

Simply XML June Newsletter:
Battle of the Bots
Structured Writing
Simply XML Tips and Tricks!

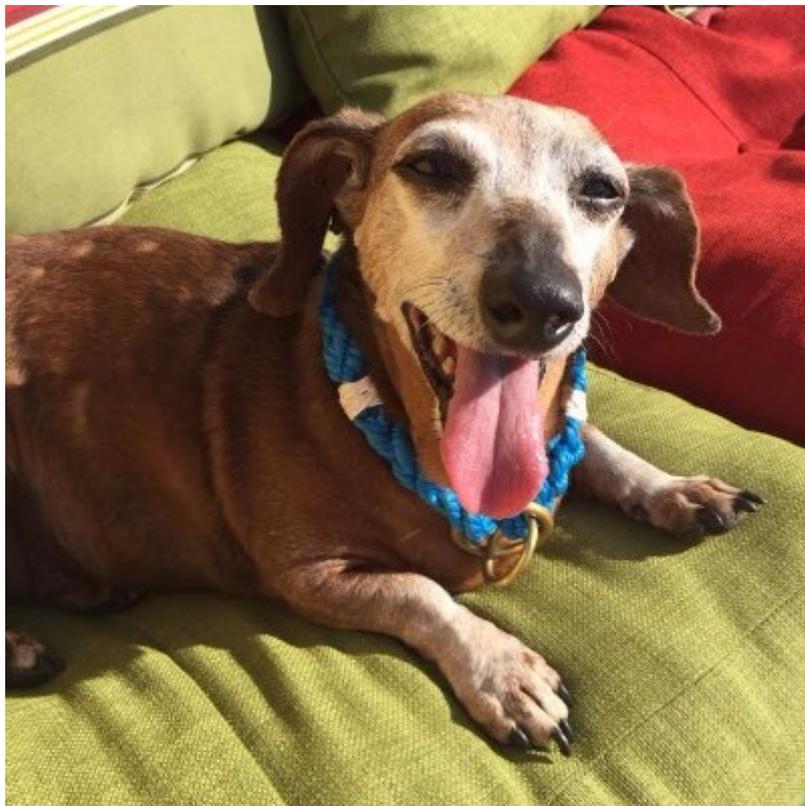


June 2017

Simply XML June 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.

We welcome our new friends from CIDM, STC, Lavacon, and the Web. 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.



Battle of the Bots

Frank: Welcome back from Conference season, Doug. By my calculation, I missed out on about one month of cookies at work. What was the most interesting thing you learned during your travels?

Doug: At Lavacon, Stefan Gentz from Adobe gave a very interesting keynote about how attention spans have been declining at a faster rate over the past decade. The problem is compounded by the exponential growth in the amount of content. So, there is an increasing need for content filters.

Frank: How is that going to work out?

Doug: At Simply XML, I think I search Google at least half a dozen times a day. I don't think I'm alone. But the solution is not just about search. Across organizations and among customers, Bots are appearing to filter content before an information consumer is sometimes involved.

Frank: Are you thinking of replacing me with a Bot?

Doug: Of course not, Frank! But there is something we all need to think about here.

Google as a Filter

Google probably knows more about me than you do, Frank. Google knows my search history. It knows what web sites I visit. I assume it knows other "stuff" as well.

Sometimes Google searches are eerily accurate. How did it know the apparent nuances of my simple search to provide, on the first page, links to the sites that are most relevant to my search?

But other times I need to search through pages or a number of links, reformat my question, or find another way to get the information I need.

Where Access is Headed

Technical Publications and organizational web-sites use both links and search to help their users get to where they want to go. They use HTML, for sure, but underneath the base content architecture is shifting to XML. XML allows the disciplined application of metadata and this can provide information consumers with the right information, at the right time, on their device of choice.

What about the Rest of the Organization?

Back to Stefan Gentz. In his keynote, he talked about how, within the next few years, Bots would filter content for people who need the right information, at the right

time, on the right device. The implications for content creation and for reader access are dramatic.

Content will need to be intelligent with relevant metadata. Some of this metadata will be provided by the author, but some will be automatic based on the author's position, department, even other content that he/she has previously written. More importantly, there will need to be realistic content standards at the enterprise level.

The Enterprise Disconnect

At the beginning of my recent conference presentations I asked the audiences, "How many of you are implementing DITA?" More than half the hands went up. But then I asked the audiences "How many of your organizations are implementing DITA at the enterprise level?" No hands went up. We are seeing non-technical organizations walk away from XML and DITA because it is too complicated or too expensive to implement across an organization. Our perspective is that it is not complex because of DITA or XML. It is complex because organizations fail to realistically assess enterprise needs. DITA/XML is not the goal. Consistency, reuse, and flexible publishing are the goals.

Fundamentally, organizations need a way to structure content consistently and appropriately across the enterprise. The content will be tagged with metadata and will have XML underneath. But, IMHO, DITA and other XML structures need to be hidden behind the scenes. Authors who develop marketing materials, compliance information, and reports don't need to understand or use more than a few of the 640+ elements in the DITA tag set. And they certainly don't need specialized elements to augment the existing DITA tag set. They need a way of writing so that their paragraphs, tables, lists, topics, and sections fit together in a way that makes sense for readers.

