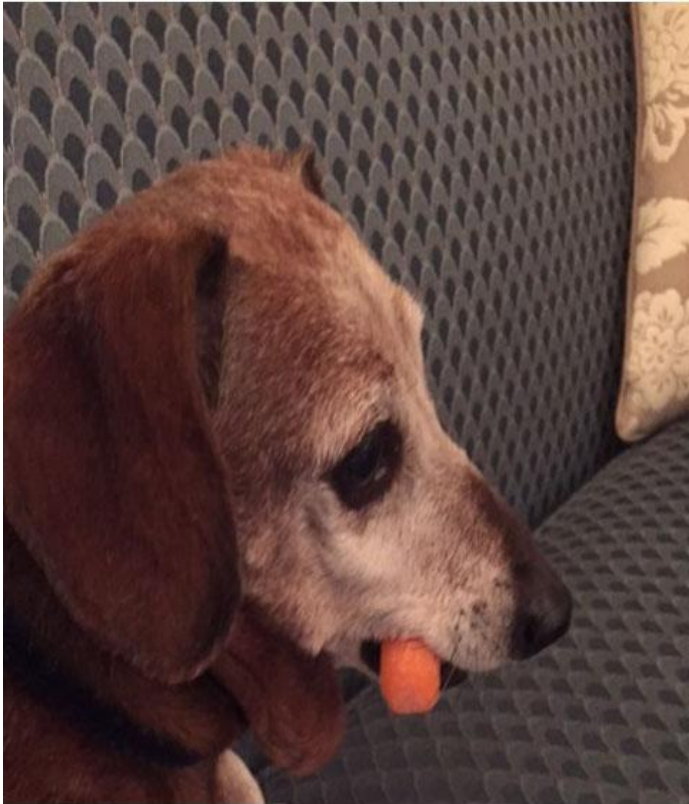

Simply XML August 2018 Newsletter

This is the Simply XML Newsletter written by Doug Gorman, Founder and CEO of Simply XML, often under the counsel of his canine colleague/muse, Frank.



Frank

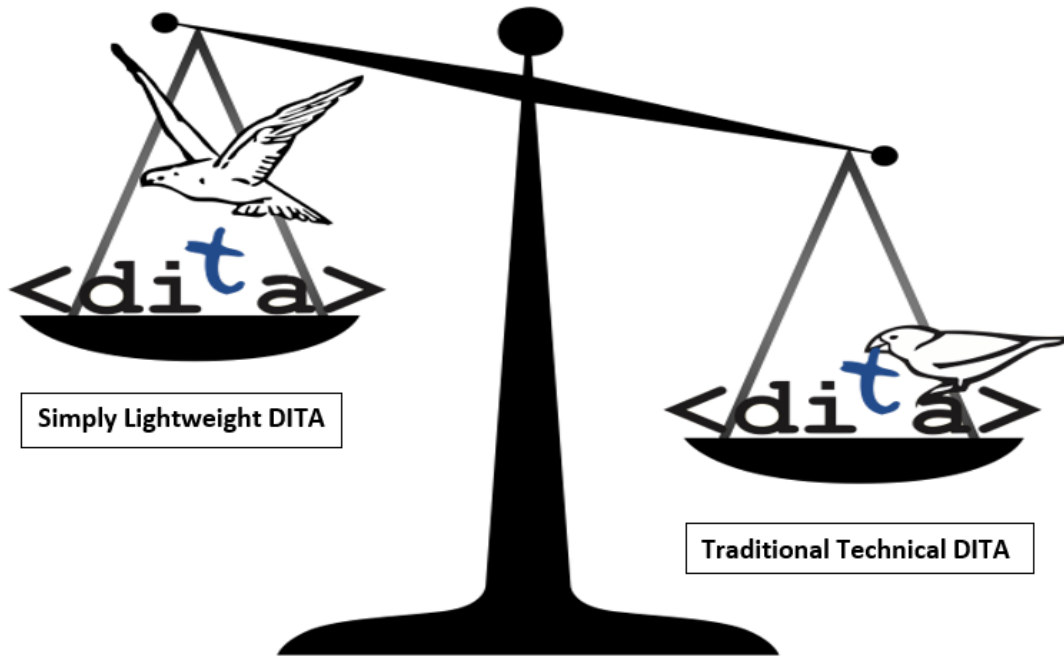
Doug

We would like to encourage you to pass this along to others and, if they want, they can subscribe with the following link [[Subscribe to the Simply XML Newsletter](#)].

We hope you enjoy these newsletters, but if you want to opt out, please unsubscribe at the bottom of the page. We would love to hear your comments. Email us at hello@simplyxml.com.

The DITA Word is expanding beyond technical departments and Lightweight DITA looks like a winner.

