

In this chapter:

- *Types of XML APIs*
- *Why Choose SAX?*
- *Why Not to Choose SAX?*
- *A Short History of SAX*
- *Packages in the SAX2 API*
- *Some Popular SAX2 Parser Distributions*
- *Installing a SAX2 Parser*
- *What XML Are We Talking About?*

1

The Simple API for XML

When XML started, Java was best known as a fun new language that made developing programs for the World Wide Web easy. XML was intended to be the data foundation for the next generation of web infrastructure tools, and it clearly needed the same kind of support that Java offered. The Java programming environment included ways to fetch data over the Web with URLs, which was a novel notion at that. It even had support for Unicode, so working with languages used anywhere on the Web would be easy. Since both those capabilities were important for working with XML, there was already a very active community of XML developers using Java when the XML 1.0 Recommendation was finalized in early 1998. More XML parsers were available at that time for Java than for the more widely adopted C programming language!

Those parsers quickly came to share one feature: applications weren't restricted to some particular product's API. The *Simple API for XML*, SAX, was well under way; it was the first API usable with all the popular Java parsers. SAX helped make Java a premiere language for developing XML-based applications.

Since then the adoption of XML has exploded, as has the use of Java in web-oriented (and other) applications. Today's Java programmer has an embarrassingly large selection of XML-related APIs to choose from, and SAX has retained its role as a premier XML API. In this chapter we look at why this is true, and learn more about where SAX came from and its current state.