There needs to be a vastly increased focus on structuring content so that authors can work efficiently and information consumers can actually do something with the content they read. This need plays to Simply XML's historical strengths in structured writing and in using MS Word as the UI at the front end of the content supply chain.

Please think about it. Does your organization need DITA? Or, does it need to implement a structured authoring standard that gets the right information, to the right person, at the right time, on the right device, in the information consumer's language of choice? The solution is not really about XML or DITA. The solution involves authoring and publishing structured content so that readers get what they need. It is also about providing information that they can understand and act upon.

Consistency should be a key focus at many levels. And the efficiency and effectiveness of this process, from author to reader, will be greatly enhanced with the latest technology with shared repositories, modern publishing, reuse, and work flow management.

Bottom Lines

While continuing to focus on the simple application of XML for the enterprise, Simply XML will also emphasize the simple application of cognitively-based structured writing principles.

The battle is going to be fought at the enterprise level, driven by a new generation of consultants and technology providers. The bots, the authors, the readers, and the CFO's are going to love it.

Structured Content-- The Missing Link to Enterprise Content Management

By Doug Gorman



Structured Writing Defined

Structured writing is the application of cognitively based principles to analyzing, organizing, and presenting information for optimal human and/or machine consumption. Information consumers get just enough, just in time information.

Simply XML's Premise

The application of structured writing principles, an XML architecture, shared repositories, and modern processes for tagging, managing, and publishing content will allow information consumers to improve their use of information at the enterprise level.

Why Aren't You Interested?

Many of the professionals we meet seem to be focused on technical issues and technical publications. I'm going to provide a bit of background on structured writing here, possibly enough so that you will want to know more. I'm going to briefly discuss:

- Topic-based Writing
- Information Types
- Principles Behind Great Content
- Managing Content
- Implementation

Topic-based Writing

This is an approach to authoring content in units that can stand alone or that can be assembled into larger documents we call maps. Topics or Maps can be accessed based on reader requirements.

Information Types

From the reader's perspective and with an understanding of how the human brain works separating content into information types improves reader access and human performance.

- **Procedures:** These are a series of steps performed by one person to accomplish an objective. How to assemble a model airplane is a procedure.
- **Processes:** Processes describe how things change or are transformed. They happen in stages, over time, and usually involve many people. How an airplane flies is a process.
- **Principles:** These are rules and may be policies and a person often takes an action as a result. An example would be: If the car overheats (you) turn the engine off.
- **Concepts:** These are knowledge or information that support the other types of information.
- **Reference:** These are facts or other information accessed by a reader and are often presented in a table. A table of error codes would be a reference.

Note: These information types may be supported by technology, or XML, or DITA, but their utility is primarily focused on the desired actions of the reader.

Principles Behind Great Content

There are the subtle or not so subtle rules that an author and/or publisher needs to think about to meet the needs of information consumers.

- **Orientation:** Write content with an audience, or multiple audiences in mind. The audience is most often a person, but might also be a Bot or filtering agent.
- **Modularity:** Write your content and publish your content in modules that can be reused. The modularity principle yields useful chunks of information, but also more complex or complete content for broader purposes.
- **Consistency:** Use consistent terms, formats, and structures at many levels. Consistency is the holy grail of enterprise content. It won't work for information consumers, authors, translators, publishing staff or others unless it is consistent. And this consistency relates to both structured writing and structured mark-up (XML).
- **Hierarchy:** Present your content in a hierarchy. This principle applies within topics, among topics, and in larger documents (Maps).
- **Accessibility:** Provide multiple access routes into your content including search, labels, metadata, tables of contents, and links.
- **Media:** Your content may be presented in Paper (PDF), on the Web (HTML), in E-Books, Mobile, or other forms/devices. Increasingly the information consumer and not the provider will be deciding the media on which content will be consumed.

Managing Content

Enterprises, including authors will also need to think about

- **Content reuse**
- **Metadata**
- **Workflow**
- **Review Cycles**
- **Versioning, and**
- **Conversion of legacy content.**

We cover these content management issues with our technologies and in our training and implementation efforts.

Implementation Success Principles

These principles can help you get started and stay focused to produce great results for your enterprise.

- **Enterprise plan**– Take a well-defined, systemic approach.
- **Information consumers**– Understand them and focus on them.
- **KISS**– Keep It Simple Smart-person—Don't try to boil the ocean.
- **Least Change**– There will be change, but make it least change.
- **Standards**– You need both content and mark-up standards.
- **Phased Implementation** – Pilot first then go live in phases.
- **C-Level Leadership** – You will need C-level leadership with management and staff ownership.

Action requested

Please give us a call if we can help directly or with our technology and integration partners. We would be forever grateful if you would help us identify and work with your business leaders to achieve great content for your information consumers.

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 June involves listening.

In Life:

Listening is a focused process that considers many relevant factors related to the person who is speaking. The speaker's voice is more than just words. It is important to actively listen and to consider what is really being said.

IN XML:

You need to listen to the voice of the information consumer to understand his/her needs and orientation. This will allow you to consider his/her required need for various types of content.

What information do they need? How will it be used? When will it be needed? In what form will it be consumed?





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](#)

Simply XML, LLC.
Tel: +1 (781) 801-9255
Email: hello@simplyxml.com
www.simplyxml.com

Copyright © 2017 Simply XML, LLC. All rights reserved.
Simply XML, LLC. 47 Village Ave., Unit 212, Dedham, MA 02026