Media Types with Multiple Suffixes

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Abstract

This document updates RFC 6838 "Media Type Specifications and Registration Procedures" to describe how to interpret subtypes with multiple suffixes.

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As written, RFC 6838 [RFC6838] permits the registration of media type subtype names which contain any number of occurrences of the "+" character. RFC 6838 defines the characters following the final "+" to be a structured syntax suffix, but does not define anything further about how to interpret subtype names containing more than one "+" character.

This document updates RFC 6838 to clarify how to interpret subtype names containing more than one "+" character as subtypes with multiple suffixes.

As registration of media types which use a structured suffix has become widely supported, this enables further specialization of media types that build on already registered and well-defined media types which themselves use a structured suffix.

1.1. Conventions Used in This Document

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC2119] when they appear in ALL CAPS. They may also appear in lower or mixed case as plain English words, without any normative meaning.

2. Media Types with Multiple Suffixes

The following paragraphs are additions to RFC 6838.

Media types MAY be registered with more than one suffix appended to the base subtype name. The suffixes MUST be interpreted as ordered. Valid media type names containing a structured suffix are built from right to left (not left to right). Characters on the left-most side of the left-most "+" in a subtype name specify the base subtype name. Characters to the right of each "+" in a subtype name denote additional structured syntax specifier suffixes.
Media types with more than one suffix MUST be registered according to the procedure defined in [RFC6838]. A new base subtype name MUST only be registered with suffix combinations that are already registered in their own right.

For example, a media type that uses the two suffixes "+svg+xml" is only permitted insofar as "svg+xml" is already registered. In this case, the suffix "+svg" does not need to be registered individually, but "+xml" and "svg+xml" MUST be registered.

2.1. Processing Multiple Suffixes

Registered subtypes have clear processing rules. In cases where specific handling of the exact media type is not required, receivers of the media type MAY do generic processing on the underlying representation according to their ability to process any subset of the suffix(es) from right to left inclusive. In other words, an application can choose to ignore the base subtype name and left-most "+" from a media type with multiple suffixes, and process according to the remaining media type suffix(es). An application can ignore as many of the left-most suffixes as necessary to achieve a media type that can be processed.

For example, for the media type "application/did+ld+json", the following are all valid subtypes with their own individually specified processing rules:

did+ld+json
ld+json
json

Thus applications can choose to process the underlying representation according any of the following valid media types:

application/did+ld+json
application/ld+json
application/json

3. Normative References

Appendix A. Acknowledgements

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