

Validation Services

Validation is the process of checking over various elements of a webpage in order to ensure compliance with certain accessibility standards. Validators are extremely useful because they allow users to periodically check their work to ensure accessibility. Users can operate the validating service by plugging in the url (uniform resource locator) of their website. Then the validator instantly reports its findings based on elements similar to those set forth by the Illinois Web Accessibility Standards (IWAS). A user can then take action based upon the findings.

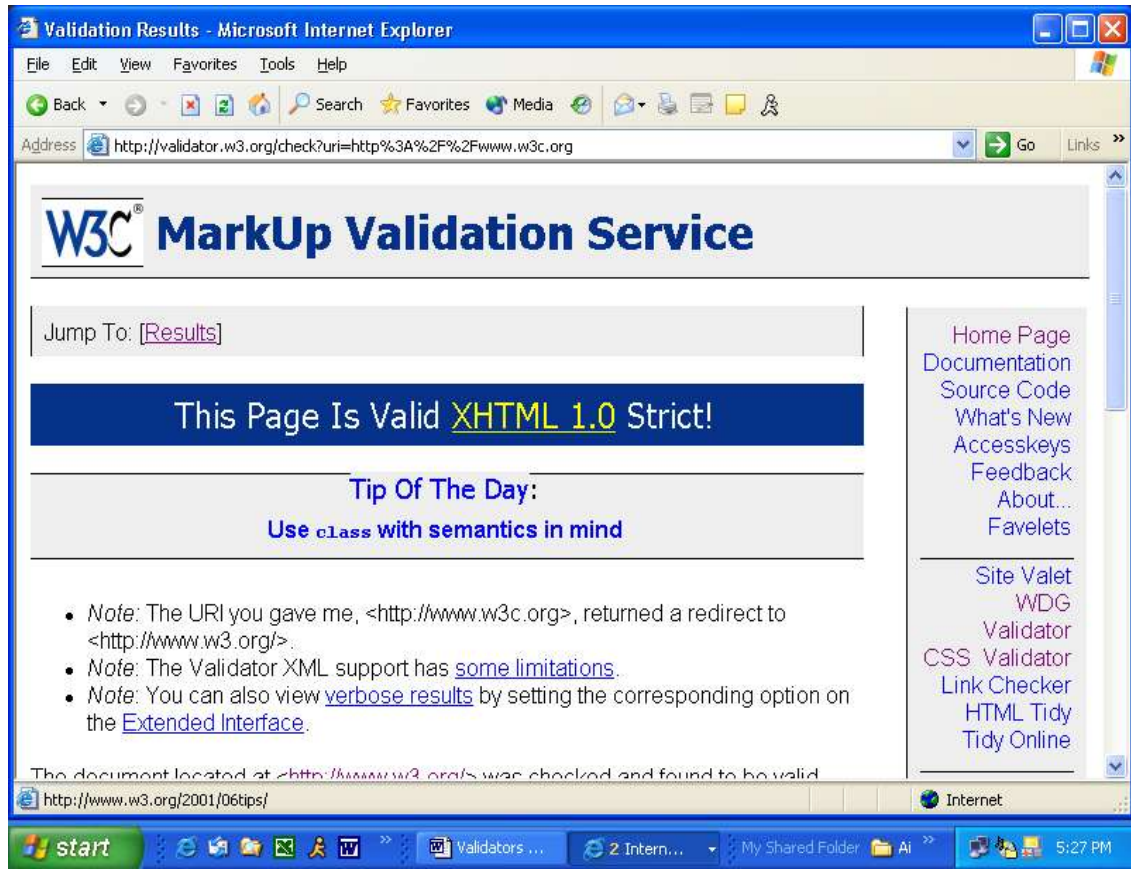
The three primary areas that validators evaluate consist of coding, style sheets, and accessibility. Coding is essential for accessibility because it can affect the operation of a screenreader. Style sheets are a new technique that allows web creators to simplify their pages by grouping all style elements together in a separate document. Users may also use the same style sheet for many different web pages. However, style sheets may affect the use of a screenreader if not properly utilized. Lastly, accessibility is evaluated in order to ensure that websites are accessible to all potential users.

The following list provides a comprehensive review of popular validating services that are either free or for commercial use. These services are grouped according to their usage for validating code, style sheets, or accessibility.

