

## **Proprietary and Open-Source File Formats**

### **Proprietary Format**

These are designed, created, maintained and controlled by a license agreement which is owned by an organization or individual, i.e. privately owned. Proprietary standards may be free to use, but the file specification is often closed rather than being open.

Some popular proprietary standards include:

- DOC files (Microsoft Word Document file format)
- MP3. MPEG Audio

An important benefit of proprietary standards is that products developed around these standards should work well with each other. For example, all Microsoft software should work well on Microsoft Windows.

### **Open-Source Format**

Open standards are usually controlled by a Creative Commons license or they are unlicensed. They can be used by anyone and are not owned by a commercial organization or individual. Normally, they will have been developed by experts collaborating online.

The source code behind files and programs created using open standards will normally be open source which means the code should be freely available. Anyone could look at the code and make improvements.

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) maintains a number of open standards to use on the web, such as CSS, HTML, SQL and HTTP.

Ensuring standards like these are open and accessible means that anyone can create a website and be confident that it will work as expected on any device.