Liam Quin – Information Architect

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About Liam Quin

Information Architecture: how do we represent information in our computers? How does that facilitate the processing we need to do? How can that support our business processes? How might it lead to **discovering new products and markets**?

I've been doing this sort of analysis for decades, helping companies, organizations, institutions, individuals make the best use out of their documents and information.

I was involved in deploying some of the earliest software using SGML, the ISO standard markup format that begat HTML and XML; I was involved in the first standard version of **HTML** (at the Internet Engineering Task Force) and was an Invited Expert to the W3C Working Group that created XML itself, and later joined W3C where I led the **XML** standardization work. Sometimes standards succeed and sometimes not, but open architectures and standard formats and protocols **protect your investment**, making it easier to migrate when needed, and where the formats become popular, making skills, expert knowledge and software easier to acquire, **reducing costs**.

I have a background in **computer science** and in **digital typography**, **text formatting** and **graphic design**; this combination is an excellent grounding for designing information that can be used and presented effectively.

Languages and Systems

I represented W3C on the XML-related Working Groups, including XML, XSLT and XPath, XQuery, XML Schema, Efficient XML Interchange, and more. I've worked professionally writing and maintaining **XSLT** transformations and **XQuery**-based templating and query systems. I was also staff contact and W3C representative the **Verifiable Claims** Working Group, working on digital identity and distributed private **trustworthy credentials**.

At W3C I've also worked in accessibility, coordinating a task force on HTML accessibility; on electronic publishing, including co-chairing and organizing a Workshop on using Web technologies to make printed books; a Workshop on interchanging XML efficiently which ended up with a world-leading technology in use in industry today; on **CSS**; on XML Pipelines.

Before joining W3C I had written, released and maintained a text retrieval system, *lq-text*, in the **C Programming Language**. I've also done work in **Perl**, **JavaScript**, Unix/Linux **shell** scripts, **Scheme**, **PHP**, and in an earlier job maintained a version of the **troff** text formatting system. I also worked on XSLT transformations (including the use of JSON) to convert large complex XML documents to HTML for the Web, and at SoftQuad I was in charge of a group of people doing d**ocument analysis**, consulting, product customization, **system integration** and **document conversion**.

I've mostly worked on **Linux** and **Unix** systems, both as workstations and as servers, including the **command-line**, although I've also used Apple and Microsoft systems.

I've done detailed performance analysis, speeding up programs sometimes by three orders of magnitude, and have advised clients on architectures for content management and deployment and on information design to support it.

My own personal Web site, **fromoldbooks.org**, uses XQuery over a mix of RDF, complex XML and SQL-based relational data to drive rapid and effective searching, with a framework that I built for the purpose. I wrote code that generates queries on the fly in XQuery, the same W3C NoSQL language used in e.g. MarkLogic Server.

Any software I write as a consultant is normally **open source**, but this is negotiable. I've spoken at many conferences, including open/libre source, XML, Web, and more, and have had my calligraphy featured on the front cover of *Time* magazine.

Employment History

2001–2018 World Wide Web Consortium, as XML Activity lead.

1999–2001 Consulting to Wiley Interscience Ltd, first on the production of the Web version of a large encyclopædia, including arranging for the presentation of mathematics; later for a project making the Web version of scientific and technical journals.

1998–1999 Consulting to Bombardier Inc. in Toronto on the production of aircraft manuals.

1997–1998 Employee of Groveware Inc., a Toronto startup that ran out of venture capital money before shipping the final product.

1990–1997 SoftQuad Inc., Toronto, initially as a programmer, then as pre-sales support visiting potential clients to advise on information architecture and software solutions, and ending up as head of the SoftQuad consulting, contract programming and document conversion division. I was also technical lead for SoftQuad Panorama, a Web viewer for SGML that was one of the motivating factors behind the creation of XML; and technical lead for HoTMetaL, the first commercial HTML editor.

1986–1990 Unixsys (UK) Ltd., as programmer, porting text formatting software to various Unix systems for resale, and later in pre-sales support dealing with potential and actual clients.

1984–1986 Independent, working on text formatting; formatted the proceedings of a mathematical conference for Prof. D.B.A. Epstein, a project that necessitated making significant modifications to the *troff* formatting system (this was before mathematics had switched to TeX!)

Education

1981–1984 University of Warwick, BSc. In Computer Science with Honours;

1976–1984 Samuel Whitbread Upper School.