DITA 1.2 Specification Survey
Summary of Results

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Organization the Participants are Working in

Overall 24 responses representing most likely different companies

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Size of the company is very much distributed over the scale

<50 (4); 50-200 (4); 200-1000 (6) more then 1000 (9)

Majority of the participants working in computer software industry + something else, like hardware or health care or other

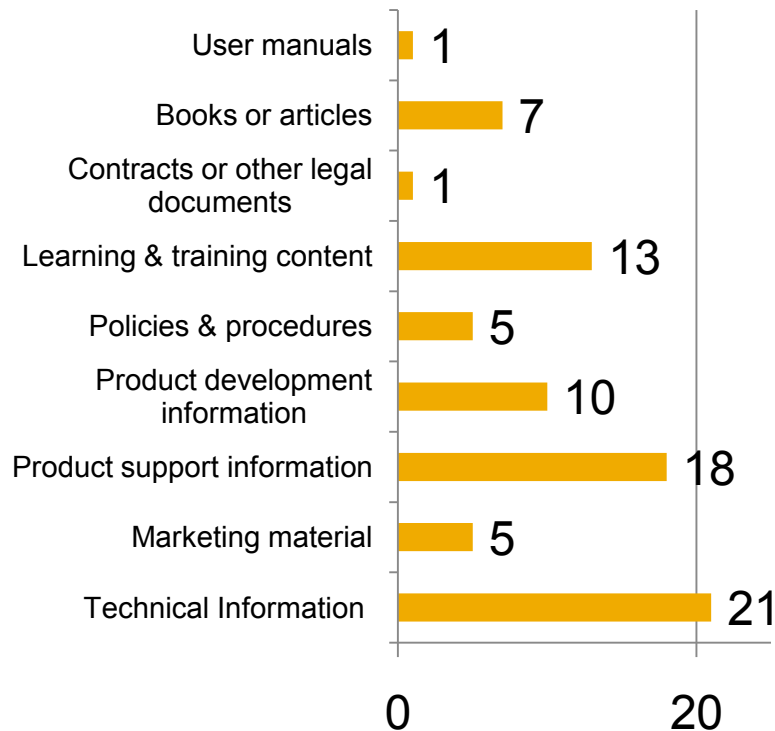**Participants of the survey using a big part of their time to work with DITA**

<30% (3); 30%-70% (9); >70% (12)

About half of the participants using DITA productive, whereas the other half is in some stage of an implementation project

No correlation between size of the company and implementation stage

Use Cases for DITA

Information Type

User manuals — 1
Books or articles — 7
Contracts or other legal documents — 1
Learning & training content — 13
Policies & procedures — 5
Product development information — 10
Product support information — 18
Marketing material — 5
Technical Information — 21

0   20

Activities relating to DITA

No real tendency here, most participants are all involved in the majority of all activities from creating information to determining the strategic direction.

Only tool development and specialization was less represented each in about a third of the responses.

Translation and localization is not always but often involved.

