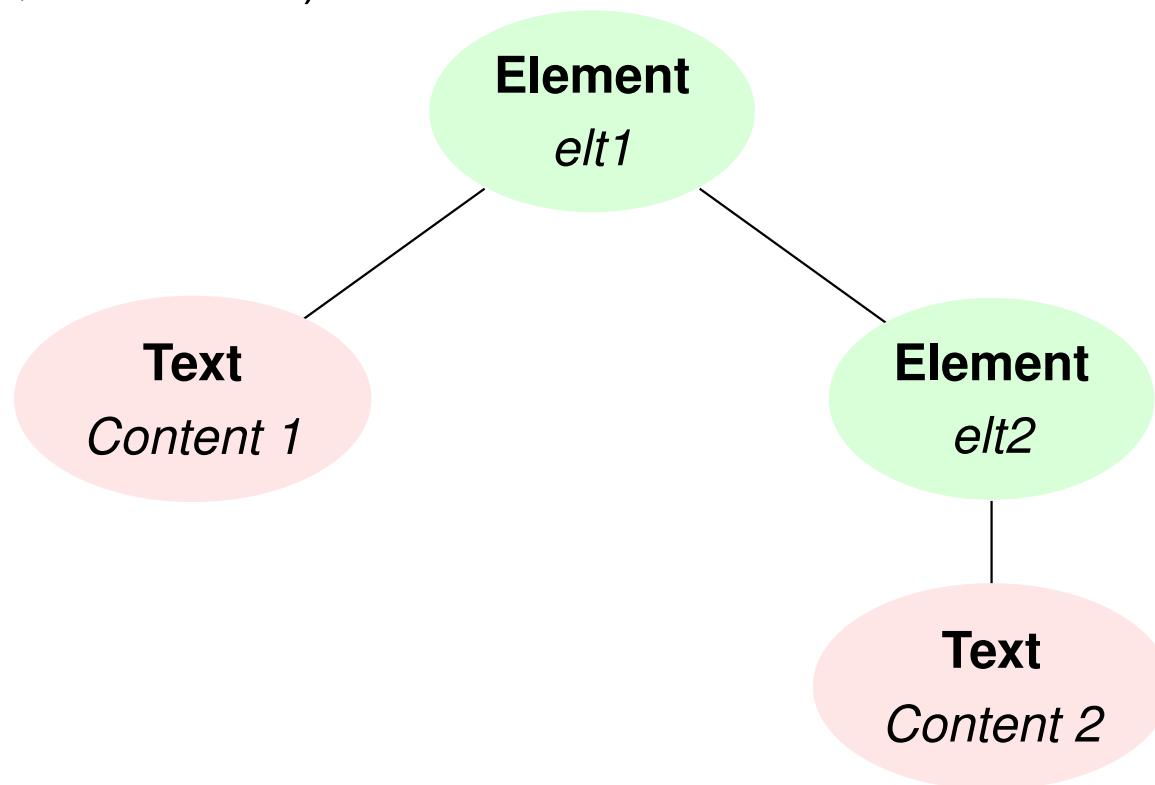
The content of an element is

- 1 the part between the opening and ending tags (in serialized form),
- 2 the subtree rooted at the corresponding **Element** node (in DOM).

The content may range from atomic text, to any recursive combination of text and elements (and gadgets, e.g., comments).

Example of an element nested in another element.

```
<elt1>
  Textual content
  <elt2>
    Another content
  </elt2>
</elt1>
```



From serialized to tree form: attributes

Attributes are pairs of name/value attached to an element.

