

DITA Standard Inspires Collaboration

Adobe assembles the world's top technical communications experts to demonstrate DITA support with Adobe® FrameMaker®

DITA: a standard with staying power

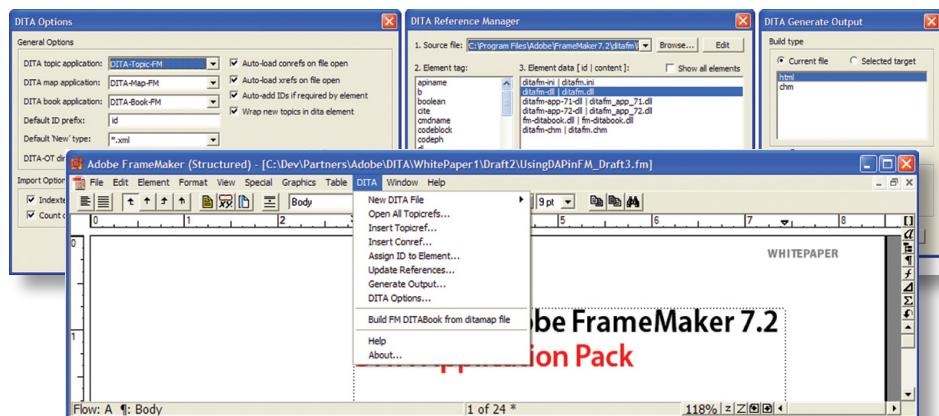
In the world of technical communications, acronyms come and go. There's one acronym, however, that technical communications experts say has staying power. DITA, short for Darwin Information Typing Architecture, is an XML-based open specification that is managed by standards consortium OASIS. It is used for designing, writing, managing, and publishing information in print and on the web that builds content reuse into the authoring process.

To date, a high degree of complexity, uncertainty, and expense has kept many organizations from integrating XML and DITA into their technical publishing processes. To demonstrate this doesn't have to be the case, Adobe assembled some of the best minds in the technical communications industry to create a reference implementation for how to use Adobe FrameMaker software with DITA. The result is the freely available Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA, a comprehensive suite of plug-ins, templates, and other resources that showcase how DITA can be implemented with FrameMaker.

Silicon Publishing helped Adobe manage the effort to create the Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA with numerous development partners. "The project benefited from the collaboration of diverse talent across the structured FrameMaker community," says Max Dunn, co-founder of Silicon Publishing.

Putting DITA within reach

Originally developed by IBM, DITA enables authors to describe a specific task, product, or other topic and reuse their content in different materials, simply by creating pointers or maps that refer to their original content. It's a matter of reshuffling versus reauthoring content—and in technical communications, this is an exciting proposition. What was missing until now was a starting point that illustrates how DITA can be supported in a popular, intuitive, off-the-shelf software application like FrameMaker.



The Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA adds a DITA menu to the FrameMaker user interface. A series of dialog boxes in FrameMaker help provide fine-grained control over DITA functionality.

"Authors need a trusted, visually intuitive authoring environment like FrameMaker. At the same time, enterprises need DITA support so that they can build reuse into every content element," says Hayden Jones, XML solutions architect at Silicon Publishing. "With FrameMaker and the FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA, organizations can now have both."

Assembling a team of world-class experts

The team used several commercially available third-party FrameMaker DITA solutions as starting points and incorporated feedback from customers and each other to devise a reference specification. Scott Prentice, founder of technical communications consulting company Leximation, worked to code the primary DITA plug-in for the application pack. Tassos Anastasiou created a FrameMaker book building plug-in to streamline creation of long documents. Bernard Aschwanden of Publishing Smarter created the core data-formatting model based on previous DITA implementations.

A bright future for FrameMaker aficionados

By assembling some of the best minds in the technical publishing industry to create the Adobe FrameMaker 7.2 Application Pack for DITA and

provide valuable free resources to publishers and developers, Adobe believes it will have a significant impact on the industry. And, support for DITA makes FrameMaker a desirable option for technical communicators looking to move into structured XML publishing using DITA.

Technical communications experts participating in this effort include:

Andrea Sharp, Backspace Ink, Bright Path Solutions, Chris Converse, Document Jones, Group Wellesley, Integrated Technologies, Leximation, Promptt, Publishing Smarter, Scriptorium Publishing, Silicon Publishing, Tassos Anastasiou, Text Structure Consulting, and Tobias Reif

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