
A, B, C, ...DITA

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Agenda

- Survey
 - HTML - > SGML - > XML
 - Defining DITA
 - DITA Open Toolkit
 - DITAMAPs and Topics
 - CMS, Editor, and Publishing Engine
 - How I approached it?
 - How I will approach it now?
 - Benefits
 - All this Hoopla – could it fizzle out?
 - The phenomenon called Infocenter
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Definition

- Basically, a technical documentation markup language
 - Topic based
 - Has:
 - Content references
 - Metadata
 - Conditional Text
 - Information typing
 - Specialization
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DITA Open Toolkit

- An open-source set of tools
 - Installed either in raw form or as a part of a DITA editor
 - Transforms DITA content (topics + maps) into deliverables:
 - PDF
 - XHTML
 - CHM
 - Eclipse
 - Troff
 - RTF
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DITA Open Toolkit

■ Includes

- ❑ Apache Ant
 - ❑ Java (JDK)
 - ❑ DTDs and Schemas
 - ❑ XSLT processor
 - ❑ HTML Help Workshop
 - ❑ XSL-FO
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DITAMAPs and Topics

- What is a DITAMAP
 - Topic types
 - Task
 - Reference
 - Concept
 - Example files
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CMS, Editor, and Publishing Engine

■ DITA CMSes

- ❑ Using a versioning tool as a CMS
- ❑ Proprietary CMSes
- ❑ DITA without a CMS
- ❑ CCM and CMS

■ DITA Editors

- ❑ Frame, Serna, XMLSpy, XMetaL, Arbortext, IBM WorkBench

■ Publishing Engines

- ❑ RenderX, FrameMaker, DITA-OT
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Analogies

- Roads -- Indian Vs American
 - Which are better?
 - Who Spent more?
 - Object Oriented Documentation -- Kurt Ament's theory
 - Granularity
 - Reuse
 - Small topics that make sense on their own
 - Databases
 - A database of content?
 - A platform independent database of content?
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DITA Licensing costs

- Editor - USD 200 – 1000
 - DITA CMS - Hundreds of thousands of Dollars)
 - A publishing engine (If required) – USD 200
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Initial cost of setup

- Cost of pilot (forego this on your own peril)
 - Tools cost (one option, sans a CMS)
 - Serna : \$200
 - DITA OT : \$0
 - xep: : \$300
 - Subversion : \$0
 - Time invested
 - Content migration/porting costs
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Costs you save...

- Formatting
 - Re-writing and publishing similar deliverables
 - Translation management
 - Publishing
 - Dropping a product feature at last moment...
and cost of re-including it on the lastest
 - Review and project management
 - Working on the wrong source for 3 days
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DITA TCO

- $TCO = \text{Initial cost of setup} + \text{training costs} + \text{content migration costs} - (\text{costs you save} \times \text{number of releases})$
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DITA factors

- How big the are deliverables? Multiple releases?
 - Do you need multi-channel publishing?
 - Want freedom from tools?
 - Same content -- small modifications for different platforms ...user profiles?
 - Configuration Management a requirement?
 - Translation a requirement?
 - Want consistent patterns and look and feel in your documentation?
 - Want endless possibilities with your documentation?
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How I thought of it?

- ❑ Saw the problems we were facing
 - Config management
 - Duplication of effort
 - Inconsistent content
 - Tight deadlines
 - ❑ Saw the opportunity
 - A culture of open source
 - Probed for a need for multi channel publishing
 - ❑ Sold the Idea (Self, team members, PM, and Client)
 - Installed DITA OT
 - Experimented and Tried to see the possibilities
 - Did lots of study
 - Thought of CHM for context help from the same content
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When I look back...

■ What went wrong

- ❑ CHM over the network -- Bad Idea!
- ❑ Thought things will fall into place - they eventually do... but not before you lose sleep over each of the issues
- ❑ A lot of planning came along as we implemented ... can happen when you do something for the first time

■ What went right

- ❑ A Team that was already working with a lot of open source software -- ANT, Eclipse
 - ❑ A team member who required little hand holding
 - ❑ No aversion to DITA
 - ❑ An empowering culture of open source software
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How I will approach it NOW?

- Step 1: Determine if I really need DITA
 - Study DITA
 - Analyze:
 - The potential and viability of DITA in the documentation deliverables
 - Team attitude towards DITA?
 - Tools and reuse methodologies
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How I will approach it NOW? (Contd.)

- Step 2: Sell the idea—create a POC
 - A smaller version of the perceived to be your solution
 - Include all the elements – figures, equations, cross references
 - Run it in the intended environment
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How I will approach it NOW? (Contd.)

