

Assessing DITA as a Foundation for XML Implementation



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Agenda

- What is DITA?
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Business case for DITA
- DITA versus custom XML architecture



About the presenter

- Founder and president, Scriptorium Publishing, 1996 to today
- Co-Author: FrameMaker, WebWorks Publisher, and technical writing books
- Degree in international affairs and German, Duke University
- Adobe Certified Expert, FrameMaker
- Certified Technical Trainer (CTT+)
- Realistic, results-oriented consultant



Questions

- Please ask questions.
- Feel free to ask in German (if you prefer) and I will translate.
- I may defer some questions to the end of the presentation.
- A PDF version of the slides is available upon request.



What is DITA?

- Darwin Information Typing Architecture
 - Darwin – because you can evolve new elements from existing elements
 - Information Typing – content is categorized as task, reference, concept
 - Architecture – includes components for reuse, single sourcing, and generating output
- Developed by IBM, maintained by OASIS



DITA components

- Document type definitions (DTDs)
- Open Toolkit
 - XSL
 - XSL-FO
- Documentation



What DITA is not



Is DITA better than XML?



Which is better?



DITA's ecology

- Topic-oriented, modular content
- Content reuse
- Information exchange with other organization
- Semantic requirements are minimal
- Basic metadata (audience, platform, output) is adequate



conrefs

- ➔ Mechanism for reuse of smaller bits
- ➔ Replaces entity references
- ➔ Element-based reuse



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```
<topic id="xyz">
  <title>Baboon</title>
  <body>
    <p>Baboons eat mostly fruit. </p>
    <note type="danger"
      conref="warnings.xml#nofeeding"/>
  </body>
```

warnings.xml

```
<note id="nofeeding">Do not feed animals snacks,
scraps, or people food.</note>
```



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Business case for XML

- ➔ Content exchange
- ➔ Database publishing
- ➔ Reuse of content/reduce duplication
- ➔ Automated formatting/publishing
- ➔ Compliance



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Beyond XML's business case, DITA may...

- ➔ Reduce content modeling effort
- ➔ Make content truly portable
- ➔ Support content reuse
- ➔ Take advantage of software support
- ➔ Provide output options



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Reduce content modeling effort

- ➔ Assume that DITA structure is a reasonable match
- ➔ Speed up the transition to structure
- ➔ But what if DITA doesn't match?
- ➔ Does your industry have special requirements?



Make content truly portable

- ➔ Do you need to send content to a customer, partner, vendor, other department?
- ➔ Will they standardize on DITA?



Version A

```

<topic
  author="Sarah"
  last_mod="2009-07-20"
  <title>The Health Benefits of
  Chocolate</title>
  <intro>It's probably too good to
  be true.</intro>
  <para>Scientists report that there
  are chemicals in chocolate that
  have health benefits.</para>
  <list>
  <li>xxxxxx</li>
  <li>yyyy</li>
  <para>details about yyyy</para>
  </list>
</topic>

```

Version B

```

<topic title="The Health Benefits of
  Chocolate">
  <para>It's probably too good to be
  true.</para>
  <para>Scientists report that there
  are chemicals in chocolate that
  have health benefits.</para>
  <list>
  <li>xxxxxx</li>
  </li>
  <li>yyyy</li>
  <para>details about
  yyyy</para>
  </li>
</list>
</topic>

```

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Support content reuse

- Map files for topic reuse
- conrefs for smaller reuse

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Software support

- DITA support found in many (most?) XML authoring tools
- Some tools support only DITA and not general XML

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Provide output options

- XHTML, HTML Help, PDF, Eclipse, DocBook, JavaHelp, troff, Word RTF through DITA Open Toolkit
- Starting point for output
- Not suitable for production workflow
- Customization is difficult and time-consuming

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DITA versus DocBook

- Topics versus books
- Customization techniques
- Reuse options
- Output types supported

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Should you use DITA?

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Yes.

- DITA meets all requirements.
- A business partner or customer requires DITA content.
- Single sourcing is a requirement.
- No existing content.
- Can be flexible with markup requirements to make implementation faster.



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No.

- Content must conform to a specific standard, such as S1000D
- Content is and should remain narrative.
- Semantic requirements are industry-specific, complex, and/or strict.



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Maybe

- DITA is not an exact match.
- Customization/specialization would be required.



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Resources

- DITA @ OASIS
- http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/tc_home.php?wg_abbrev=dita
- White papers
 - Available on CD at our booth
 - www.scriptorium.com/papers.html



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Contact information

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Questions



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