Introducing Content Mapper™ with Simply Lightweight DITA



DITA Politics

The East Content and the West Content Can Both Agree on One Common
Enterprise Content Management Approach:
Lightweight DITA

East Content

Description

East Content is represented by the original architects of DITA, the technical publication departments that have implemented DITA, the consultants who have helped, and the software tools companies that have enabled DITA with brilliant software. To the Easterners, each of the 640 or so DITA elements has an important purpose when implemented correctly. Consultants and technical staff implement DITA with technology, training, and consulting costs that can often be measured in the \$ thousands per user.

Successes

Broadly speaking, DITA has provided consumers of technical content with much better technical publications that can be accessed and then acted upon from many devices/media. It has provided an improved organizational brand for technical publications with authoring, publishing, and localization efficiency through content reuse.

Problems/Issues

Because of DITA's breadth of possibilities and its innate complexity, implementation requires specialized authoring, CMS, and publishing technology. It also requires knowledgeable and capable technical staff. As a result, the use of DITA has been confined to well-funded, experienced technical organizations. And furthermore, the required tools and education for staff has been time-consuming and expensive.

Implication for Content Mapper and Simply XML

In many organizations, it has been difficult for the engineers, subject matter experts, marketing departments, and compliance staff consider using DITA primarily because of the required technical knowledge and because traditional XML editors are hard to use. Simply XML's target market includes organizations, and not necessarily technical organizations, that understand the value of XML as an architecture, but with non-technical authors who use

MS Word. Our authors will not use complicated DITA authoring and repository tools. So, the use of DITA beyond technical publication departments for what we call "West Content," has been modest.

West Content

West Content is represented by what we sometimes call "ROTO," which stands for the **Rest Of The Organization**. ROTO authors and information consumers are measured in exponentially larger numbers of people in organization worldwide, across industries and governments. Responsibilities for these authors relate to diverse organizational objectives with technology as an adjunct to the job. There are a billion of these people who author and save most content in MS Word. Many have adopted structured writing methodologies including Information Mapping, DocuTools, and Functional Design. They sometimes use Microsoft SharePoint as a shared repository. Technology and consulting expenditures for these writers is usually measured in the hundreds of dollars per writer.

Successes

Even without DITA, hundreds of millions of information consumers receive the large majority of the information they need to use products, review plans, describe issues, and comply with internal and external regulations.

Problems/Issues

Across large global organizations and customers, content lacks consistency. Ubiquitous access to inconsistent information on many devices causes the organization's brand image to suffer. Authoring reuse is confined to cut and paste. And publishing to multiple devices/media involves maintenance of multiple versions of the same content. ROTO believes that DITA cannot be used because is too technical, too complicated, and way too expensive. Eyes glaze over with aggressive resistance to XML editing tools and the implementation impact of single source publishing, metadata, work flow, and versioning.

Implication for Content Mapper and Simply XML

The use of Content Mapper has generally been seen in content intensive departments that have the need for control, reuse, and single source publishing. We are sometimes involved with technical publications organizations that work in MS Word. For these customers, Simply XML has hidden its narrower implementation the XML/DITA standard and have used training and an MS Word plugin to create a straight-forward information standard to achieve single source publishing and reuse objectives.

About Lightweight DITA

Lightweight DITA offers a content architecture that could cost-effectively improve enterprise content management. The OASIS DITA Technical Committee wants to facilitate control, reuse, and single source publishing beyond technical organizations. After years of analysis and work, Lightweight DITA offers 40 or so elements that can realistically be used to power enterprise content. Lightweight DITA is compatible with our Simply DITA structure and we now offer Simply Lightweight DITA from Content Mapper, our Word Plug-in. Our solution always produces valid DITA that works either independently or in a more complex implementation where technical authors use the larger DITA tag set.

Conclusion: Lightweight DITA has the potential to unify the enterprise content needs of the East Content and the West Content when supported by relevant, quickly implemented, and cost-effective software, training, and other services.

Lightweight DITA Looks Like a Winner!

www.simplyxml.com

**“If all you have is a hammer,
everything looks like a nail.”**

Abraham Maslow



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Nailing Analogies Frank to Doug..... Wake Up!

Frank: Doug, I see that you haven't moved at your "work station" in the in the last hour or so. Have you adopted my successful work habits? Are you waiting for a cookie, like I do *before* starting work?

Doug: No, Frank.

Frank: You haven't hit a key or even surfed the Web for at least an hour. I've been watching you with one eye open. What are you doing?

Doug: I've been trying to think of a fitting analogy for structured writing and structured mark-up both in technical pubs departments and across large organizations.

Frank: What's an analogy?

Doug: It's a simple way of developing a basic understanding of something that is complex.

Frank: You mean like "working" to me looks a lot like "sleeping" to others.

Doug: Yes, Frank.

If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

Here a Topic. There a Topic. Everywhere a Topic, Topic—Whack, Whack, Whack From one side, when implementing DITA, some technologists seem focused primarily or even exclusively on reuse. Often, to them, everything looks like a DITA Topic. Simply XML has seen a lot of DITA Topics that are one sentence or one paragraph long but also some DITA Topics that are 50 pages long. The thinking in favor seems to be that Topics can be reused so, if it might be reused, it is a Topic—no matter what the length.