Learning about DITA and Usage of the Sections

No preferred way to learn about DITA has been identified, looks like the participants needed to use all information channels available to get started
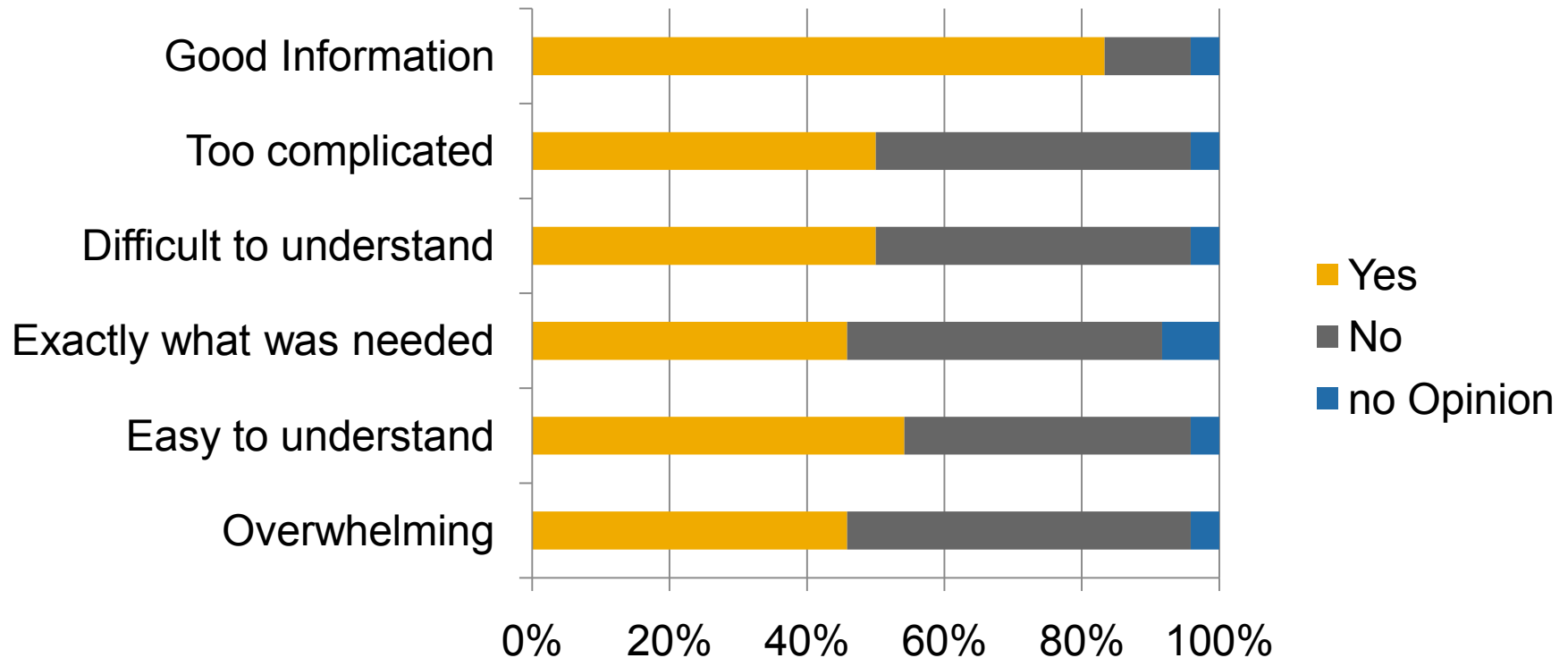
All of them have been in touch with the DITA 1.2 Specification and the majority (18) referenced parts of it.

Section Usage in order of appearance:

1. Language reference (96%)

2. Architectural Specification (70%)

3. Introduction (57%)

4. Non-normative information (13%)

Do you find that the DITA 1.2 Specification meets your needs? Yes/No - Questions

Majority liked the "what" is written, but about half of the participants see room for improvement in "how" it is written.

Voices

I miss the higher-level overviews in the Arch. Spec. in DITA 1.0 and 1.1. They could have been kept before the deep-dive information provided now. Complicated features still not sufficiently explained, esp. regarding their purposes and intentions. More realistic examples would help.

It was a tremendous effort and I am very grateful that there were people in the DITA community who got together to get it done. I am also personally grateful for the architectural leadership of Robert Anderson, the DITA Architect. He has done more to the technical communication industry than many others.

… I prefer the way the information was called out in the TOC of 1.1 PDF, and the index (which is missing in 1.2).

As language specifications go, it is well-organized and well-written. The content is complex, dense, and challenging, so it is no surprise that it it a more difficult reading experience than they typical technical content that we actually write in DITA. A separate, friendly "reading guide" would be great.

I think you all did a fantastic job of trying to give a little to all concerned, hence the increase in size.

I'm not the typical reader. The spec meets my needs for implementing DITA 1.2, but I agree that finding what I need is not easy. The spec is as complete as it needs to be, but I'm thinking now that perhaps enhanced search interfaces might be a faster way to the kinds of details that implementers might look for. IOW, a way to approach the spec as a knowledge base rather than a guide.

Voices

The DITA specification is a bit "dry" insofar as it provides the details but does not necessarily take a step back and emphasize the big picture. But there are other resources for that, tutorials and so on on the net so it's OK. The DITA specification is of high quality. CHM format is needed, so thanks for including that (how about hosting an infocenter with the various versions, too)? Just an idea...

It's a big standard and just got a lot bigger in 1.2 with the addition of learning and training, etc. Some parts, such as key references, are pretty esoteric. Some parts, such as both key references and reltables, require an understanding of map-based indirection that can be hard for the average technical writer to either grasp or see the benefit. Some parts are just noise to people who do not work a lot with DTD or Schema development. Who is the intended audience for the specification? Vendors? Implementors? Writers? All of the above? The latter, I expect, and it's hard to serve such a varied audience with a single document. I know the DITA Adoption TC is supposed to take of the slack there, but people are going to go to the specification first. We need to do a better job of getting across the concept that DITA is a specification that can be uniquely adapted to serve the exact needs of an organization. You only need to use the parts that work for you, as long as they conform. I think that simple message gets lost in the sheer breath of DITA.

Thank You!

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