**February 2017**

Simply XML February 2017 Newsletter

This is the Simply XML Newsletter written by Doug Gorman, CEO of Simply XML, often under the counsel of his canine colleague, Frank. After our busiest year ever, we welcome our new friends from all over the world. 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.
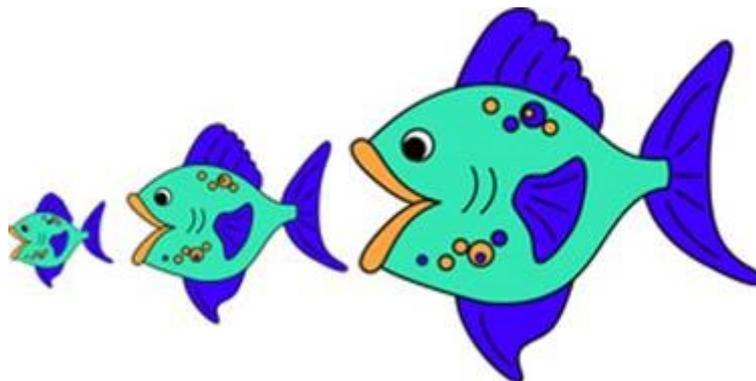
Bigger and Bigger Fish

In our circles, there are currently a lot of small and medium-sized fish. Like us, they work in software and services markets either primarily or indirectly related to structured writing and structured mark-up. We note that some organizations are "implementing DITA." They may have implemented DITA in Tech Pubs, but now want to implement DITA at the enterprise level.

We see this approach, with its initial and primary focus on DITA, as backwards. Organizations implement DITA at great expense in technical areas, see the benefits, and then try to roll out a complex, very specialized behemoth to the enterprise. This is a failed approach and we are not aware of any significant organization where this has actually worked.

Recently, we have been working with several very large organizations with

the objective of implementing content standards for control, content reuse, and flexible publishing. They want a cost-effective, least-change solution. DITA is often underneath, but a simpler configuration of DITA with complexity of DITA hidden. They know that any change has to be easy to implement and cost-effective.

Recent conversations at MIT's Center for Information Systems Research (CISR) and with two very large consulting organizations have encouraged us. People in these large organizations see the opportunity to bring information development and publishing to the next level. They are sometimes noting that the first phase must involve simple straight-forward authoring/content standards with appropriate supporting technology. Perhaps you are finding yourself in similar conversations and sharing these same observations.

During 2017 we believe that the need for structured authoring supported by an XML architecture will rise to the surface. One or more of the "big guys" will jump into the fray. They will see that the majority of potential authors and contributors use MS Word. The use of technically advanced XML editors and web-based tools will be limited, perhaps only requiring round tripping of content between these products and the authors who use MS Word.

We'll be talking more about this at the Content Management Strategies Conference in San Diego where Rob Hanna from Precision Content and I will be talking about how to move to the front of the DITA freight train. https://cm-strategies.com.

Let's Help Improve the U.S. Government's Communication

By Doug Gorman

www.simplyxml.com

What a mess for citizens! Have you ever tried to find and do something government

related? Answer a tax question? Find someone who cares about an environmental problem? Fix a mistake? The process is often inconclusive and almost always frustrating.

What a mess for U.S. Government workers and contractors, too! Many are trying to improve information and communication with technology including an XML mark-up called DITA. It's expensive. Often, supporting the technology doesn't seem to work appropriately. And, people don't seem to be able to work together.

What's a country to do? The U.S. Government, like other large commercial enterprises, needs to improve information and communication. That is the defining need of the current stage of this Information Age.

Every US Government Agency may shortly be required to have a program to implement "Analytic Writing" which is directly and indirectly related to the Plain Language initiative. It is also related to grammar, simplified English, taxonomies, structured writing, the modern content supply chain, and more. Simply XML has begun to consider how a consortium of products and services might create improvement momentum while achieving a greater good.

The U.S. Government should build upon the plain language initiative to embrace not only structured content, but also the tools that will enable government employees to better serve the people who read and depend on published content. The business case for improved quality of communications and reduced cost is already clearly evident in the scorecards for the agencies that have adopted this approach.

There is tremendous synergy and momentum that will be realized from a flexible assembly of various skills, services, and products. In my former life as CEO of Information Mapping, we commercialized the structured writing methodology developed by Robert Horn. The US Government was a voracious consumer of that methodology. During those days adoption and rapid growth was achieved through a simple, cost-effective methodology with easy to use supporting software.

We have been involved with structured mark-up since we created an SGML DTD for our long-term customer Lucent in the early 90's. SGML was relegated to a small penetration of high end publishers because it was just too darn complicated. Technical people in heavily funded organizations implemented SGML, but it never made it to "ubiquity."

"Those who fail to learn from the past are doomed to repeat it," said a lot of famous people including Winston Churchill. At this point, we are convinced that XML and DITA can only succeed at the enterprise level if the XML and technology are hidden. This is actually quite easy to do. We believe that the key to enterprise content success involves

- implementing a structured writing standard,

- using XML as an architecture,
- training large groups of authors in a simple standard,
- modernizing the content supply chain, and
- giving all staff the simplest and most appropriate tools possible.

Our previous success in the Federal government and emergence of new and more current approaches to structured writing with enabling technologies is important. Simply XML and a number of our CMS and systems integration partners are convinced that a simple straight forward approach to implementing content standards will mean better information and lower costs for all. It doesn't have to be, nor should it be complicated.

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 February focuses on diverse audiences.

In Life:

Have respect for the goals, needs, and opinions of people of all backgrounds, in all countries, in all religions, in all areas of life.

IN XML:

Recognize the background, skills, and needs of the very diverse groups that can benefit from information reuse and flexible publishing. Help them to succeed this year in their worlds!

There's a reason we call it Simply XML.

Simply XML provides simple, easy to use solutions for creating and publishing XML 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.

> ### Request a Free Trial of Content Mapper

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