- Step 3: Plan and port
 - Condition-alities and commonalities
 - Images
 - Localization
 - Conditional references
 - Specialization?
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How I will approach it NOW? (Contd.)

- Step 4: Refine
 - Forming > Storming > Norming > Adjourning



Benefits we realized

- Configuration management/versioning using SVN
 - Reuse
 - Consistency and accuracy
 - Less work
 - Better management of content— features being dropped and included at the last time
 - Single sourcing—PDF and Infocenter
 - Core writing time increased
 - Content updated on daily basis – not essentially at the end of a release
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Benefits we can realize

- Endless



Limitations

- Equations
 - Initial investment
 - Content Migration
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All this Hoopla – can it die down?

- **IBM**
 - **OASIS** (Organization for the **A**dvancement of **S**tructured **I**nformation **S**tandards)
 - **DITA Committee**
 - **XML tool vendors** (Adobe, Arbortext, Blast Radius, Idiom, Rascal, Syntext)
 - **Consultants** (Comtech, Innodata, Mulberry, SeicoDyne)
 - **Companies** (BMC, Boeing, IBM, Intel, Lucent, Nokia, Sun)
 - **Organizations** (National Library of Medicine, US Department of Defense)
 - **Power users** (who create plugins and pass them on)
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So who else is out there?

- **DocBook** - format for technical (but not only) manuals and documentation.
 - **Extensible HyperText Markup Language (XHTML)**
 - **Mathematics Markup Language (MathML)**
 - **Microsoft Assistance Markup Language (MAML)**
 - **Music Extensible Markup Language (MusicXML)**
 - **S1000D** - international specification for technical documentation related to commercial or military; aerospace, sea or land; vehicles or equipment.
 - **troff** (typesetter runoff)
 - **Wikitext** - used in Wikipedia, MediaWiki and other Wiki installations.
 - **Wireless Markup Language (WML)**
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DITA Vs AuthorIT

- See letsdita.blogspot.com for the latest

Factor	DITA	Authorit
Initial cost of ownership	DITA is XML. XML is free ... and platform independent	For optimized performance, Authorit's backend has to be SQL – SQL costs USD 2,000/- (If you will have up to only 4 GB of data to manage, you can use one of the free alternatives, JET, MSDE or SQL Express)
Licensing	Free – but you will spend on the authoring tool and CMS (maybe) for convenience	Proprietary You will spend at least on the CMS and Authoring application Costs add up with localization and other requirements
Localization	Free – you save money due to "re-use" and "easy tracking" of content to be translated	Localization support superior to DITA – but you pay per language supported
Costs	Apart from the CMS (Astoria etc) and the authoring tools (Epic, XMetal, Frame, Serna, XMLspy, there could be consulting and training costs, which you can minimize with self-study and RnD. If your project team uses open source tools, such as Eclipse, Ant Scripts, XSLT, and Tortoise SVN, these costs could be amazingly low. The developers can set up and support many aspects of DITA for you.	Costs will be something like the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Authoring + CMS)* # of licenses + Multi-channel publishing = X,XXX • SQL = X,XXX • Localization = XX,XXX * number of languages you need It may be wrong for me to reveal the actual costs, but you can count the digits and get an idea where the cost estimate is going. For precise figures, you can request a quote from Authorit: http://my.author-it.com/index.php?option=com_jah_portal&task=register
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plethora of self study material available on the web • Many consultants/trainers are willing to do the training for you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USD XXXX per trainee for 3 days' training by Authorit consultants • Free self study material on the web: http://www.author-it.com/index.php?page=documentation • Consultants/Trainers available
Sustainability	You have the capability or confidence to set up and work with DITA and the open source tools involved in the process – you can work with DITA with costs as low as ZERO! - Or - You are clear about the costs (Setup+ Training+ Authoring tool + CMS) involved and are OK with them.	You do not want to experiment – you want an out-of-the-box system to cater to your needs and you are fine with the costs.
Conclusion	DITA has much lower initial as well as total cost of ownership. Authorit scores as an out-of-the-box solution and provides you a way out to DITA, as it can author DITA. The final decision between the two needs a thorough understanding of your requirements, the two solutions' capabilities, and a match between the two.	

The phenomenon called Infocenter

- Eclipse help component
 - Infocenter—the online version of eclipse help component
 - Open Source
 - Can be run on a server
 - Requires no installation on the client machines
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Thanks!

■ About me

- ❑ 9.5 years as a tech-writer
- ❑ 3.5 years with DITA
- ❑ Like researching about DITA possibilities and trying them out

■ Contact

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