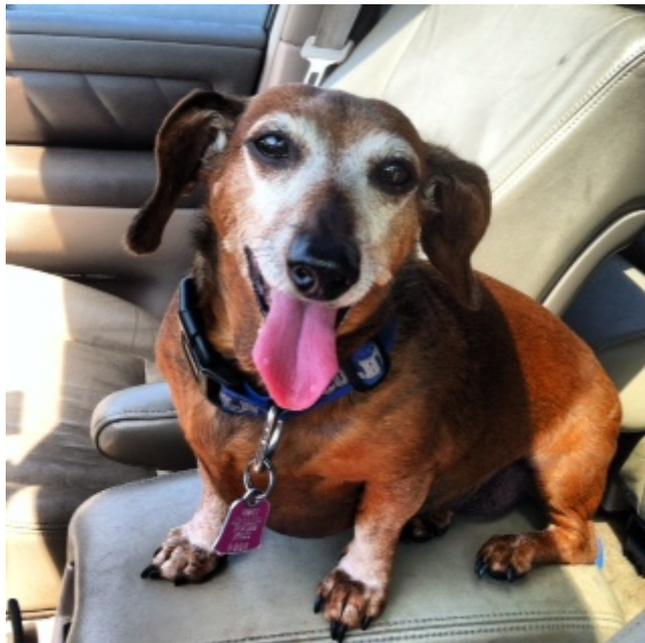# Content Management Strategies

Musings from the Chicago Conference

It is Mid-May and I still haven't written the April Newsletter (which is now the May Newsletter). I've been a bit stuck about exactly what self-serving words of wisdom to offer. It's interesting that sometimes the thoughts and words just seem to appear and at other times it seems like "real work."

I don't think it is any secret that Simply XML is a small virtual company focused on one thing, letting Microsoft Word-based authors easily contribute valid XML to the burgeoning XML architecture of their organizations.

But here's another secret you might not know about. We don't shy away from nepotism at Simply XML. My blood relative and best friend Frank, pictured above, is our Vice President of Security. He works with me pretty much every day and is actually a great sounding board for ideas. He is non-judgmental about my ideas and always cheerful. But, he does not travel well, except in a car, and I had to fly to the Content Management Strategies Conference and Frank had to stay behind and take care of the rest of the family.

So when Frank and I were discussing my mental block regarding this newsletter he suggested I should discuss what I learned at that conference where I had to leave him for "3 whole days." He further suggested that I should confine my comments to the sessions I actually attended which were mostly in the management track. Good idea Frank, "Here's a cookie!"

- Keynote John Hall said there should be a mix of people on your team, not just technologists. You have to make your content consumable and an exclusively technical team will miss some important perspectives.
- Joe Gelb had a cool way of judging whether content was well-designed and presented. He said it should be judged on utility, agility, productivity, quality, and manageability.
- Mike Eleder from Alcatel-Lucent is an old guy like me who got this content structure and mark-up disease back in the 80's from a similar bout with SGML. Working for a big company with an obviously powerful legal force he had the best disclaimer I've ever seen where his presentation didn't reflect upon his company, bosses, himself, or his family. Let the record show, Frank, that he did not disclaim his dog.
- The use of XML is clearly moving beyond TechPubs. It's a miracle because some customers are actually talking with us about information architecture and authoring tools before choosing which CMS to use.
- Three very, very large companies, are talking about how all (that's right ALL) of their important content could have an XML architecture underneath. This will require easy to use tools for authors and a change in the business model for software vendors. I love it!
- At least two presenters discussed enterprise level issues with FrameMaker, struggling with how to move from Tech Pubs to an enterprise content architecture. I can attest from my previous life at Information Mapping that technical writing organizations love FrameMaker, but like Frank, who does not go to dog parks, FrameMaker does not play well with others. Adopting an XML architecture with Content Mapper can allow FrameMaker and other XML editors to achieve choice and even democracy in authoring tools while promoting a common XML-based content architecture. (Flag rising and anthem playing!)
- Keith Schengili-Roberts apparently has more statistics than SAS Institute. He said that DITA is used by 5% of technical writing groups. FrameMaker has 16% of market share in author tools. Please don't shoot the messenger here, but MS Word is the leading tech writing editor, by far. I know there are more than a billion people worldwide who already know that. Thanks Keith.
- Speaking of SAS Institute………I'm a modest non-judgmental guy, but I'd like to say that the joint presentation given by Nick Green from SAS and the CEO of Simply XML was simply "the best." It was very well-attended and, IMHO, the best part was when Nick said that he gives new authors Content Mapper with DITA, a Quick Reference Card, and one hour of training and they are off and running, creating DITA Topics for SAS Books. (Audible gasp from the

audience!) Have I mentioned lately that it does not have to be complicated, it is Simply XML.

