



## DITA – a state of consciousness!



### Attaining tech doc nirvana

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## Agenda—Attaining tech doc nirvana



- ▶ Introduction and samples
- ▶ DITA for the common document?
  - ▶ Is DITA for everybody?
  - ▶ If not, then DITA for whom?
- ▶ DITA Success
  - ▶ What is DITA success?
  - ▶ Anticipating DITA success.
- ▶ Practical Steps
  - ▶ A-Z to successfully implement DITA.
  
- ▶ Interspersed with hands-on examples.





## Introduction and Samples

Getting us all on the same page, I mean topic, regarding DITA.

## Introduction: DITA Building Blocks

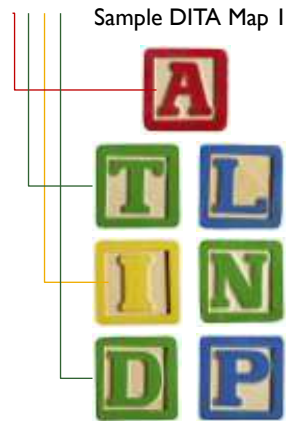
Content Building Blocks



Each content building block is an XML topic

## Introduction: DITA Maps Organize Building Blocks

- ▶ DITA Maps are XML files that reference other files.
- ▶ One DITA Map can refer one or many times to any building blocks.
- ▶ Multiple DITA Maps can refer to a building block.
- ▶ A DITA Map can refer to other DITA maps.



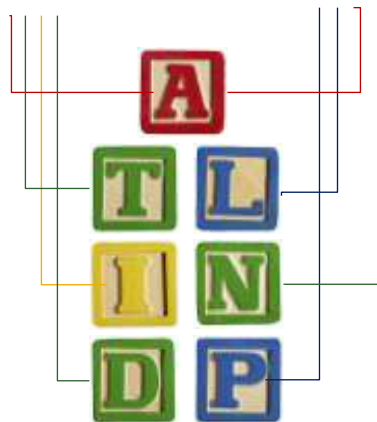
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## Introduction: More DITA Maps

Sample DITA Map 1

Sample DITA Map 2



Each DITA Map can be used to publish a different set of information

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## Introduction: Publishing From DITA Maps

Sample DITA Map 1 – Output



Sample DITA Map 2 – Output



Each DITA Map can be used to publish to multiple formats, including: PDF, JavaHelp, Eclipse Help, HTML, ...

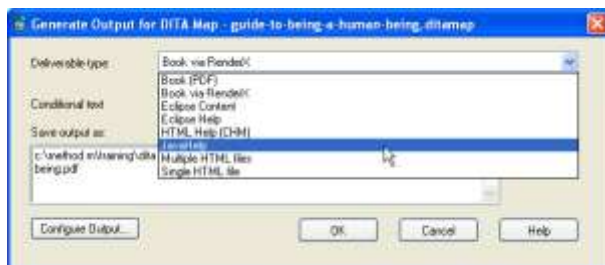
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## Introduction: Open Source Publishing

- ▶ DITA Open Toolkit transforms
  - ▶ XSLT-based, specialization-aware transforms
  - ▶ CSS stylesheets for presentation.
  - ▶ XSL-FO rendering
- ▶ Incorporated in open source and commercial products.

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/dita-ot/>

The DITA Open Toolkit is an implementation of the OASIS DITA Technical Committee's specification for Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) DTDs and Schemas. The Toolkit transforms DITA content (maps and topics) into deliverable formats.



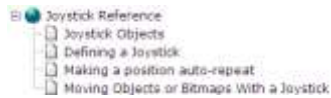
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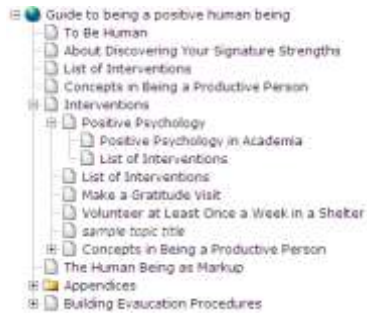
## Introduction: Editing DITA Maps

- ▶ Usually, you will edit DITA maps visually.
- ▶ Jargon: DITA maps model the *information architecture*.

Sample DITA Map 1



Sample DITA Map 2



## Introduction: DITA is Topic-based

- ▶ Information is authored in discrete topics.
- ▶ Topics are “typed” (concept, task, reference).
- ▶ You *can* create additional topic types (“specialization”).
  - ▶ Can is different than should.
- ▶ DITA maps organize topics into coherent collections.
  - ▶ You can edit maps without editing topics.
  - ▶ You can edit topics without editing maps.