Code Validators

1. W3C Markup Validation Service

- (<http://validator.w3.org>)
- This service validates the coding of a website and is extremely useful because it does a thorough evaluation of the site. It also provides beneficial material for the user to fix the problems because it provides additional explanations of the errors. This service is in connection to the W3C consortium and this service is free for users.
- The user can activate the service by visiting the website above and then simply plug in their url (uniform resource locator) address for it to immediately validate. Within seconds the result page appears and describes errors, if any, that appear. In addition, the W3C provides links for further explanation of the problems.
- The following example demonstrates how positive results would look using the website of <<http://www.w3c.org>>



Style Sheet Validators

1. W3C CSS Validation Service

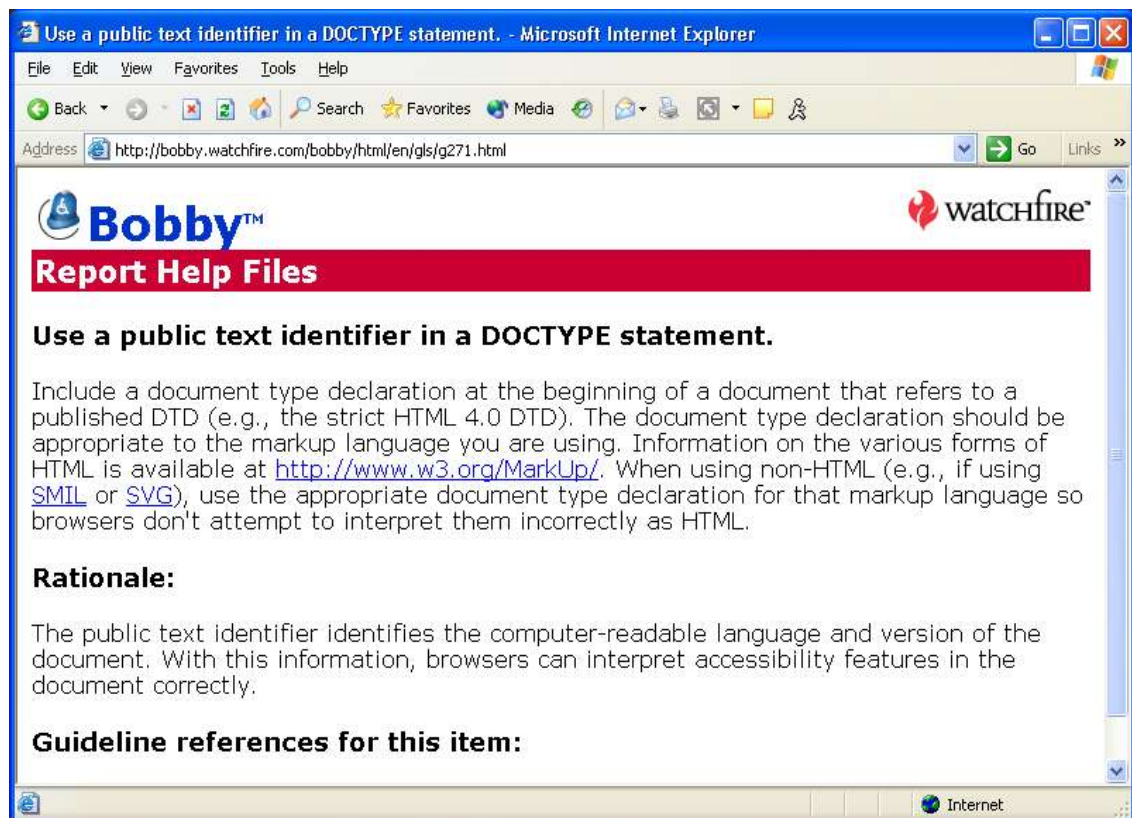
- (http://www.jigsaw.w3.org/CSS-validator/Validator_uri.htm)
- CSS stands for cascading style sheets. CSS essentially ensures that the formatting does not interfere with the information of the web page. CSS is connected to the W3C consortium and is available free to users.

Accessibility Validators

1. Bobby

- (<http://www.bobby.watchfire.com>)
- This site is very beneficial because it gives very detailed information regarding accessibility. The service remains consistent with the standards set forth by the W3C. Bobby was designed for commercial use; however, users can check their websites on a trial basis for 30 days free.

- Bobby also requires the user to plug in a url, where within seconds Bobby reveals the results. Bobby lists the results according to priority 1, priority 2, and priority 3 accessibility standards.
- Priority 1 simply outlines the most basic essential accessibility needs. Without these standards, a screenreader would not be able to function.
- Priority 2 standards are less essential for accessibility needs; however, a screenreader would still have some difficulty using the site.
- Priority 3 standards are the most advanced level where the site would be largely functional with minor problems with accessibility.
- The following example shows an explanation from Bobby about the importance of specific doctypes, which is a specific HTML code.



