

Google Chrome Browser dropping H.264 support

January 14 2011, by John Messina



On January 11, Google announced that Chrome's HTML5 video support will change to match codecs supported by the open source Chromium project. Chrome will support the WebM (VP8) and Theora video codecs, and support for the H.264 codec will be removed to allow resources to focus on open codec technologies.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Google will soon stop supporting the H.264 video codec in their Chrome browser and will support its own WebM and Ogg Theora technologies.

Google's announcement of their change from H.264 to WebM and Theora in the Chrome browser came in a post Tuesday on Google's

Chromium blog by product manager Mike Jazayeri. Jazayeri explained on the Chromium blog why Chrome will no longer support H.264:

“We expect even more rapid innovation in the web media platform in the coming year and are focusing our investments in those technologies that are developed and licensed based on open web principles. To that end, we are changing Chrome’s HTML5 support to make it consistent with the codecs already supported by the open Chromium project. Specifically, we are supporting the WebM (VP8) and Theora [video](#) codecs, and will consider adding support for other high-quality open codecs in the future. Though H.264 plays an important role in video, as our goal is to enable open innovation, support for the codec will be removed and our resources directed towards completely open codec technologies.”

Since Google is developing the WebM technology, they can develop a good video standard using open source faster and better than a current standard video player can.

The problem with H.264 is that it cost money and the patents for the technologies in H.264 are held by 27 companies, including Apple and Microsoft and controlled by MPEG LA. This makes H.264 expensive for content owners and software makers.

Since Apple and Microsoft hold some of the patents for the H.264 technology and make money off the licensing fees, it’s in their best interest not to change the technology in their browsers.

There is however concerns that Apple and Microsoft’s lack of support for WebM may impact the Chrome browser. Since H.264 is so popular it’s going to force Chrome users to use [Flash](#) for video playback which sends the video to a flash player and encodes it as H.264 for playback.

It's interesting to know that Google is dropping H.264 support but not Flash. This is because Adobe owns Flash and is also a WebM partner that will support WebM technologies inside Flash. This leaves Adobe siding with [Google](#) and their WebM technology.

More information: [Chrome Blog](#)

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