## Introduction: Filtering Content

- ▶ **Filter content within a map and/or within topics**

- ▶ By product, by task, by level, by version...
- ▶ User-selected criteria, such as:
  - ▶ Product
  - ▶ Platform
  - ▶ Audience



Filters, or conditional processing, can enable technical authors (top down) to filter content in a publication, or enable information consumers to proactively filter what they need to see (bottom up).

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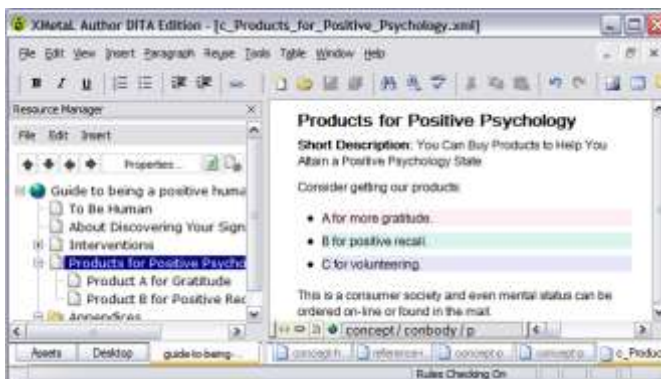


## Examples

Looking at DITA under the hood.

## Example: Specifying Conditions

- ▶ As shown in an editor:



- ▶ As shown in code:

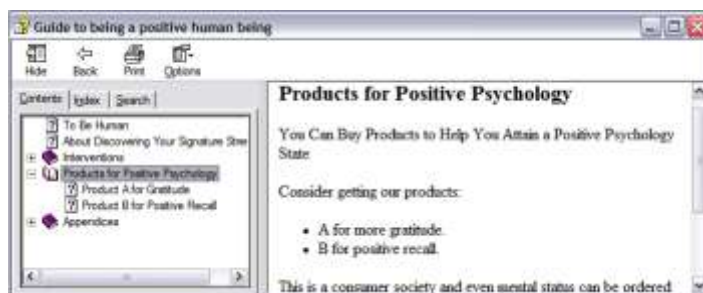
- ▶ `<li id="li_05...." product="producta">A for more gratitude.</li>`
- ▶ `<li id="li_31...." product="productb">B for positive recall.</li>`

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## Example: Show output with exclusions

- ▶ Note the text marked for Product C filtered out.



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## Example: store condition flags

- ▶ Sample DITVAL file – note which condition will be flagged with an image:
  - ▶ `<?xml version="1.0" ?>`
  - ▶ `<val>`
  - ▶ `<prop att="audience" val="administrator" action="include" />`
  - ▶ `<prop att="audience" val="user" action="include" />`
  - ▶ `<prop att="platform" val="windowsxp" action="include" />`
  - ▶ `<prop att="platform" val="windows2000" action="include" />`
  - ▶ `<prop att="platform" val="linux" action="include" />`
  - ▶ `<prop att="platform" val="macosx" action="include" />`
  - ▶ `<prop att="product" val="producta" action="include" />`
  - ▶ `<prop att="product" val="productb" action="flag" img="xml-pics-funny.jpg" />`
  - ▶ `<prop att="product" val="productc" action="include" />`
  - ▶ `</val>`

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## Example: Show flagged output

- ▶ Note image (“flag”) inserted.
- ▶ Use for quick indicators for products, countries, warnings, etc.



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## So, when does DITA make sense?

Make sure that you can address the following issues before you commit to DITA

## Is DITA for Everybody?

- ▶ Going to topic-centric DITA requires effort.
- ▶ But we often still need to deliver technical documents that look like books.
  - ▶ What is the cascading TOC if not a book metaphor?
- ▶ Substantial effort required to bridge the gap between authoring topics, delivering books.
  - ▶ Training writers.
  - ▶ Thinking about context.
  - ▶ Converting legacy.
  - ▶ New stylesheets, new production techniques, ...



## Question:

### Does DITA makes sense for your needs?

- ▶ **Does the topic-based paradigm work for you?**
  - ▶ Is your content a narrative or is it building blocks?
- ▶ **Are your customers happy?**
  - ▶ Information glut or just-enough information?
  - ▶ Do you *need* to publish for different audiences, variants?
  - ▶ Is your published content up-to-date?
- ▶ **Is content reused in different documents?**
  - ▶ E.g., installation, implementation and troubleshooting.
  - ▶ E.g., documentation, training, support, pre-sales.
  - ▶ E.g., user guide and administrator guide.