- IBM's presentation offered technology in the context of an enterprise initiative and simplicity, but no surprises here……. IBM's Lightweight DITA and Simply XML's Simply DITA are virtually the same. A Markdown interface and Content Mapper's UI are both "tag-less" to the author. And now for the title of IBM's presentation, "Does DITA Need Tags?" We don't think so!
- Finally, Erin, the food was great, location convenient, facilities perfect, speakers- the best yet, and the CIDM staff were competent and helpful, as usual, and deserving of a vacation and probably a bonus.

Great conference!

And Now Some Relevant Comments about Life in the Dog Park

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Have I mentioned that Frank is a Dachshund who works as VP of Security at Simply XML? He has a genetic or at least environmentally caused disease. He doesn't play well with others except for his forced compatible play with his Dachshund cousin Lexi. We've tried to work on this "bug" but positive results are elusive.

Like most urban and suburban towns, my town has a Dog Park. I drive by it regularly and see lots of people and many different breeds running and jumping, chasing balls, and having a great old time romping. I also notice that some owners seem go to the dog park for a human to human experience and some of their dogs are confined to the nearby ground, on leashes, with no canine to canine interaction.

But the pack has dogs of different sizes, colors, breeds, and temperaments and it is a marvel how it all seems to work. To be honest, I am envious.

And then I think of Frank. It would not even work in the dog park for him next to me with a leash. Frank displays his "VP of Security Skills" to most dogs, but also most

humans and, when tempted, to the occasional rabbit or squirrel. He barks often and audibly and will physically challenge the big dogs.

"What's your point, Doug?" asked Frank. "Please get to the point so we can go for a car ride."

When I look at the dog park and all those different kinds of dogs playing together and obviously having fun, I naturally think about people and technology and the need for the various breeds of people and technology to play well together. It is a real problem when the big dogs want to rule the roost and confine interactions to their breed. The smaller niche dogs have a particular skill that makes them unique, but are no less lovable and playful. Big dogs cannot make every dog into their breed any more than small dogs can become big dogs.

As organizations come to the rightful conclusion that important content in many departments requires an XML architecture to become efficient, reusable, and publishable to multiple media, let's try to make our organizations more like the dog park where all different breeds of people and technology can play well together. Let's also keep those who don't play well with others on a very tight leash.

Most organizations have multiple repositories, some confined to individual PC's, some for non-technical work groups, some for technical work-groups, and some for groups of work-groups or even the enterprise. Somehow we need to find a way for these multiple repositories to play well together. An XML architecture and common metadata can certainly help here.

Most organizations need to support multiple authoring tools. MS Word, Arbortext, Oxygen, FrameMaker, browser-based, and more. Somehow, we need to find a way for these multiple authoring tools to play well together. An XML architecture and common metadata can certainly help here, regardless of the author UI.

The simple achievable goal of playing well together will make everyone's experience at the dog park of enterprise content productive and enjoyable. We are doing our part. We are integrating with more CMSs. Our last release supported round tripping of specialized DITA to Content Mapper and back to the repository with the specializations in tact. Our next release supports the round tripping of Microsoft Word review comments and track changes to and from Oxygen. We can even support authoring in Content Mapper and output to entrenched XML structures like DocBook. Come on vendors, let's play.

Woof-Woof, Bow-Wow! Let's go for a ride. Then you can have a cookie.

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 May involves dealing with issues and moving on .

In Life:

Simply XML has customers and Partners all over the globe. Our need to communicate globally is greatly enhanced through our web-site, email, and web-meetings. We're friendly, mostly human beings, at Simply XML and we like to have good relationships. And one easy thing to talk about is the weather and apparently it was no secret that Boston had the most winter snow, confined mostly to about 6 weeks in January and February, ever since records began in the 1800's. We had blizzards every week-- one hundred and eight inches of snow. In some areas storm after storm meant that there was no place to put the snow. Streets became impassible. Potholes were the worst in a lifetime. Roofs leaked. Gutters fell off. Cars were buried for weeks on end.

But with the arrival of spring, the snow melted and we moved on. Roofs, gutters, and streets are being repaired. Insurance proceeds flowed in an economically productive way into the right places in the local economy. We have moved on.

In XML:

Sometimes in this move to XML, it snows. Sometimes it snows a lot. Sometimes the mistakes we have made become visible. But we face the challenges, recovering from our mistakes, learning, and letting time pass. Spring is here and it is almost summer in Boston! You can move on and succeed, tackling new challenges, learning from mistakes, and making content productive for your

organizations and information consumers.

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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