When technical writers have all the tools in the world, they can, and might, use as many as possible.

Out of the box the DITA tag set has more than 600 elements. It is true that no one uses them all. But some technologists use a large number and then expect their enterprise authors to use the same granular tag set. This is expensive in time, training, and money. And it is unrealistic.

Simply XML had a customer in the Chip Industry that said their enterprise authors could not use Content Mapper unless it supported some of the UI, Software, and Programming Specializations. We took the time to program them into Content Mapper with .NET. Guess what? Their enterprise authors don't use them! If you are building a tree house, you need some tools. If you are changing a carburetor, you need other tools. If you are building a bookcase, you don't need a huge amount of expensive tools. And if you are authoring enterprise content you need to **Keep It Simple, Smart-person.**

Bottom line for technical publications staff:

Technical writers may have a granular technical understanding of DITA. If they are trying to source content from outside of their department, they may be missing a clear understanding of the content that enterprise authors develop as well as the structured authoring piece. There is more to enterprise content management than just modularizing content so it can be reused. They may be missing other structured authoring principles like audience orientation, relevance, consistency, organizational hierarchy, and even information typing beyond task, concept, and reference. Information consumers can get chunks of information, but sometimes lack the context they need to be effective. Beyond structured mark-up with DITA, technical writers often need a broader understanding of topic-based writing. Technical writers need to understand what structures and tools are really needed and how to apply them. Content needs to be organized in a hierarchy with multiple levels and there are often 4-6 layers in the hierarchy. From an information architecture perspective, technical writers using DITA need to determine what a Topic is. Topics can have sections and multiple levels of paragraphs. Topics can also be assembled into DITA Maps and DITA Maps can be assembled into larger DITA Maps. Nailing the hierarchical structure may be the most important decision an organization needs to make regarding their DITA architecture.

When enterprise authors know structured authoring, they can create content that works.

On the other side of the equation, there are enterprise authors, sometimes SME's, who have a vast amount of knowledge. They understand the need to focus content on the information consumer. They know how to organize that content in a consistent way and how to present it in a hierarchical structure. They are not technologists but they sometimes use technology tools in their work. They primarily work in MS Word and use PDF as their output. Information consumers sometimes receive too much information but not in HTML, Mobile, or CHM formats. Enterprise authors need a way to structure content to release themselves from the constraints of large documents only in PDF.

Bottom line for enterprise authors:

Enterprise authors are often stuck in the world of large documents published to PDF. They have created a vast amount of effective content that can be printed in a beautiful PDF, often with the Microsoft Publisher or high-end publishing tools like Adobe InDesign or Antenna House. Their first approach to web and mobile output is to make the PDF available from those devices. Beyond topic-based writing, enterprise authors need a technical mark-up system to modularize and tag content for reuse so they can publish just enough of the right content from a single source to HTML, Mobile, CHM, and, yes, PDF. Enterprise authors need an authoring system that lets them work in MS Word, but that has an XML architecture underneath. This will improve modularity, reuse, and publishing to multiple devices.

Bottom line for the enterprise:

In financial terms,

- Technical organizations may need to spend thousands of dollars per person for technical writers who have a need for granular DITA supported by the required high end tools and training. They should also train authors in broader principles of structured authoring including advanced information typing, principles of good writing, and more.

- With current tools already in use, including MS Word, SharePoint, and CMS's, enterprise authors can use structured writing and MS Word on the front end to produce high performing DITA XML on the back end. This will bring better content to information consumers with control and efficiency on the back end. In large volumes, the cost may be measured in just tens of dollars, or at most, hundreds of dollars per enterprise author.

Conclusion

Frank: I think you nailed it, Doug. What's next?

Doug: Well Frank, I'm glad to say that working with one of our CMS Partners, we just landed a sale for 4000 licenses in Europe. Get ready to help them use their hammers, other tools, and structured authoring appropriately.

Frank: Let's each have a cookie.

Doug: OK, Frank. Thanks for your help.

To Download the Simply XML White Paper: **Big Bodacious BOTs, But....** [Click Here!](#)

Simply Tips and Tricks

All of our newsletters provide quick tips and tricks to help you simplify the XML world and beyond. Our tip for August is the final push at the end of the year.

In Life:

The road of life is long and winding. In lots of ways, the end of the calendar year is an artificial milestone. Some dates may be equally important, for example, the end of the school year or your next birthday. Don't stress out about artificial milestones.

IN XML:

Don't get stressed about implementing XML across your organization by the end of 2018. The road to structured writing and structured mark-up is a long one. Take some positive steps, show realistic results, and enjoy the journey.



There's a reason we call it Simply XML.

Simply XML provides simple, easy to use solutions for creating and publishing great content. Creating, managing, and publishing content with our XML editor, Content Mapper, minimizes costs and ensures efficiency across your organization. Learn more at www.simplyxml.com.

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