2. Cynthia Says

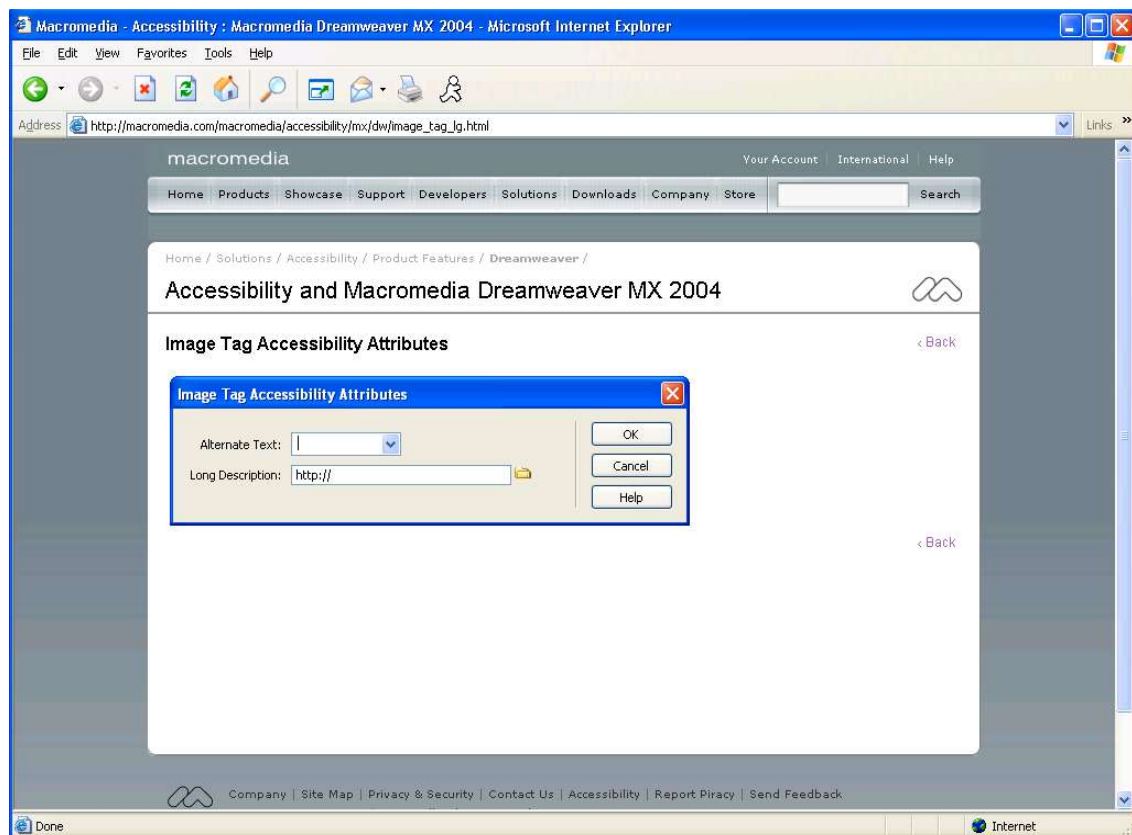
- (<http://www.cynthiasays.com/>)
 - Cynthia Says identifies problems with accessibility compliance using the W3C standards.
 - Cynthia Says operates similarly to the other validators in that it requires a url address and lists the results immediately.

Software

The following list contains software programs that have tools to aide users in building accessible websites.

1. Dreamweaver

- (<http://www.macromedia.com>)
- Dreamweaver is a commercial product that provides the most complete set of tools to help build, edit, or maintain accessible websites. Free trial versions are available to download from the main page.
 - The following is an example of a dreamweaver feature that requests alternate text whenever an image is used.



2. Frontpage

- (<http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage/>)
 - Frontpage is a highly commercialized product that provides software to create websites.
 - Frontpage focuses on producing websites that are dynamic and interactive.

Additional Services

Here are some links to additional validation services available.

1. **Access Enable**

(<http://www.retroaccess.com/>)

This service requires the user to register online and assesses accessibility.

2. **Ask Alice**

(<http://askAlice.ssbtechnologies.com:8080/sdsb/ao/anon/index.jsp>)

Ask Alice specializes in helping companies create accessible websites.

3. **A-Prompt**

(<http://aprompt.snow.utoronto.ca/>)

A-Prompt specializes in the repairing accessibility issues in websites.

4. **Lift**

(<http://www.usablenet.com/>)

Lift is software that is designed to help users test and repair their websites.