

Hacking the DITA Open Toolkit

WHITE PAPER



Simon Bate
Senior Technical
Consultant

The Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) defines a set of XML elements for creating and organizing content. However, the DITA specification is silent on transforming DITA into user-readable documentation. The DITA Open Toolkit (DITA OT) fills that gap, providing a mechanism for transforming DITA content into multiple output formats, including HTML and PDF. The DITA OT formatting for both of these formats is basic, at best. This paper focuses on the changes you can make to the DITA OT HTML output to create attractive output. These modifications include changes to cascading stylesheets (CSS), headers and footers, and more advanced customizations. The paper also illustrates how you can create content-specific elements through DITA specialization.

NOTE: The information in this white paper covers increasingly complex changes to the DITA OT. Depending on the types of changes you decide to make, your skills should encompass these areas: XHTML (including CSS), XSLT, Ant, and XML DTDs.

What's in this paper?

This white paper describes changes you can make to the DITA OT in increasing level of technical difficulty.

- ❖ [Hacking vs. elegance](#)—Contrasts different approaches to modifying the DITA OT and provides suggestions for file management.
- ❖ [DITA OT Overview](#)—Provides background on the DITA OT, including how to install and run the DITA OT.
- ❖ [CSS changes](#)—Describes various strategies for changing CSS files in the DITA OT.
- ❖ [HTML headers and footers](#)—Describes how to use HTML files to create static headers and footers.
- ❖ [Modifying XSL transforms](#)—Describes different ways to change the XSL transforms in the DITA OT.
- ❖ [Packaging up your overrides](#)—Illustrates how to create a plugin for the DITA OT.
- ❖ [Hacking and specialization](#)—Describes how to modify DITA OT dtd files to specialize individual elements.