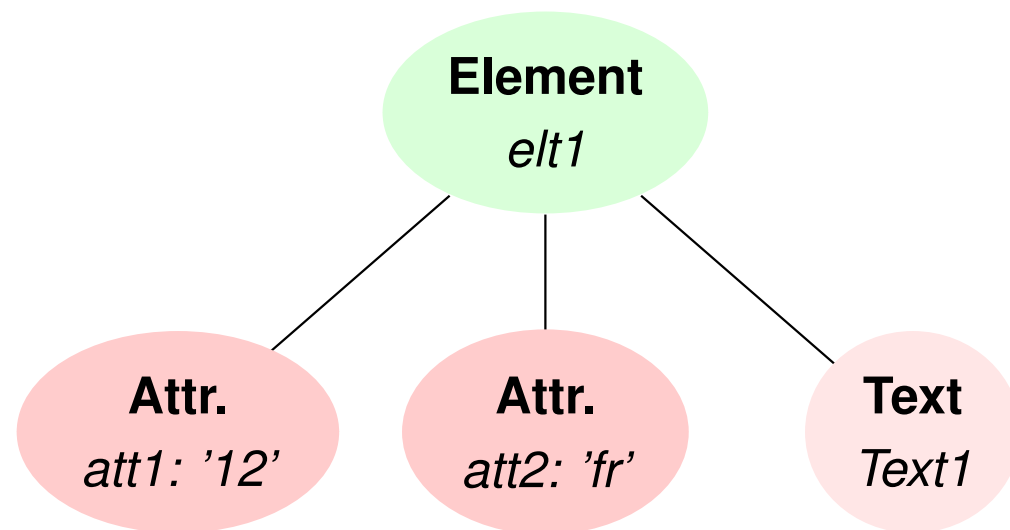
- 1 as part of the opening tag in the serialized form,
- 2 as special child nodes of the **Element** node (in DOM).

The content of an attribute is always atomic text (no nesting).

An element with two attributes.

```
<elt1 att1='12' att2='fr'>  
  Textual content  
</elt1>
```

Unlike elements, attributes are *not* ordered, and there cannot be two attributes with the same name in an element.



From serialized to tree form: the document root

The first line of the serialized form must *always* be the *prologue* if there is one:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8" ?>
```

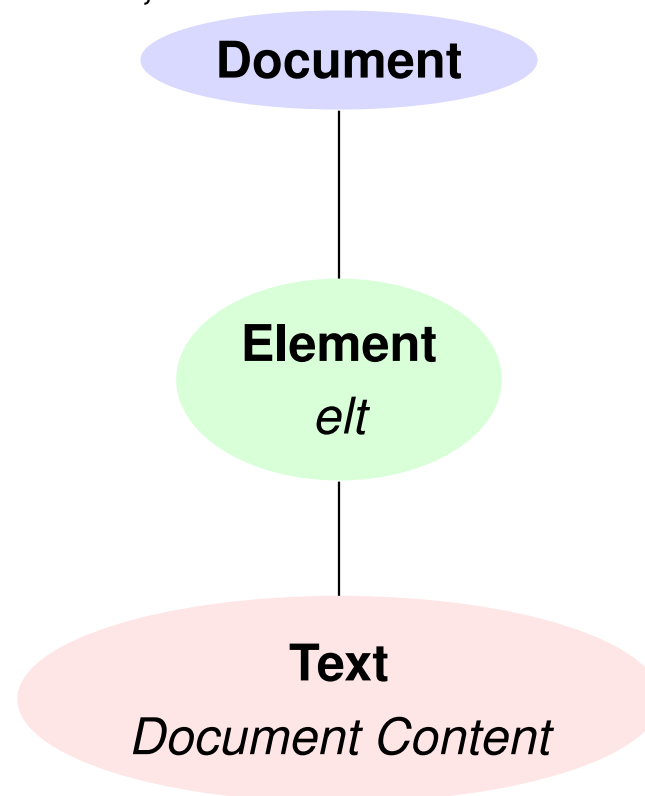
and the document content must *always* be enclosed in a single opening/ending tag, called the *element root*.

A document with its prologue, and element root.

```
<?xml version="1.0"
  encoding="utf-8" ?>
<elt>
  Document content.
</elt>
```

Note: there may be other syntactic objects after the prologue (processing instructions).

In the DOM representation, the prologue appears as a **Document** node, called the *root node*.



Predefined entities

Several symbols cannot be directly used in an XML document, since they would be misinterpreted by the parser.

They must be introduced as entity references.

Declaration	Reference	Symbol.
<code><!ENTITY lt "&#60;"></code>	<code>&lt;</code>	<code><</code>
<code><!ENTITY gt "&#62;"></code>	<code>&gt;</code>	<code>></code>
<code><!ENTITY amp "&#38;"></code>	<code>&amp;</code>	<code>&</code>
<code><!ENTITY apos "&#39;"></code>	<code>&apos;</code>	<code>'</code>
<code><!ENTITY quot "&#34;"></code>	<code>&quot;</code>	<code>"</code>

Comments and instructions

Comments can be put at any place in the serialized form.