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## Question:

### How much can DITA save me?

- ▶ **Direct and indirect costs**
  - ▶ Direct cost of technical writers.
  - ▶ Other costs:
    - ▶ Content review by subject matter experts (SMEs).
    - ▶ QA.
    - ▶ Translation.
    - ▶ Manipulating content for delivery in different formats.
    - ▶ Fiddling with formatting.
    - ▶ Managing the document lifecycle.
- ▶ **How much do you actually spend?**
  - ▶ Enterprise companies spend double on documents than they think.
  - ▶ InfoTrends/CAPVentures found 6% of revenue on document costs.
- ▶ **Don't forget productivity lost by support and other teams.**



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## Question – predicting the upside: What is your $V^3$ quotient?



- ▶ **Volume**
  - ▶ Growing demand for specialized content for implementation, CRM, web self-support and other needs.
  - ▶ Growing product complexity increases product document volume.
- ▶ **Variants**
  - ▶ Technology increasingly enables creation of solution variants.
  - ▶ Each variant requires unique “just enough” information per customer.
  - ▶ Markets may require translation of part or all of the document set.
- ▶ **Velocity**
  - ▶ As products cycle faster into the global marketplace, bottlenecks for original and translated documents ↓ sales and ↑ support costs.

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## Question: Your responses to high $V^3$ quotient?



- ▶ **Engineering methods and tools**
  - ▶ Engineers fix a bug or add a feature in one module, enhancing many products/variants. But can tech docs be updated in one location?
- ▶ **Repetitive information**
  - ▶ Is information repeated for pre-sales, requirements, installation and implementation, operation, training, and support materials?
  - ▶ Updating is costly and error-prone.
- ▶ **Multiple delivery formats**
  - ▶ Delivery in multiple formats (such as PDF or print, on-line help, and web), multiplies the effort – and room for error.
- ▶ **Translations (if needed)**
  - ▶ Translations – extra cost, room for error and potential bottlenecks.

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## Question:

### How Much Will DITA Cost To Implement?

- ▶ **Tools (select, purchase, install, maintain).**
  - ▶ DITA-aware XML editor (suggested).
  - ▶ CMS (requires discussion).
- ▶ **Customize**
  - ▶ Output look and feel.
  - ▶ Specialize – if you must.
- ▶ **Training of writers.**
  - ▶ Don't forget to include others who may be involved in the content.
- ▶ **Conversion of legacy content.**
  - ▶ New projects.
  - ▶ Existing projects.



## Question:

### Who Will Author, Edit and Review Content?

- ▶ **Workflow with SMEs and other stakeholders**
  - ▶ Technical writers.
  - ▶ Technical documentation managers (outlines, proofing).
  - ▶ SMEs.
  - ▶ Translators.
  - ▶ Marketing and sales.
  - ▶ Product management.
  - ▶ QA.
  - ▶ Implementation team.
  - ▶ Support team.
- ▶ **Buy-in from other stakeholders.**





## So, what are possible points of failure in a migration to DITA?

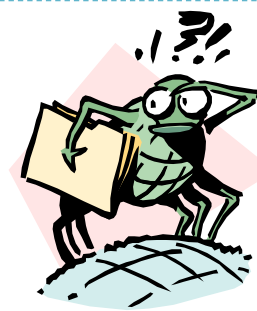
Consider the following issues before you commit to DITA

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## Common questions and issues

- ▶ **Content review**
  - ▶ How will SME and QA comment/edit?
- ▶ **Corporate CMS:**
  - ▶ How does DITA fit with my CMS or CMS plans?
- ▶ **Customization**
  - ▶ Branding for corporate look and feel?
- ▶ **Translation**
  - ▶ Will my translators use DITA?
  - ▶ Does DITA work with translation memory?
- ▶ **Human factors**
  - ▶ Writers are comfortable in Word or FrameMaker.
  - ▶ Working to next week's deadlines will never allow time to shift to DITA.
- ▶ **How will the shift ever happen, we have so much legacy content!**
- ▶ **Other issues that you want to raise?**



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## Planning and practical steps for success.

