WordPress: using the HTML5 time element

HTML5 introduces a brand new set of elements that can be used in our WordPress themes. Among them, the `time` element is used to associate dates and times to an `article` element (if it's present as ancestor) or to the whole document. In this article we'll see how to use this element effectively on WordPress.

The `time` element is defined as follows by the HTML5 specifications:

> The `time` element represents its contents, along with a machine-readable form of those contents in the `datetime` attribute. The kind of content is limited to various kinds of dates, times, time-zone offsets, and durations, as described below.
>
> The `datetime` attribute may be present. If present, its value must be a representation of the element's contents in a machine-readable format.
>
> A `time` element that does not have a `datetime` content attribute must not have any element descendants.

Here's an example of the `time` element:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
<title>time</title>
<meta charset="utf-8" />
</head>
<body>
<article>
```

```
        <!--content-->
        <time datetime="2012-06-10">June 10, 2012</time>
</article>
</body>
</html>
```

WordPress already supports a wide variety of date and time formats that can be used with the `datetime` attribute (see Formatting Date and Time on the WordPress documentation).

Here's a sample Loop that makes use of the `time` element together with the WordPress date and time functions:

```php
<?php

   while(have_posts()):
       the_post();
   ?>

   <article id="<?php the_ID();?>">
     <header>
               <time datetime="<?php the_date('Y-m-d');?>"><?php the_time('F j, Y');?></time>
               <h2 class="entry-title"><a href="<?php the_permalink();?>" rel="bookmark"><?php the_title();?></a></h2>
         </header>
               <div class="entry-content"><?php the_excerpt();?></div>
   </article>

<?php
  endwhile;
?>
```

The result is shown below:

[caption id="attachment_1921" align="aligncenter" width="430" caption="The HTML5 time element displayed in a WordPress theme"]The HTML5 time element displayed in a WordPress theme[/caption]

The pubdate attribute

Using the `pubdate` attribute often results in a validation error. The W3C validator simply says that this attribute is not allowed to appear at a certain point. Unfortunately, the HTML5 specifications lack of useful examples for this problem. Some authors report that the problem is due to the date format chosen for the `datetime` attribute, but I still can't confirm this information.