```
<!--This is a comment-->
```

They appear as **Comment** nodes in the DOM tree (they are typically ignored by applications).

Processing instructions: specific commands, useful for some applications, simply ignored by others.

The following instruction requires the transformation of the document by an XSLT stylesheet

```
<?xml-stylesheet href="prog.xslt" type="text/xslt"?>
```

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Type declaration

XML documents *may* be typed, although they do not need to. The simplest (and oldest) typing mechanism is based on *Document Type Definitions* (DTD).

A DTD may be specified in the prologue with the keyword **DOCTYPE** using an ad hoc syntax.

A document with proper opening and closing of tags is said to be **well-formed**.

- `<a> . . . <c> . . . </c>` is well-formed.
- `<a> . . . <c> . . . </c>` is not.
- `<a> . . . <a> . . . ` is not.

A document that conforms to its DTD is said to be **valid**

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Popular XML dialects

- RSS** is an XML dialect for describing content updates that is heavily used for blog entries, news headlines or podcasts.
- WML** (Wireless Mark-up Language) is used in Web sites by wireless applications based on the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP).
- MathML** (Mathematical Mark-up Language) is an XML dialect for describing mathematical notation and capturing both its structure and content.
- Xlink** (XML Linking Language) is an XML dialect for defining hyperlinks between XML documents. These links are expressed in XML and may be introduced inside XML documents.
- SVG** (Scalable Vector Graphics) is an XML dialect for describing two-dimensional vector graphics, both static and animated. With SVG, images may contain outbound hyperlinks in XLinks.

XML standards

SAX (Simple API for XML) sees an XML document as a sequence of tokens (its serialization).

DOM (Document Object Model) is an object model for representing (HTML and) XML document independently of the programming language.

XPath (XML Path Language) that we will study, is a language for addressing portions of an XML document.

XQuery (that we will study) is a flexible query language for extracting information from collections of XML documents.

XSLT (Extensible Stylesheet Language Transformations), that we will study, is a language for specifying the transformation of XML documents into other XML documents.

Web services provide interoperability between machines based on Web protocols.

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Exploiting XML content

Publishing: an XML document can easily be converted to another XML document (same content, but another structure)

⇒ **Web publishing** is the process of transforming XML documents to XHTML.

Integration: XML documents from many sources can be transformed in a common dialect, and constitute a **collection**.

⇒ **Search engines**, or **portals**, provide browsing and searching services on collections of XML documents.

Distributed Data Processing: many softwares can be adapted to consume/produce XML-represented data.

⇒ **Web services** provide remote services for XML data processing.

Genericity of softwares and APIs

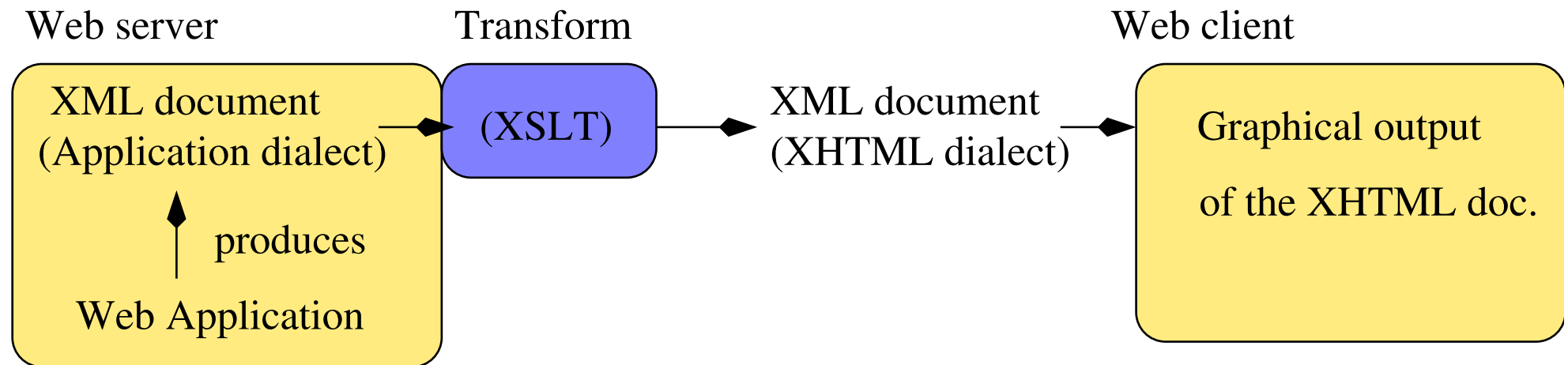
XML comes with many tools that are **generic**: A software or API for XML documents applies to **all** the possible XML dialects.

Web Publishing: restructuring to XHTML

The **Web application** produces some XML content, structured in some application-dependent dialect, on the server.

In a second phase, the XML content is transformed in an XHTML document that can be visualized by humans.

The transformation is typically expressed in XSLT, and can be processed either on the server or on the client.



XML describes structured content

Applications cannot interpret unstructured content:

The book ``Foundations of Databases'', written by Serge Abiteboul, Rick Hull and Victor Vianu, published in 1995 by Addison-Wesley

XML provides a means to structure this content:

```
<bibliography>
  <book>
    <title> Foundations of Databases </title>
    <author> Abiteboul </author>
    <author> Hull </author>
    <author> Vianu </author>
    <publisher> Addison Wesley </publisher>
    <year> 1995 </year> </book>
  <book>...</book>
</bibliography>
```

Now, an application can access the XML tree, extract some parts, rename the labels, reorganize the content into another structure, etc.

Web publishing: content + presentation instructions

The following document is an XHTML version of the bibliographic content presented above:

```
<h1> Bibliography </h1>
  <p> <i> Foundations of Databases </i>
    Abiteboul, Hull, Vianu
    <br/> Addison Wesley, 1995 </p>
  <p> <i> Data on the Web </i>
    Abiteoul, Buneman, Suciu
    <br/> Morgan Kaufmann, 1999 </p>
```

Now the labels belong to the XHTML dialect, and can be interpreted by a Web browser.

[Test: biblio.html](#)

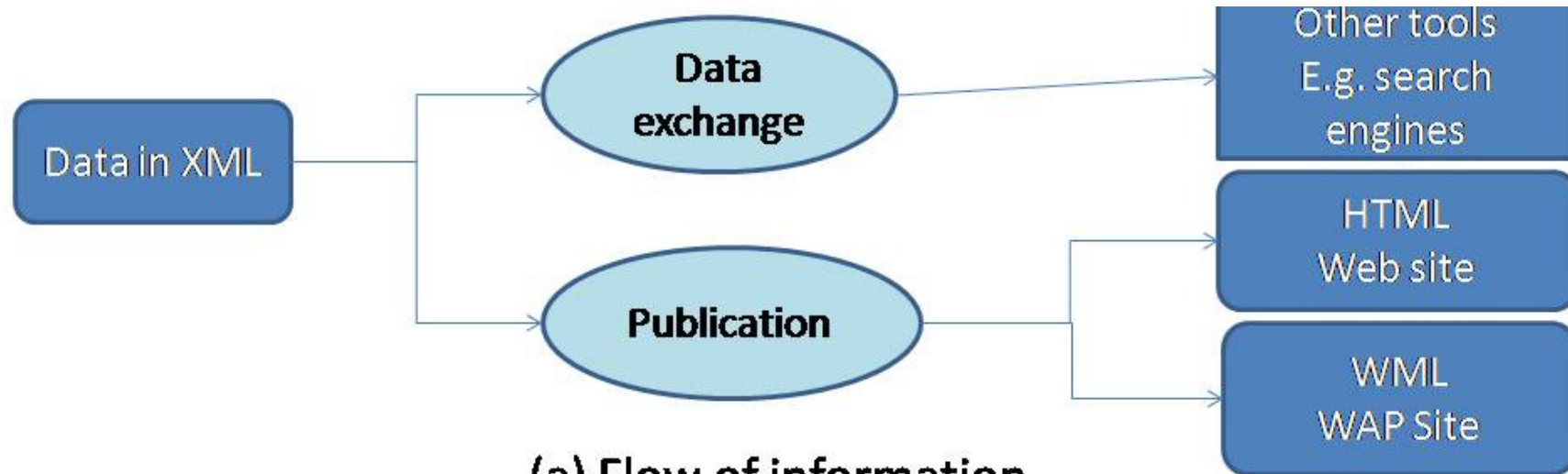
Note that the “meaning” of labels is restricted to presentation purposes. It becomes complicated for a software to distinguish the name of authors.

Web publishing

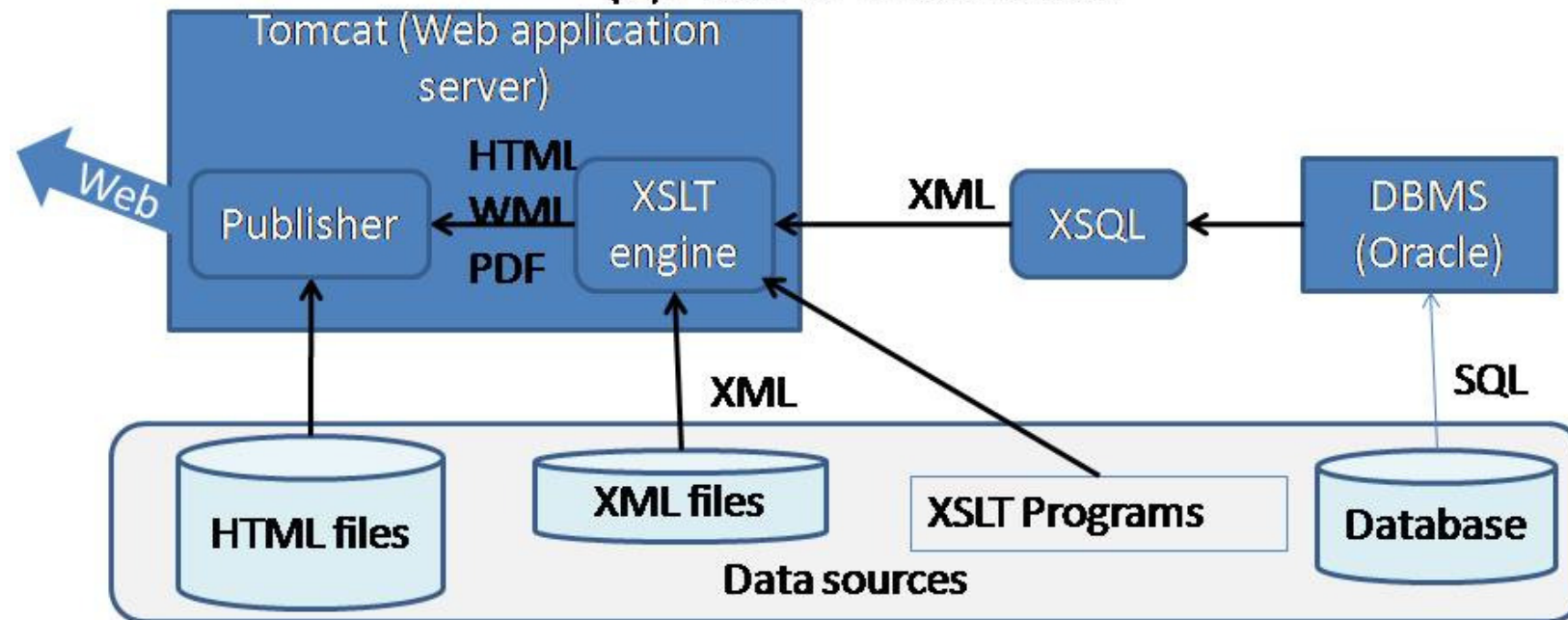
The same content may be published using different means:

- Web publishing: XML \Rightarrow XHTML
- WAP (Wireless Application Protocol): XML \Rightarrow WML

Web publishing, the big picture



(a) Flow of information



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