While the technology of Web 2.0 existed as early as 1998, something changed in the half-decade that followed. Microsoft originally created Ajax as proprietary technology of Internet Explorer, to facilitate Outlook on the Web. It was not fully functional in Mozilla until 2002, and Safari did not support it until version 1.2 in 2004. This half-decade also witnessed the rise of web standards as the de facto mode of operation for browser vendors, a big change from the browser wars that spawned JavaScript and Ajax.

In fact, the standardization of the Web, more than any technology, defines the last five years. When Google released Chrome, the first big new browser since Safari, nobody asked whether or not it complied with web standards. Everyone assumed it did. And when jQuery and other libraries went looking for Chrome problems, they found virtually none. In effect, Web 2.0 has meant the maturing of the Web as a platform—a place where web developers can assume that anything new that calls itself the Web will support a common subset of features.

In the past few years, browser vendors have come together in fairly valiant efforts to build the next versions of JavaScript, HTML, and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), as the technologies of the Web. As standards bodies go, they have managed to move rather quickly and get everyone (even the recalcitrant Microsoft) on board with rather helpful changes. While I fully anticipate to see vendors like Microsoft, Mozilla, and Apple drive innovation over the next five years, I also expect those efforts to be canonized in standards that will quickly make their way onto the Web as a platform.

In fact, that has already started to happen. The audio and video support in HTML5 originated in Opera, while the canvas tag, and CSS animations and transforms originated in Webkit. In all of those cases, the originators saw value in standardizing their invention rather than keeping it to themselves. This, to me, epitomizes the future of the Web.

■ 18.4.8 Michael Van Riper

18.4.8.1 Google Wave: A Peek into the Future of the Web

Some of you may recall when Google Maps first introduced draggable web maps. At the time, it was truly innovative. Since then, the underlying Ajax techniques have propagated to the point that this type of interaction is now