Roles  
Tasks  
Moving to Rollout

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## Roles

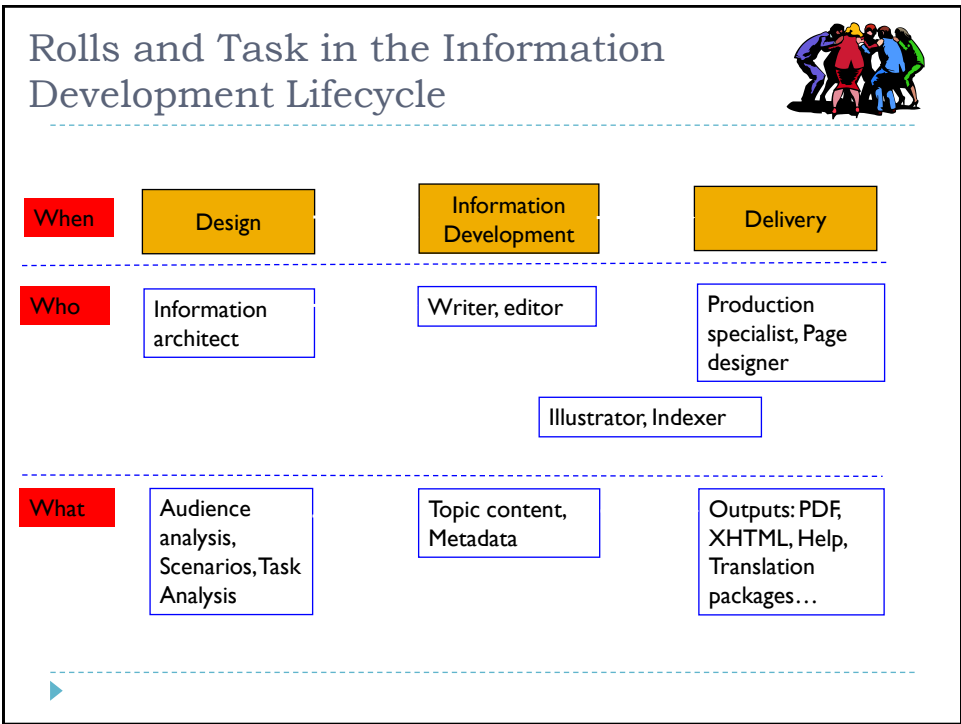


One person will often fill multiple roles.



- ▶ **Information architect.**
  - ▶ Might be filled by a manager or writer who knows the content well.
  - ▶ Should have vision for product documentation.
  - ▶ Can be helped by consultant, but a consultant cannot fill this role!
- ▶ **Technical writers and editors**
- ▶ **Reviewers**
  - ▶ SMEs.
  - ▶ QA.
- ▶ **Production specialists – to get deliverables.**
  - ▶ Role might be filled by a consultant or any savvy team member.

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## Roles and topics may go beyond product boundaries



Going beyond product boundaries is a possible outcome, but not a necessary one, even if information does cross product boundaries.

Corporate organization can be the toughest nut of all to crack.

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## Review of the Practical Steps to Success

- ▶ **Build and present the business case**
  - ▶ Shameless self-promotion.
- ▶ **Plan implementation step by step.**
  - ▶ Pick your projects.
  - ▶ Make sure you have tech support and help.
  - ▶ Staff your roles.
  - ▶ Train and have manpower for tasks.
  - ▶ Groundwork (software and CSS and ...)
  - ▶ **Get into topic paradigm mode – and stay there!**



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## Suggested Steps to Success – Modest Start; Great Future

- ▶ **Start with a simple prototype: start to finish in three weeks**
  - ▶ Content – all new or imported into concepts, tasks, reference topics
  - ▶ At least 2 output targets
  - ▶ Two tiers in the DITA map
  - ▶ Limit the number of topics
  - ▶ Limit the number of people (max 3, including one who is DITA savvy)
- ▶ **Scale up to a larger prototype: start to finish in six weeks**
  - ▶ Some new, some converted content
  - ▶ Implement reuse
  - ▶ Implement conditions
  - ▶ Implement linking
  - ▶ Three tiers in the DITA map
  - ▶ More topics, but still limited (say, 100).
  - ▶ More people if needed, but make sure that all are trained.
- ▶ **Now, you're ready to move ahead into the big time.**



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## Hope that we can help you embark on the great DITA journey!

- ▶ Comments to this presentation?
  - ▶ Feel free to visit our booth today for live demo and more.
- ▶ More resources:
  - ▶ [dita.xml.org](http://dita.xml.org)
  - ▶ [dita-ot.sourceforge.net](http://dita-ot.sourceforge.net)
  - ▶ [groups.yahoo.com/group/dita-users](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/dita-users)
- ▶ Method M workshops that may help:
  - [DITA Immersion Workshop](#)
  - [Bare Bones Writing](#)
  - [Converting Legacy Content](#)
- ▶ Feel free to call on our consultants or use our resources:
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  - ▶ [www.methodm.com/downloads/downloads.htm](http://www.methodm.com/downloads/downloads.htm)
- ▶ If time permits, hands-on samples.

