Can you explain that again?

DITA for Beginners

Tony Self

OASIS
DITA

• Darwin
• Information Typing
• Architecture

Photo: Julia Margaret Cameron
What is DITA?

- DITA is a new open standard for the creation and management of written documents such as policies and procedures, teaching and learning documents, Help systems, Web sites and instruction manuals.
- DITA is many things in one. It is:
  - an XML language
  - a writing methodology
  - a topic-based information architecture
  - a structured authoring platform.
For Tech Writers...

- The DITA approach utterly separates content from its presentation by using document semantics as the basis for mark-up.
- It takes a modular approach
- It is very different from the existing methods of:
  - linear writing
  - style-based markup
Two differences to focus on

• Separation of content and form
  – Author not concerned with presentational form

• Modularity
  – Documents written as re-useable components
Different Approaches
Influences on Tech Comms

- Globalisation
- Agile
- Re-use
- Single-sourcing
- Embedded UA
- Modularity
- Dublin Core
- Facets
What is DITA again?

- A revolutionary approach to writing manuals, online Help systems and other publications
- XML is used to separate content from form (ie, presentation) and from context
- Uses semantic markup instead of “style-based” markup
- Modular approach enables flexible “single-source” publishing
- An OASIS open standard for technical communication
What is OASIS?

- Organisation for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards
- International, not-for-profit
- “Advancing open standards for the information society”
- 5000 participants, 600 organisations, 100 countries
- DITA TC
- DITA Adoption TC
Hippies

- Counter-culture sub-group
- Opposed political and social orthodoxy
- Gentle and non-doctrinaire politics
- Favoured peace, love, and personal freedom
- Hip: “to be aware”
OASIS DITA Technical Committee

- Charter: to promote the use of the DITA architecture for creating standard information types and domain-specific markup vocabularies.
- TC members are representatives from different industries, organisations and countries.
- Chairs: Don Day, Kris Eberlein
OASIS DITA Adoption TC

- Charter: to provide expertise and resources to educate the marketplace on the value of the DITA OASIS standard.
- Actively solicits participation from non-US members and help to facilitate providing information promoting DITA adoption globally.
- Chairs: Gershon Joseph, JoAnn Hackos
What DITA is

- An open standard
- A writing methodology
- A topic-based information architecture
- A structured authoring platform
- An XML vocabulary
- A file format
What DITA is not

• Software
• Programming language
• The DITA Open Toolkit
• Something that readers will know about
The End
IBM IIA Workbench
Sissel’s generation tool

- Converts database tables
- Specialised information type
- 13,000 generated topics
- Visual Studio.NET
- Uses Web Services to interrogate database
- Named **DI TA File Generator**
- Generates map and specialised DITA topics
- Adds descriptive text via conref
DITA File Generator

**Interface Description:**
- **Site:** standard
- **Username:** system
- **Password:**
- **Buttons:**
  - Get tables
  - Gen. map file
  - Gen. domain files
  - Generate files
  - Generate shell file

**Additional Options:**
- Any tables selected?
- Select all tables
- Log empty elements
- Log no access elements
Dynamic content

Are you too busy to read such a long article? (That's one of the concerns about reading habits raised in the article!) Try this short version for busy people.
### Dynamic UA

#### WinANT Echidna

- **File**, **Tools**, **View**, **Reports**, **Help**
- **Man**, **Conditional**, **Flags**, **Help Systems**, **DITA OT**, **Advanced**, **Preferences**

- **DITAMAP2 to be transformed**: 
- **sOutput Folder**: 
- **x28 Output Type**: 
- **Custom Stylesheet**: 

![WinANT Fields](image)

**Short Description**: The WinANT user interface uses dropdowns, text fields, radio buttons and other types of fields to allow you to configure a DITA publishing build.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label Name</th>
<th>Label Value</th>
<th>Label Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lblInput</td>
<td>DITAMAP2 to be transformed:</td>
<td>The ditmap or dita file to be transformed into a reading format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lblOutput</td>
<td>sOutput Folder:</td>
<td>The directory or folder into which the transformation output is to be saved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lblOutType</td>
<td>x28 Output Type:</td>
<td>The type of output to be generated by the DITA OT publishing process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>